

Abstract Art in an Age of Walls

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[The Age of Walls: How Barriers Between Nations Are Changing Our World by Tim Marshall \[Politics of Place, Scribner, 9781501183904\]](#)

Tim Marshall, the New York Times bestselling author of [Prisoners of Geography](#), analyzes the most urgent and tenacious topics in global politics and international relations by examining the borders, walls, and boundaries that divide countries and their populations.

The globe has always been a world of walls, from the Great Wall of China to Hadrian's Wall to the Berlin Wall. But a new age of isolationism and economic nationalism is upon us, visible not just in Trump's obsession with building a wall on the Mexico border or in Britain's Brexit vote but in many other places as well. China has the great Firewall, holding back Western culture. Europe's countries are walling themselves against immigrants, terrorism, and currency issues. South Africa has heavily gated communities, and massive walls or fences separate people in the Middle East, Korea, Sudan, India, and other places around the world.

In fact, at least sixty-five countries, more than a third of the world's nation-states, have barriers along their borders. There are many reasons why walls go up, because we are divided in many ways: wealth, race, religion, and politics, to name a few. Understanding what is behind these divisions is essential to understanding much of what's going on in the world today.

As with Marshall's first two books, [The Age of Walls](#) is a brisk read, divided by geographic region. He provides an engaging context that is often missing from political discussion and draws on his real-life experiences as a reporter from hotspots around the globe. He examines how walls (which Marshall calls "monuments to the failure of politics"), borders, and barriers have been shaping our political landscape for hundreds of years, and especially since 2001, and how they figure in the diplomatic relations and geo-political events of today.

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Excerpt: The border wall between Israel and the West Bank is among the most forbidding and hostile in the world. Viewed from up close, whichever side you find yourself on, it rears up from the ground, overwhelming and dominating you. Faced by this blank expanse of steel and concrete, you are dwarfed not only by its size but by what it represents. You are on one side; "they" are on the other.

Thirty years ago a wall came down, ushering in what looked like a new era of openness and internationalism. In 1987 President Ronald Reagan went to the Brandenburg Gate in divided Berlin and called out to his opposite number in the Soviet Union, "Mr. Gorbachev—tear down this wall!" Two years later it fell. Berlin, Germany, and then Europe were united once more. In those heady times, some intellectuals predicted an end of history. However, history does not end.

In recent years, the cry "Tear down this wall" is losing the argument against "fortress mentality." It is struggling to be heard, unable to compete with the frightening heights of mass migration, the backlash against globalization, the resurgence of

nationalism, the collapse of communism, and the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. These are the fault lines that will shape our world for years to come.

We are seeing walls being built along borders everywhere. Despite globalization and advances in technology, we seem to be feeling more divided than ever. Thousands of miles of walls and fences have gone up around the world in the twenty-first century. At least sixty-five countries, more than a third of the world's nation-states, have built barriers along their borders; half of those erected since World War II sprang up between 2000 and now. Within a few years the European nations could have more miles of walls, fences, and barriers on their borders than there were at the height of the Cold War. They began by separating Greece and Macedonia, Macedonia and Serbia, and Serbia and Hungary, and as we became less shocked by each stretch of barbed wire, others followed suit—Slovenia began building on the Croatian border, the Austrians fenced off Slovenia, and Sweden put up barriers to prevent illegal immigrants crossing from Denmark, while Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have all started on defensive fortifications on their borders with Russia.

Europe is certainly not alone. The UAE has built a fence along its border with Oman, Kuwait likewise with Iraq. Iraq and Iran maintain a physical divide, as do Iran and Pakistan—all 435 miles of it. In Central Asia, Uzbekistan, despite being landlocked, has closed itself off from its five neighbors: Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The border with Tajikistan is even mined. And on the story goes, through the barriers separating Brunei and Malaysia, Malaysia and Thailand, Pakistan and India, India and Bangladesh, China and North Korea, North and South Korea, and so on around the world.

We erect walls for many reasons because we are divided in many ways—in wealth, race, religion, and politics. Sometimes divisions lead to violence, and walls are erected to protect or defend. Sometimes walls go up to keep certain people out. Sometimes physical walls don't go up at all, but we still feel the separation; it's in our minds. These invisible barriers are often just as effective.

These walls tell us much about international politics, but the anxieties they represent transcend the nation-state boundaries on which they sit. The primary purpose of the walls appearing throughout Europe is to stop the wave of migrants—but they also say much about wider divisions and instability in the structure of the European Union and within its member nations. President Trump's proposed wall along the US-Mexico border is intended to stem the flow of migrants from the south, but it also taps into a wider fear many of its supporters feel about changing demographics.

Division shapes politics at every level—the personal, local, national, and international. It's essential to be aware of what has divided us, and what continues to do so, in order to understand what's going on in the world today.

Picture the beginning of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 sci-fi masterpiece, 2001: A Space Odyssey, the sequence titled "The Dawn of Man." On the African savanna in the prehistoric era, a small tribe of proto-man/apes are drinking peacefully at a watering hole when another tribe turns up. The individuals are quite happy to share with their own group—but not with this new, "other" tribe. A shrieking match ensues in which the new group succeeds in taking over the watering hole, forcing the others to retreat. At this point, if the newcomers had had the nous to make a few bricks and mix some cement, they could have walled off their new possession and guarded it. But given that this is set a few million years ago, they have to fight it out again when the first tribe returns some days later, having boned up on warfare, to reclaim its territory.

Grouping into tribes, feeling alarmed by a lot of outsiders, or responding to perceived threats are very human things to do. We form ties that are important for survival, but also for social cohesion. We develop a group identity, and this often leads to conflict with others. Our groups are competing for resources, but with an element of identity conflict also—a narrative of "us and them."

In the early history of mankind, we were hunter-gatherers: we had not settled or acquired permanent fixed resources that others might covet. Then, in parts of what we now call Turkey and the

Middle East, humans started farming. Instead of roaming far and wide to find food or graze livestock, they plowed the fields and waited for the results. Suddenly (in the context of evolution) more and more of us needed to build barriers: walls and roofs to house ourselves and our livestock, fences to mark our territory, fortresses to retreat to if the territory was overrun, and guards to protect the new system. The Age of Walls was upon us and has long gripped our imagination ever since. We still tell each other tales of the walls of Troy, Jericho, Babylon, Great Zimbabwe, Constantinople, and of the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, the Inca Walls in Peru, and many others. On and on they stretch, through time, region, and culture, to the present—but now they are electrified, topped with searchlights and CCTV.

These physical divisions are mirrored by those in the mind—the great ideas that have guided our civilizations and given us identity and a sense of belonging—such as the Great Schism of Christianity, the split of Islam into Sunni and Shia, and in more recent history the titanic battles between communism, fascism, and democracy.

The title of Thomas Friedman's 2005 book, *The World Is Flat*, was based on the belief that globalization would inevitably bring us closer together. It has done that, but it has also inspired us to build barriers. When faced with perceived threats—the financial crisis, terrorism, violent conflict, refugees and immigration, the increasing gap between rich and poor—people cling more tightly to their groups. The cofounder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, believed social media would unite us. In some respects it has, but it has simultaneously given voice and organizational ability to new cyber tribes, some of whom spend their time spewing invective and division across the World Wide Web. There seem now to be as many tribes, and as much conflict between them, as there have ever been. The question we face today is, What form do our modern tribes take? Do we define ourselves by class, by race, by religion, by nationality? And is it possible for these tribes to coexist in a world where the concept of "us and them" remains?

It all comes down to this "us and them" concept and the walls we build in our minds. Sometimes the

"other" has a different language or skin color; a different religion or other set of beliefs. One example of this came up recently when I was in London with a group of thirty leading young journalists from around the world whom I was helping to train. I'd mentioned the Iran-Iraq War, in which up to 1 million Iranians had died, and had used the possibly clumsy phrase "Muslims killing Muslims." A young Egyptian journalist jumped from his chair and shouted that he could not allow me to say this. I pointed out the statistics from that terrible war and he replied, "Yes, but the Iranians are not Muslims."

The penny dropped, along with my heart. The majority of Iranians are Shia, so I asked him, "Are you saying that the Shia are not Muslims?"

"Yes. The Shia are not Muslims."

Such divisions do not come down to competition for resources, but rather to a claim that what you think is the only truth, and those with differing views are lesser people. With such certainty of superiority, the walls quickly go up. If you introduce competition for resources, they go up higher. We seem to be in that place now.

For the purpose of this book I use walls as shorthand for barriers, fences, and divisions in all their variety. We do look at physical walls in each chapter, most of which involve bricks and mortar, or concrete and wire, but those walls are the "what" of division, not the why—and they are just the beginning of the story.

I haven't been able to cover every divided region. Instead I have focused on those that best illustrate the challenges of identity in a globalized world: the effects of migration (the USA, Europe, the Indian subcontinent); nationalism as a force for both unity and division (China, the UK, Africa); and the intersections of religion and politics (Israel, the Middle East).

In China, we see a strong nation-state with a number of divisions within its borders—such as regional unrest and wealth disparity—that pose a risk to national unity, threatening economic progress and power; thus the government must exert control over the Chinese people. The USA is also divided, for different reasons: the era of Trump has

exacerbated race relations in the Land of the Free, but has also revealed a hitherto unrivaled split between Republicans and Democrats, who are more opposed than ever before.

It sometimes seems as if it's easier to divide than unite. For example, the myriad complexities of how to put Korea back together were brought into focus by the sketchy agreement between the North and South on denuclearization in the spring of 2018. There were vague murmurings of eventual reunification included in the "Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula." These were in the spirit of the declaration, but the realities of geopolitics soon kicked in. There are five players in this game and each has a different view of the future.

The USA's imperative is to prevent North Korea from being able to reach it with a nuclear weapon. However, maintaining a military presence in South Korea is also important to counter China's growing naval power in the Yellow Sea and elsewhere. This latter point does not fit with Chinese strategy, nor with North Korea's ideas about dominating the peninsula, and this of course runs counter to South Korea's interests. Meanwhile the Japanese, who host their own US military bases, would be alarmed at the prospect of a unified Korea, especially one under Chinese influence, as it views the peninsula as a buffer between it and China.

These complexities serve as a reminder when we look at the partitions, walls, and divides in this book as to why it is so hard to overcome them at the political level.

The divisions between Israel and Palestine are well established, but with so many further subdivisions within each population it is almost impossible to try to agree upon a solution. Religious and ethnic divisions also spark violence across the Middle East, highlighting the key struggle between Shia and Sunni Muslims—each incident is the result of complex factors, but much of it comes down to religion, especially the regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. On the Indian subcontinent, population movements, now and in the coming years, reveal the plight of those fleeing religious persecution as well as that of the many economic and climate refugees.

In Africa, the borders left behind by colonialism are proving difficult to reconcile with tribal identities that remain strong. Across Europe the very concept of the EU is under threat as the walls go back up, proving that the differences of the Cold War years haven't entirely been resolved, and that nationalism has never gone away in the age of internationalism. And as the UK leaves the EU, Brexit reveals divisions throughout the kingdom—long-established regional identities, as well as the more recent social and religious tensions that have formed in the era of globalization.

In a time of fear and instability, people will continue to group together, to protect themselves against perceived threats. Those threats don't just come from the borders. They can also come from within. <>

[A Nation Forged by Crisis: A New American History](#)
by Jay Sexton [Basic Books, 9781541617230]

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Excerpt: No words in American history are better known today than those of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which assert "all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Americans have struggled to fulfill those ideals ever since. The bar could not have been set higher. "The United States was the only country in the world that began with perfection and aspired to progress," as mid-twentieth century historian Richard Hofstadter memorably put it.'

But for all the implications of the Declaration's second paragraph, few at the time of its drafting considered it the most significant section of the document. It was the first and final paragraphs that were then understood to contain the most critical lines. Their objective was constitutional and

diplomatic, not ideological. These passages were an attempt to demonstrate to audiences at home and abroad that the diverse inhabitants of the thirteen colonies were "one people" ready "to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them." The Declaration concluded not with ideologically charged rhetoric but with a description of the political authority, power, and unity of what was now given, for the first time, a name: "the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA... and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protections of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration at a moment of international instability and opportunity. The political crisis in Britain's North American colonies threatened to trigger a second world war in as many decades. France awaited the opportunity to strike back at its British nemesis, whose 1763 victory in the Seven Years' War had left it as the dominant European power in North America—and with the burdens that led it to levy new taxes and assert its authority over its colonies. The rapidly growing population and economy of North America further destabilized the international order of the mid-eighteenth century. As North America boomed, thanks in part to an unprecedented increase in immigration and Atlantic trade, the political institutions of the British Empire struggled to adapt. Patriots declared themselves independent at a moment in which the aggregate power of the thirteen colonies was rapidly growing. Linkages between the Old World and the New were stronger than they had ever been. In fact, much of the patriots' strength came from relatively recent British connections. The blockbuster pamphlet that had given the cause of independence such momentum, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, published in January 1776, was authored by one of the era's many British emigrants—in Paine's case, one who had arrived in North America less than two years earlier. The printing press of John

Dunlap, an Irish-born Philadelphian who printed the initial run of the Declaration of Independence, was one of the many British imports of this period that empowered the patriot cause. The roads and communication systems that the British built in North America during the recent Seven Years' War became the circuits of patriot resistances.

The Declaration of Independence was a bold gambit aimed at convincing wavering observers at home and abroad—particularly France, the Americans' longtime enemy but now potential ally—that the patriots had established a new country worthy of recognition and support. "It is not choice then but necessity that calls for Independence," Virginian Richard Henry Lee pointed out in June 1776, "as the only means by which foreign Alliances can be obtained; and a proper Confederation by which internal peace and union can be secured." Establishing political legitimacy was the critical next step for the rebellion, for it would pave the way to diplomatic alliances as well as further material support and foreign loans. This diplomatic goal was inseparable from—indeed, dependent upon—the union of the thirteen states. "Foreign Powers could not be expected to acknowledge Us," John Adams argued in 1776, "till We had acknowledged ourselves, and taken our Station among them as a sovereign Power, and Independent Nation." The position in which the American rebels found themselves offered them that rarest of political opportunities, a chance to create the world anew. "The present time," Paine argued in 1776, "is that peculiar time, which never happens to a nation but once, viz. the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors, instead of making laws for themselves."

The nation's founding document, in short, was not only a statement of timeless principles but also an outward looking and innovative act of statecraft during a moment of crisis. This is not to demote the historical significance of those admirable ideals of the Declaration's second paragraph, which have inspired so many over the course of American history. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," stated the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments of the

women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, "that all men and women are created equal." "Very seldom, if ever, in the history of the world," Martin Luther King Jr. declared a century later, "has a sociopolitical document expressed in such profound, eloquent and unequivocal language the dignity and the worth of human personality." Rather, it is to suggest that the animating ideals of the Declaration's second paragraph have been entwined, from the very beginning, with its opening and closing paragraphs, which navigated a course for a hastily constructed ship of state through stormy international waters.

This Book Tells the history of the United States through the greatest periods of crisis in each century of its existence. It opens with the eighteenth-century Revolution and founding, when the thirteen colonies broke from the British Empire and created a new political union. Next comes the Civil War—America's "second revolution"—which witnessed the abolition of slavery and accelerated the nation's international rise. Then we reach the protracted and interrelated crises of the mid-twentieth century: the Great Depression, the Second World War, and—finally—the onset of the Cold War. These periods of crisis were like violent earthquakes that forever altered the nation's political landscape.

Traditionally, historians of the United States have given primacy to internal factors when explaining the nation's development: long simmering social and political struggles that periodically have come to a boil, such as the campaign against slavery in the nineteenth century and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s; the emergence of new political practices, alignments, and institutions—for example, the collapse of the Whigs and the rise of the Republican Party in the 1850s; and specific leaders, as in "the age of Jefferson." Some historians have suggested that there are peculiar rhythms or cycles within American history involving flurries of reform and innovation. Wars undeniably have been powerful drivers of transformative change at home in that the demands of mobilizing resources and political will have necessitated changes to America's domestic institutions. It is no coincidence that all the periods examined here occurred in the midst of intense conflicts.

There is merit to these explanations, many of which inform the pages that follow. My argument is not that they are wrong, but rather that they are incomplete. The history of the United States—particularly its moments of crisis—cannot be understood in a vacuum. Nations are more than repositories of individual rights and political traditions; they are configurations of power forged by geopolitical pressures. The United States that we know today bears the imprint of the international forces that have been placed upon it in the past: the booms and busts of the global economy, the ebbs and flows of human migration, and the violent fluctuations in the international order. The old shibboleth of American "exceptionalism"—that most persistent of nationalist myths, which posits that the course of US history has been the unique product of its internal formations, institutions, and ideology—has obscured the ways in which the volatile forces of global integration have conditioned its development. Far from being an exceptional nation walled off from the world, the United States has always been entangled within it—even in those times in which Americans have attempted to limit their connections to the international system.

What follows is less a description of the domestic fault lines that opened up during periods of crisis than it is an assessment of the distant, yet powerful, forces that shifted the underlying tectonic plates of historical change. When we broaden our perspective beyond the nation in this way, things look different: a new set of determinants of historical change become visible; familiar stories unfold in unexpected ways; contingent moments in which the course of American history—and world history—might have played out differently come into focus.

Three aspects of America's foreign relations, in particular, emerge as drivers of its history. The first is what we today call national security. The development of the United States, particularly in moments of crisis, has been shaped by international pressures, foreign threats, and imperial rivalry. For most of its existence, the United States has been a vulnerable nation, one weaker than the traditional European powers as well as one whose innovative but untested system of constitutional democracy

was in danger of imploding. Native peoples, revolutionary ideologies, and foreign cultures have struck fear into the hearts of the citizens as well as the leaders of the United States. Anxiety and insecurity have been as important to US history as have confidence and national triumphalism. Even archnationalists, operating at moments of relative stability, have feared the worst. "Within five years from this time," Henry Clay predicted in the midst of the high tide of early nationalism in the aftermath of the War of 1812, "the Union would be divided into three distinct confederacies." Yet for all these anxieties, what is most striking when one takes the long view of American history is the extent to which the United States has been the beneficiary of geopolitical reconfigurations. The age of revolutions, the era of mid-nineteenth-century nation making, and the global crisis of the 1930s and 1940s all ended with the United States occupying a more secure and profitable position within the international system.

National security has been more than merely a matter of diplomacy and foreign relations; it also has molded domestic politics, fueled the growth of the federal government, and fostered America's ardently nationalist culture. International crises have been the catalysts of political innovation. The 1787 Constitution—the world's oldest written national constitution—aimed not only to balance liberty with order but also to enhance the security of the imperiled former British colonies. The specter of foreign threats similarly prompted the creation of the modern national security state in the mid-twentieth century. And it was sometimes the absence of external threat that made all the difference. It was no coincidence that the Civil War unfolded at a moment of newfound security for the Union, nor that the destructive partisanship and culture wars of our own era have occurred against the backdrop of America's Cold War triumph.

Second, the development of global capitalism has played a key role in the making of the United States. Here, too, America has benefited from broader developments. Over the course of the last two and a half centuries, the United States has been one of the greatest beneficiaries of the economic processes that we now call globalization. It has attracted foreign capital at relatively low

rates of interest, it has been a magnet for laborers seeking work, and it has accessed lucrative foreign markets and resources as well as attracted competitively priced imports. The development of the American economy, including the establishment of the immense internal market that has been the material foundation of US power, has been inseparable from the broader formation of global capitalism. The pursuit of wealth and economic power has been as central to the course of American history as has the pursuit of equality. "Our plan is commerce," Paine averred in his 1776 pamphlet, "and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because, it is the interest of all Europe to have America a free port."

But for as much as the international economy helped give rise to the US economic juggernaut, it also has been the source of internal discord and political conflict. The United States has never been a single economic unit; rather, like most nations, it is a conglomeration of different economic interests, many of which pursue their own objectives in the wider international order. Competition between different economic, sectional, and social groups has generated political tensions, which in turn have been intensified by the financial panics and economic downturns that have been an inescapable feature of global capitalism. The result has been divisive debates over economic questions, including tariffs, trade policy, foreign investment, and imperial connections. The international economic order, in short, has deepened internal divisions and contributed to crisis even as it has made the United States the wealthiest nation in world history.

Last, but certainly not least, is immigration. The inflow of people is a defining feature of the history of the United States, a "nation of nations." The largest numbers of immigrants arrived in the half century between 1870 and 1920 as well as in our own era since 1980. In both of these periods, the percentage of the population that was foreign-born climbed into the teens, triggering heated debate over immigration policy (the historic high is 14.8 percent in 1890; in 2016, the figure stood at 13.4 percent). But these were not the only times in which immigration created political controversy. Two of the periods that witnessed the largest

proportionate increase in the population that was foreign-born often come as a surprise. The decade after 1845 saw some three million newcomers arrive on America's shores at a time when the 1850 census counted twenty-three million people in the United States. This wave of immigration, which was driven by the Irish potato famine and dislocation in Europe, particularly in Germany, accounted for a remarkable 13 percent of America's population. The span between the end of the Seven Years' War and the outbreak of the American War of Independence saw a similar surge of new arrivals, who came both voluntarily (from the British Isles and Germany) and against their will (enslaved Africans). The new arrivals of the 1760–1775 period amounted to an estimated 10 percent of the overall population of the colonies. The sudden bursts of immigration in these periods destabilized existing political institutions, contributing in both cases to the breakdowns that were to follow.

Immigration has been of greater importance than merely functioning as a wedge issue debated by "native" Americans. Those who landed upon America's shores brought with them new ideas and political agendas. Immigrants arrived not to a monolithic society but rather to one with its own social fault lines, above all, those related to African American enslavement and its legacies. Immigrants and their children—even in eras such as the mid-twentieth century, when the percentage of the US population that was foreign-born plummeted to its all-time low of less than 5 percent as a result of federal immigration restrictions—have shaped the culture and politics of their new home just as much as the United States has changed them.

The quest for national security and global power, America's shifting position in the international economy, and fluctuations in immigration have made the United States the nation that it is today. America's foreign relations have conditioned its history not only in their cumulative effects over the long haul but also as a result of their volatility. In periods of crisis, America's position in the world has lurched in unexpected directions. For as inexorable as the rise of the United States appears in retrospect, there have been contingent moments in which the very existence of the nation was up for grabs.

This is the essence of crisis: the world turned upside down; the known replaced by the unknown; panic reigning as people struggle to maintain their balance amid shifts in the very ground beneath their feet. "It came with a speed and ferocity that left men dazed," New York Times correspondent Elliot Bell wrote of Wall Street's catastrophic collapse in October 1929. "The market seemed like an insensate thing that was wreaking a wild and pitiless revenge upon those who thought to master it." Crises are contagious, spreading like viruses from one realm to another. It is not without reason that the word crisis was associated with medical conditions and health scares in the nineteenth century. Each of the periods under consideration in this book were less a singular crisis than a set of interlinked crises—a political crisis could trigger an economic panic, which in turn could intensify social conflict, and so on. As these pandemics spread throughout the body politic, crisis itself was normalized, becoming an almost accepted characteristic of an age.

Just as foreign crises have spread to the United States, domestic ones have spilled outside its borders, unsettling foreign countries and peoples as well as reconfiguring America's connections to the world. Consider the fateful winter of secession that followed the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln. The crisis over slavery that divided the Union into warring sections also led to a series of sharp reversals in America's position in the global system. The immigration surge of the 1840s and 1850s was followed by a span that saw the lowest number of foreign arrivals in a century. The foreign capital that had rushed into the roaring American economy in the preceding decades suddenly began to flee; indeed, more capital left the United States in 1860-1862 than came into it, also a once-in-a-century occurrence. One of the world's most valuable commodities and America's largest export—Southern cotton—was confined to the ports of the Confederacy as a result of Richmond's ill-fated diplomatic strategy, leading to unemployment and social unrest in the British textile towns of Lancashire. The most unexpected reversal was how the national security that the United States had attained after the war against Mexico in the 1840s was suddenly imperiled, with European powers encroaching once again upon the Western

Hemisphere. Meanwhile, Confederate emissaries crossed the Atlantic in search of an alliance with Britain.

"Our country, after having expelled all European powers from the continent," Secretary of State William H. Seward lamented in early 1861, now threatened to "relapse into an aggravated form of its colonial experience, and, like Italy, Turkey, India, and China, become the theatre of transatlantic intervention and rapacity.

A wider view of American history that looks beyond the nation's borders brings into focus not only the migration patterns, economic flows, and international rivalries that have connected the United States to the world but also those rare moments in which the very existence of the nation was in question. Perhaps none was more pregnant with implications than the autumn of 1777, when the fate of the patriots' bid for independence hung in the balance. Having proclaimed their independence to the world the previous fourth of July, their cause had stalled, on the battlefield and in the diplomatic courts of the Old World. "I think the game is pretty near up," Washington privately confessed at year's end. "To accomplish their independence is not quite so easy as to declare it," the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham haughtily remarked.

But then a series of events forever changed the course of modern history: the stunning patriot victory at the Battle of Saratoga in October; the drafting of the Articles of Confederation in November that, for all its limitations, further demonstrated the political resolve of the Americans; and, most of all, the alliance signed with France in February 1778, which provided the patriots with the resources, military assistance, and naval power that ultimately tipped the scales in their favor."

There are comparable "Saratoga moments" in other crises of US history, as we shall see. These contingent moments played out in their own distinctive ways but are joined by a common denominator that has been curiously forgotten in our age of US global power: foreign states and peoples have played decisive roles in the critical moments of American history. As we make our way

through our own era of global instability in an unprecedentedly interconnected world, there is perhaps no more important lesson from the past to keep in mind.

"Crisis may beget crisis," Franklin D. Roosevelt said as his administration transitioned from battling the Great Depression to entering the Second World War, "but the progress underneath does not wholly halt—it does go forward." Like so many of Roosevelt's public statements, this one reveals a truth even as it conceals others. The United States came out on the other side of its greatest crises as a stronger and more efficiently organized nation, as Roosevelt suggested. The process of mobilizing resources to counter threats catalyzed innovations in political economy, such as the creation of a national financial system during the Civil War and the economic reforms of the New Deal. Previously marginalized social groups, particularly women, African Americans, and immigrants, secured new political rights, not least because of the sacrifices they made on behalf of the nation in its moments of need. In the bigger picture, the United States came to be the most powerful nation the world has ever known because of the stress tests it endured, the rivals it overcame, and the power it accrued during its moments of trial."

But as true as all of that is, such Whiggish notions of the forward progress of the United States are misleading. The crises that forged the nation saw rights taken away from social groups, as well as granted to them. The new nation of the 1780s was founded upon slavery as well as freedom. The political rights earned by African Americans during the Civil War were rolled back in the era of Jim Crow; loyal Japanese Americans were rounded up into internment camps in the 1940s; and "Rosie the Riveter" was welcomed into the workforce during the Second World War, only to then be told to return home after 1945. Crisis moments might have catalyzed the rationalization of the political system, but they also perpetuated inequalities and sowed the seeds of future troubles.

When we view American history from a global perspective, we see a nation that has been prone to abrupt reversals in its relations with the wider world. The United States has gyrated between free trade and economic nationalism, between

encouraging immigration and restricting it, and from expansionist foreign policies to those aimed at limiting its commitments abroad. Old enemies have been embraced as new allies, only then to revert to rivals. Amid all these twists and turns, there is a discernable—and curiously underappreciated—pattern: geopolitical shifts that enhanced American security and power have devolved into periods of instability at home. Moments of international triumph have quickly transitioned to political crisis. A mere dozen years lay between the 1763 victory in the Seven Years' War and the 1775 "shot heard round the world" at Lexington and Concord; the conquest of Mexico in 1848 and the collapse of the Union in 1860; the decisive US intervention in the First World War in 1917 and the Wall Street crash of 1929; and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. America's global ascent has not unfolded in a linear manner, even if the historical trendline—at least until recently—has been the growth of US national power.

As we navigate through our own iteration of what Lincoln called "the stormy present," it behooves us to take a new look at our history to see how past moments of crisis have made America the nation that it is today. Furthermore, in an age in which our political crises are entangled with the volatile processes of modern globalization, we would be well served to revisit the nation's history from a global vantage. When we do this, the familiar story of America's history looks different. To return to the metaphor of the ship of state, far from being one that has inexorably sailed forward in pursuit of its founding ideals, the United States is one that has been blown in unexpected directions and whose rudders have sharply turned when tossed about in tempestuous waters. This book aims to show that American history does not move consistently in any direction, that US citizens alone have not determined their nation's destiny, and that the interconnected nature of the modern world ensured that the crises that forged the United States were not confined to its borders. These realities were evident in the very beginning, at the unexpected founding of a new nation, a crisis to which we will now turn. <>

[Beirut Rules: The Murder of a CIA Station Chief and Hezbollah's War Against America](#) by Fred Burton and Samuel Katz [Berkley, 9781101987469]

From the New York Times bestselling coauthors of [Under Fire](#)--the riveting story of the kidnapping and murder of CIA Station Chief William Buckley.

After a deadly terrorist bombing at the American embassy in Lebanon in 1983, only one man inside the CIA possessed the courage and skills to rebuild the networks destroyed in the blast: William Buckley. But the new Beirut station chief quickly became the target of a young terrorist named Imad Mughniyeh.

[Beirut Rules](#) is the pulse-by-pulse account of Buckley's abduction, torture, and murder at the hands of Hezbollah terrorists. Drawing on never-before-seen government documents as well as interviews with Buckley's co-workers, friends and family, Burton and Katz reveal how the relentless search for Buckley in the wake of his kidnapping ignited a war against terror that continues to shape the Middle East to this day.

Excerpt:

Locals referred to it as "thunder and lightning": thuds of distant artillery, followed by explosive flashes of fire and destruction. Most nights were like this. An orchestra of serenading car horns would be punctuated by the chatter of heavy machine guns, and sporadically interrupted by the sonic booms of fighter jets. But tonight had been quiet. The ambulance crews, who normally shuffled from one kill zone to another, passed the hours playing backgammon while sipping from cups of bitter Turkish coffee. The all-night falafel stands did brisk business on nights when people didn't die.

The American was up long before dawn, his alarm clock ringing at 5:30 sharp. He showered and ate a breakfast of fruit and cereal, then dressed as a light breeze rolled into his one-bedroom flat. Every night he picked out his clothes for the next day and hung them on a closet door—an old habit from his many years of military service. He always chose a dark suit and a conservative tie. In a country of rolled-up sleeves and safari jackets, he would

never permit himself to display such casual abandon.

At 6:45 he walked out of his apartment for the final time. A dim forty-watt bulb illuminated the corridor. When it flickered, the light created menacing shadows. He turned the dead bolt key twice to the right to lock the steel door and then headed toward the elevator and stairs. He had been warned against the lift; he took the stairs.

The stairwell smelled of yesterday's garbage and the morning's cooking. He clutched the banister as he negotiated the narrow stairway toward the ground floor. Arabic music blared from kitchen radios. The sounds of children crying and pots and pans banging together assaulted his ears. As he passed the second floor, he could hear a couple arguing. They always were.

His building was a white concrete concoction that combined the regal thumbprint of the French colonial presence with modern expediency. The neighborhood was one of the upper-crust sections of the war-torn city, but few people wore a suit and tie in the morning. When he walked out the door, dressed like an insurance salesman, he looked very much like a European baron stepping into a Byzantine world.

Across the street, the old man who lived on the second floor watched as the American left for work. A pensioner, the old man was always at his window at that hour, tending to the plants he kept in clay window boxes. He didn't know the American by name; the two had never spoken to each other. But surviving in Beirut meant that you knew as much as you could about your neighbors.

The pensioner knew that the American worked.... The American's vehicle, a gray 1983 Renault Turbo, was parked in an outdoor lot adjacent to his apartment building. He looked around, making sure he wasn't being followed, before opening the car's driver's-side door. Satisfied that the landscape was safe, he tossed his black attaché case onto the passenger seat. Inside, along with a newspaper, a cassette recorder, and some index cards, was a nine-millimeter semiautomatic pistol. He knew there was little such a weapon could do in Beirut. Compared to the ordnance that the militiamen carried openly, a pistol was like a Swiss Army

knife. Still, in a city ruled by the AK-47, it was good to be armed.

He checked the rearview mirror before placing the key in the ignition. The first beads of sweat had already appeared on his brow. His drive to work would take about two minutes, even in the frenetic traffic. He could have walked to work, of course, but it was too dangerous—assassins were everywhere. He signaled a left turn.

Close by, two black Mercedes sedans waited, engines running. Inside were four bearded men dressed in army field jackets. When the American turned onto the street, two of the men pulled masks down over their faces and readied the AK-47 assault rifles resting on their laps.

The first Mercedes overtook the Renault on the driver's side, speeding past and then blocking it off at an angle. The second Mercedes swung in from behind and blocked off any chance of escape; the American lived in a cul-de-sac and was now completely closed in. He glanced at his attaché case. With AK-47s held at the ready, the masked men approached the car fast and determined, barking orders in Arabic. They had rehearsed this before.

It took all of a handful of seconds. In the blink of an eye, and with the barrel end of a Kalashnikov to the temple, the American vanished into a Mercedes, which made a right turn at the intersection and sped off to the south, toward the labyrinth of the Shiite slums. From his second-story window, the old pensioner had witnessed the entire abduction. The Renault was still in the street, engine running, driver's door open wide. In his living room he picked up the phone, checked for a dial tone, and called the operator, demanding to be connected to the American Embassy.

The old man was eventually patched through by a Marine gunnery sergeant and reached Jeremy Zeikel, the State Department deputy regional security officer, who took the call at 7:15.2 Zeikel's heart sank when he heard the old man's story. William Francis Buckley, the CIA Chief of Station in Beirut, one of the most important and dangerous American intelligence postings in the world, had been abducted.

Honor and Ceremony

Each Spring the Director of Central Intelligence presides over the Agency's most solemn ritual: a memorial ceremony to honor those members of the Central Intelligence Agency who gave their lives in service of their country. The Memorial Ceremony is one of the largest annual events at the CIA. It is open to CIA employees and to the families of the fallen officers. The ceremony is held in the headquarters, near the statue of Nathan Hale, always in the morning. A CIA honor guard presents the Agency's colors. There is the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and an opening prayer. The Director's speech, usually brief, reaffirms the courage and sacrifice that the fallen displayed while operating far from home and at great risk. "We at CIA remember our heroes—the men and women commemorated by stars on our Memorial Wall," Director Leon E. Panetta said in June 2009. "Each of them, in their own way and own time, strengthened America and helped spread freedom across the globe."

The names of the fallen are then read by four senior Agency officers, representing each of the CIA directorates. Following the roll call, a wreath is placed before the wall. The ceremony concludes with a benediction and the playing of taps. Great effort is made to allow the families to feel closer to their sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, fathers or mothers, who died on the front lines of wars declared and otherwise. "Ceremonies that honor the dead are, in truth, for the living. They remind us of our mortality but also celebrate the lives and memories of those we have loved, trusted, and respected," CIA Director Robert Gates explained at the inaugural ceremony held in May 1987. "Certainly, we mourn their loss—but we also glory in the knowledge of their extraordinary contribution to our service and to our country."

When Director Gates presided over the first ceremony in front of the Agency's Memorial Wall, there were fifty gold stars carved into the white marble. To be honored with a star, according to official criteria, death must be of an inspirational or heroic character while in the performance of duty; or as the result of an act of terrorism while in the performance of duty; or as an act of premeditated violence targeted against an

employee, motivated solely by that employee's Agency affiliation; or in the performance of duty while serving in areas of hostilities or other exceptionally hazardous conditions where the death is a direct result of such hostilities or hazards.

William Francis Buckley's was the fifty-first gold star carved into the wall.

Richard Holm, the head of the Agency's Counterterrorism Group, who recommended William Buckley for the open post of Chief of Station in Beirut, officiated at many annual memorial ceremonies in the lobby of CIA headquarters during his long and illustrious career. To this day, even though he's retired, Holm still believes in ceremony and honor to those who died in service to their country while working in the shadows for the CIA. Each and every morning, Holm places an American flag on its bracket in honor of his friend Bill Buckley and another friend and colleague, Mike Deuel, who died in a helicopter crash while on assignment in South Asia. Both men are commemorated by stars on the CIA's Memorial Wall. Holm kept the flag that covered Buckley's casket from Lebanon back to the United States in 1991. The flag is now part of the permanent collection on display at the CIA Museum in Langley. William Buckley remains a permanent symbol of service, sacrifice, and honor to the men and women who worked at the Agency in the 1980s, and to those who currently work in the clandestine service of their country. All know the risk. The story of William Buckley is engraved in their minds and in their consciences in training.

When asked what he thinks about when remembering Buckley, Holm said, "He was a good friend. He was my Deputy of CTC. It was an ugly and nasty ending to his life." <>

[Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America](#) by John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck [Princeton University Press, 9780691174198]

A gripping, in-depth account of the 2016 presidential election that explains Donald Trump's historic victory

Donald Trump's election victory stunned the world. How did he pull it off? Was it his appeal to

alienated voters in the battleground states? Was it Hillary Clinton and the scandals associated with her long career in politics? Were key factors already in place before the nominees were even chosen?

[Identity Crisis](#) provides a gripping account of the campaign that appeared to break all the political rules—but in fact didn't.

[Identity Crisis](#) takes readers from the bruising primaries to an election night whose outcome defied the predictions of the pollsters and pundits. The book shows how fundamental characteristics of the nation and its politics—the state of the economy, the Obama presidency, and the demographics of the political parties—combined with the candidates' personalities and rhetoric to produce one of the most unexpected presidencies in history. Early on, the fundamental characteristics predicted an extremely close election. And even though Trump's many controversies helped Clinton maintain a comfortable lead for most of the campaign, the prediction of a close election became reality when Americans cast their votes.

[Identity Crisis](#) reveals how Trump's victory was foreshadowed by changes in the Democratic and Republican coalitions that were driven by people's racial and ethnic identities. The campaign then reinforced and exacerbated those cleavages as it focused on issues related to race, immigration, and religion. The result was an epic battle not just for the White House but about what America is and should be.

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Fayetteville

Rakeem Jones didn't see the punch coming.

He had been part of a group protesting at a rally for presidential candidate Donald Trump in Fayetteville, North Carolina. It was March 9, 2016, and Trump was leading the race for the Republican presidential nomination. After Trump began speaking, one of the group started shouting at Trump. A Trump supporter screamed at the group, "You need to get the fuck out of here!" The group was soon surrounded by sheriff's deputies, who began to escort them out. Jones gave the audience the finger. Another member of the group, Ronnie Rouse, said that someone shouted, "Go home, niggers!" (Both Rouse and Jones are black.)

As police led Jones out, seventy-eight-year-old John McGraw, who uses the nickname "Quick Draw McGraw," moved to the end of his row and sucker-punched Jones as he walked past. Jones was then tackled by the deputies, who said they had not seen McGraw's punch. McGraw, who is white, was able to leave the event and was interviewed afterward by a reporter from the program Inside Edition. When asked if he liked the rally, he said, "You bet I liked it." When asked what he liked, McGraw said, "Knocking the hell out of that big mouth." Then he said, "We don't know who he is, but we know he's not acting like an American. The next time we see him, we might have to kill him." The day after, McGraw was identified, arrested, and charged with assault and battery and disorderly conduct.

The incident went viral. One reason was Rouse's cell phone footage of the attack. Another was Trump's reaction. In his speech in Fayetteville, Trump appeared to excuse violence against the protesters, saying, "In the good old days this doesn't happen because they used to treat them very, very rough." Two days later, Trump said, "The audience hit back and that's what we need a little bit more of." Two days after that he offered to pay McGraw's legal fees. That never came to pass. McGraw appeared in court nine months later and pleaded no contest to both charges. He was sentenced to a year's probation.¹

The attack on Rakeem Jones was just one of several violent incidents involving protesters and attendees at Trump rallies. Two days after the Fayetteville rally, the Trump campaign canceled a rally planned for the University of Illinois at Chicago

when violence erupted between Trump supporters and protesters. And Trump's reaction to the attack on Jones was just one of many times when he condoned violence against protesters. After a Black Lives Matter activist was attacked and called "nigger" at a November 2015 rally in Birmingham, Trump said, "Maybe he should have been roughed up because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing." On other occasions, referring to protesters, he said, "Knock the crap out of them" and "I'd like to punch him in the face" and "I'll beat the crap out of you."

What happened in Fayetteville, Birmingham, and other places revealed something else about the election. McGraw's comment "We know he's not acting like an American" distills what the election was fundamentally about: a debate about not only what would, as Trump put it, "make America great again," but who is America—and American—in the first place. It was a debate about whether the president himself, Barack Obama, was an American. It was a debate about how many immigrants to admit to the country. It was a debate about how much of a threat was posed by Muslims living in or traveling to the United States. It was a debate about whether innocent blacks were being systematically victimized by police forces. It was a debate about whether white Americans were being unfairly left behind in an increasingly diverse country.

What these issues shared was the centrality of identity. How people felt about these issues depended on which groups they identified with and how they felt about other groups. Of course, group identities have mattered in previous elections, much as they have in American politics overall. But the question is always which identities come to the fore. In 2016, the important groups were defined by the characteristics that have long divided Americans: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, and, ultimately, partisanship.

What made this election distinctive was how much those identities mattered to voters. During Trump's unexpected rise to the nomination, support for Trump or one of his many rivals was strongly linked to how Republican voters felt about blacks, immigrants, and Muslims, and to how much discrimination Republican voters believed that

whites themselves faced. This had not been true in the 2008 or 2012 Republican primaries. These same factors helped voters choose between Trump or Hillary Clinton in the general election—and, again, these factors mattered even more in 2016 than they had in recent presidential elections. More strikingly still, group identities came to matter even on issues that did not have to be about identity, such as the simple question of whether one was doing okay economically.

In short, these identities became the lens through which so much of the campaign was refracted. This book is the story of how that happened and what it means for the future of a nation whose own identity is fundamentally in question.

The Political Power of Identity

That identity matters in politics is a truism. Getting beyond truisms means answering more important questions: which identities, what they mean, and when and how they become politically relevant. The answers to these questions point to the features of the 2016 election that made group identities so potent.

People can be categorized in many groups based on their place of birth, place of residence, ethnicity, religion, gender, occupation, and so on. But simply being a member of a group is not the same thing as identifying or sympathizing with that group. The key is whether people feel a psychological attachment to a group. That attachment binds individuals to the group and helps it develop cohesion and shared values.

The existence, content, and power of group identities—including their relevance to politics—depends on context. One part of the context is the possibility of gains and losses for the group. Gains and losses can be tangible, such as money or territory, or they can be symbolic, such as psychological status. Moreover, gains and losses do not even need to be realized. Mere threats, such as the possibility of losses, can be enough. When gains, losses, or threats become salient, group identities develop and strengthen. Groups become more unified and more likely to develop goals and grievances, which are the components of a politicized group consciousness.

Another and arguably even more important element of the context is political actors. They help articulate the content of a group identity, or what it means to be part of a group. Political actors also identify, and sometimes exaggerate or even invent, threats to a group. Political actors can then make group identities and attitudes more salient and elevate them as criteria for decision-making.

A key question about identity politics is how much it involves not only an attachment to your own group but also feelings about other groups. Identities can be "social," with direct implications for how groups relate to each other. These relationships do not have to be competitive, and thus group loyalties do not have to create hostility toward other groups. But group loyalties can and often do. Hostility can arise because groups are competing over scarce resources. It can also arise not out of any objective competition but because group leaders identify another group as a competitor or even the enemy. Both the "us" and the "them" of group politics can depend on what political leaders do and say.

A Changing America

The social science of group identity points directly to why these identities mattered in 2016. First, the context of the election was conducive. The demographics of the United States were changing. The dominant majority of the twentieth century—white Christians—was shrinking. The country was becoming more ethnically diverse and less religious. Although the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, no longer dominated the nation's consciousness, there were other terrorist attacks in the United States and elsewhere. The civil rights of African Americans were newly salient, as the Black Lives Matter movement coalesced to protest the deaths of unarmed blacks at the hands of police. Indeed, several high-profile incidents between the police and communities of color made Americans more pessimistic about race relations than they had been in decades. Moreover, there was no recession or major war, either of which tends to dominate an election-year landscape, as the Great Recession and financial crisis did in 2008 and the Iraq War did in 2004. This created more room for different issues to matter.

Another crucial part of the context: even before 2016, group identities and attitudes were

becoming more aligned with partisanship. Racial and ethnic minorities were shifting toward the Democratic Party and voting for its candidates. Meanwhile, whites' attitudes toward racial, ethnic, and religious minorities were becoming more aligned with their partisanship. People who expressed favorable attitudes toward blacks, immigrants, and Muslims were increasingly in the Democratic Party. People who expressed less favorable attitudes toward these groups were increasingly in the Republican Party.

This growing alignment of group identities and partisanship is crucial because it gives these group identities more political relevance. It helps to orient partisan competition around questions related to group identities. It gives candidates a greater incentive to appeal to group identities and attitudes—knowing that such appeals will unify their party more than divide it. It makes the "us and them" of party politics even more potent.

A Racialized Campaign

But none of this context was new in 2016. The country's growing diversity was a long-standing trend, and its mere existence did not ensure an outside role for group identities in 2016. Certainly this trend cannot itself explain differences between the 2016 election and presidential elections only four or eight years prior. Something else was necessary: the choices of the candidates. That the candidates talked so much about these issues, and disagreed so sharply, helped make these issues salient to voters.

First there was Trump himself. Trump was a real estate developer and a fixture of New York City society and its tabloids, which chronicled his marriages, affairs, and business dealings throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 2004, he became a reality television star, hosting NBC's *The Apprentice* and *Celebrity Apprentice*, in which contestants competed for positions in his businesses. It was an unusual biography for a presidential candidate. But as Trump positioned himself to run for office, he did so with a strategy that has been anything but unusual in American politics: focusing on racially charged issues.

Even before he ran for office, Trump was no stranger to racial controversies. In 1973, the

government accused him and his father, who was also a real estate developer, of refusing to rent apartments they owned to minorities and steering African Americans toward other properties where many minorities lived. The Trumps would later settle the case without admitting wrongdoing.

In 1989, there was the case of the Central Park Five: four black men and one Hispanic man who were wrongfully convicted of raping a white jogger in Central Park. Within days of the incident, Trump took out a full-page ad in New York City newspapers that declared, "BRING BACK THE DEATH PENALTY! BRING BACK THE POLICE!" The men's convictions were vacated in 2002 after another man confessed to the crime, although Trump continued to insist that the men were guilty and would do so again during the 2016 campaign.

As Trump elevated his political profile during the Obama administration, racially charged rhetoric was central. He rekindled the long-discredited claim that Obama was not a native American citizen and became a virtual spokesperson for the "birther" movement. The strategy worked: when Trump flirted with running for president in 2011, his popularity was concentrated among the sizable share of Republicans who thought that President Obama was foreign born or a Muslim or both.

Obama eventually released his long-form birth certificate, but Trump made similar insinuations throughout the 2016 campaign. This was only one of Trump's many claims during the campaign that played on racial and religious anxieties and fears and brought elements of the election-year context—undocumented immigrants, terrorism, Black Lives Matter, and others—to the fore.

Trump's tactics by themselves were not enough to make racial issues central to the campaign. Had his opponents taken the same positions as him, then voters' own views on these issues would not have helped them choose among the candidates. But for the most part Trump's opponents took different positions and condemned his controversial statements. In the Republican primary, many of Trump's Republican opponents—and many Republicans, period—broke with him when he proposed things like banning travel by Muslims to the United States.

Then, in the general election, Hillary Clinton fashioned her campaign as a direct rebuke of Trump. One part of that involved a different social identity: gender. Of course, because she was the first woman major-party nominee, Clinton's gender was already significant. But she also emphasized the historic nature of her candidacy and targeted Trump for his mistreatment of women.

Moreover, Clinton distinguished herself from Trump on issues related to race and ethnicity. She took sharply different positions on civil rights, policing, and immigration. She accused Trump of catering to white supremacists and hate groups. Ultimately, she ran as Obama's successor and the curator of the coalition that had put him in the White House—a coalition predicated on ethnic minorities, young people, and others who were relatively liberal on racial issues. Clinton did not embrace every aspect of Obama's record; indeed, on some racial issues she took more liberal positions than Obama. But her candidacy was clearly meant to cement and expand his legacy as the first African American president.

How Identity Mattered in 2016

Because Trump, Clinton, and the other candidates focused so much on issues tied to racial and ethnic identities, it is no surprise that those identities and issues mattered to voters. But how? It was not because those identities and attitudes changed much in the aggregate. In the years immediately before 2016, there was no clear secular increase or decrease in the strength of ethnic identities—with the possible exception of a modest increase in the strength of racial identity among white Americans. Similarly, there was no secular increase in prejudice against ethnic or religious minorities. The metaphor of a wave was sometimes used to describe what was happening in the United States and many European countries. This was fundamentally misleading, as the political scientist Larry Bartels argued based on European survey data, which showed no change in, for example, attitudes toward immigration between 2002 and 2015.

The better metaphor, Bartels argued, was a reservoir. Among Americans, there is a range of sentiments about ethnic and other groups. Some people strongly identify with their group and some

people do not. Some people have favorable attitudes about other groups and some people do not. It is not that these sentiments never change, or that the balance of people with different sentiments is unimportant. But the key question for elections is whether and how these sentiments actually matter for voters. In 2016, the candidates tapped into these reservoirs of opinion and helped "activate" ethnic identities and attitudes, thereby making them more strongly related to what ordinary Americans thought and how they voted.

How did the activation of identities and attitudes matter in 2016? The story begins even before the election itself (chapter 2). As the campaign got under way, much was made of Americans' "anger" and anxiety about their economic circumstances. But levels of anger and anxiety were no greater in 2016 than in recent years. In fact, economic anxiety had been decreasing, not increasing, in the eight years before 2016. What economic and political dissatisfaction did exist was powerfully shaped by political identities. With a Democrat in the White House, Republicans had much less favorable opinions about conditions in the country. But dissatisfaction also reflected racial attitudes: under Obama, white Americans' feelings about blacks became associated with many things, including whether and how they felt about the economy. "Racial anxiety" was arguably driving economic anxiety. Moreover, during Obama's presidency, there was an even stronger alignment between partisanship and identities and attitudes tied to race, ethnicity, and religion. The party coalitions were increasingly "racialized" even before the 2016 campaign began.

The upshot was not an electoral landscape heavily tilted toward the opposition Republicans, as would typically happen had economic anxiety been increasing. Instead, the landscape implied both a toss-up election and one that was ripe for racially charged divisiveness.

Then, in the Republican primary, the party was forced to confront its own divides (chapter 3). These divides had to do with racial and ethnic issues, particularly immigration. Ultimately, the party was so fractured before and during the 2016 election that party leaders could not agree on any frontrunner. This opened the door for

Trump. From the moment he entered the race, Trump garnered extraordinary media coverage, which helped propel him to the top of the polls and helped ensure that he stayed there (chapter 4). That coverage amplified his unusually vitriolic message. Although many Republican leaders believed that the party needed to moderate on issues like immigration, many Republican voters were not so sure. These voters helped propel Trump to the nomination (chapter 5). Attitudes toward African Americans, Muslims, and immigrants more strongly related to support for Trump than support for the previous Republican nominees John McCain and Mitt Romney. Moreover, support for Trump was also strongest among white Americans with racially inflected grievances. This activation of whites' own group identity was an uncommon pattern in GOP primaries—and it showed again how economic anxieties came to matter more when they were refracted through social identities. The important sentiment underlying Trump's support was not "I might lose my job" but, in essence, "People in my group are losing jobs to that other group." Instead of a pure economic anxiety, what mattered was racialized economics.

In the Democratic primary, party leaders were more unified behind Hillary Clinton than leaders have been behind any nonincumbent presidential candidate in years (chapter 6). But Clinton still faced an unexpectedly strong challenge from Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent who, while caucusing with Democrats in the Senate, stood firmly outside the party. Sanders's appeal, like Trump's, depended on extensive and often positive media coverage. Although many believed that the divide between Clinton supporters and Sanders supporters was fundamentally ideological—with Sanders supporters much more liberal—Clinton and Sanders supporters were largely in agreement on many policy issues. Similarly, Clinton and Sanders supporters were not much divided by gender, gender identity, or sexism, even though Clinton's campaign routinely emphasized the historic nature of her bid to become the first female president. More important were partisan and racial identities. Clinton's status as a longtime Democrat allowed her to build support among primary voters who themselves identified as Democrats. Similarly, Clinton's embrace of Obama and her racially

progressive message helped her build support among racial minorities and especially African Americans. The prevalence of Democrats and African Americans among primary voters propelled Clinton to the nomination.

In the general election campaign, Clinton and Trump continued to clash on issues tied to race, ethnicity, and gender (chapter 7). But now, Trump's controversial statements and behavior—and the media attention that they generated—hurt him in ways that they did not during the primary. The more news attention Trump received, the more his poll numbers dropped. Trump also seemed disadvantaged by his unorthodox campaign organization, which raised far less money than a typical presidential campaign and lagged behind Clinton's in televised advertising and field organizing. It made sense, then, that Clinton had a durable lead in the polls even though she continued to face extensive media attention to her use of a private email server as secretary of state, which in turn helped make voters' views of her on several dimensions as negative as, if not more negative than, views of Trump. Nevertheless, her controversies seemed to pale compared to Trump's. By the end of the campaign, it seemed almost impossible for Trump to win.

Then he did. To be sure, Clinton's narrow lead in the national polls was borne out in her victory in the national popular vote (chapter 8). Her victory was also in line with the growing economy and Obama's increasing approval rating. Indeed, Clinton arguably exceeded what would be expected from the candidate whose party was seeking the rare third consecutive term in the White House. These facts made it difficult to interpret the election as centering on economic anxiety or a desire for "change."

Instead, the election turned on the group identities that the candidates had activated—and these identities help explain why Trump won the Electoral College and, thus, the White House (chapter 8). First, partisan identities ensured that Trump ultimately faced little penalty within a Republican Party that had often failed to embrace his candidacy. Despite Trump's many controversies, Republican Party leaders and voters rallied to him at the end of the campaign. Indeed, Trump did

about as well among Republicans as Clinton did among Democrats.

Second, attitudes concerning race, ethnicity, and religion were more strongly related to how Americans voted in 2016 than in recent elections. By contrast, the apparent impact of economic anxiety was much smaller and not particularly distinctive compared to earlier elections. This activation of racial attitudes helped Trump more than Clinton. Despite the ongoing alignment of racial attitudes and partisanship, as of 2012 a substantial minority of white Obama voters still expressed less favorable views of immigration, undocumented immigrants, African Americans, and other minority groups. Trump's appeal to these voters helped ensure that Obama supporters in 2012 who voted for Trump in 2016 outnumbered Romney supporters who voted for Clinton. And because these voters were disproportionately represented in battleground states such as Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, they helped Trump win the Electoral College—especially when the coalition that elected Obama did not show up for Clinton in comparable numbers.

Before the election, the prevailing wisdom was that the country's growing diversity would help the Democrats continue to win the White House. Trump's victory showed that the backlash against that diversity could be a winning issue too.

What Is the Identity Crisis?

It is one thing to say that identity mattered in 2016. It is another to call it an "identity crisis." When that term was coined by the psychologist Erik Erikson, it referred to the individual's struggle, particularly in adolescence, to develop a sense of self—that is, his or her true identity. Analogous crises were the preconditions, and arguably the legacy, of this election.

There was, for instance, the ongoing identity crisis within the Republican Party—one that the party's unexpected victory in November did little to remedy. Party leaders were already divided on issues like immigration, and many of these leaders rejected Trump's inflammatory comments during the campaign. But his victory raised the question of whether the GOP would now embrace his views. Trump also called into question the party's

apparent unity on economic issues. During the primary, he took heterodox positions—expressing support for entitlement programs and raising taxes for the wealthy—and then became the Republican nominee anyway. Trump revealed that many Republican voters were not movement conservatives or even particularly ideological. This raised a deeper question about what it truly meant to be a Republican or a conservative in the era of Trump.

The Democratic Party faced its own internal debate in the months after the election. The party's ranks in Congress, state legislatures, and governors' mansions had already taken a serious hit during Obama's presidency. But many blamed this on Republican gerrymandering and believed that an ascendant Obama coalition would continue to deliver the White House. With that theory now in tatters, the party began the same soul-searching that Republicans had engaged in after 2012. A key question was whether the party needed to moderate the progressive stance on racial issues that Clinton had embraced—and thereby try to win back white voters who had voted for Obama but then Trump.

The election was also symptomatic of a broader American identity crisis. Issues like immigration, racial discrimination, and the integration of Muslims boil down to competing visions of American identity and inclusiveness. To have politics oriented around this debate—as opposed to more prosaic issues like, say, entitlement reform—makes politics "feel" angrier, precisely because debates about ethnic, racial, and national identities engender strong emotions. It is possible to have a technocratic discussion about how to calculate cost-of-living increases in Social Security payments. It is harder to have such a discussion about whether undocumented immigrants deserve a chance for permanent residency or even citizenship. It is even harder when group loyalties and attitudes are aligned with partisanship, and harder still when presidential candidates are stoking the divisions. Elections will then polarize people not only in terms of party—which is virtually inevitable—but also in terms of other group identities.

The upshot is a more divisive and explosive politics. <>

[Them: Why We Hate Each Other--and How to Heal](#) by Ben Sasse [St. Martin's Press, 9781250193681]

From the New York Times bestselling author of [The Vanishing American Adult](#), an intimate and urgent assessment of the existential crisis facing our nation.

Something is wrong. We all know it.

American life expectancy is declining for a third straight year. Birth rates are dropping. Nearly half of us think the other political party isn't just wrong; they're evil. We're the richest country in history, but we've never been more pessimistic.

What's causing the despair?

In *Them*, bestselling author and U.S. senator Ben Sasse argues that, contrary to conventional wisdom, our crisis isn't really about politics. It's that we're so lonely we can't see straight—and it bubbles out as anger.

Local communities are collapsing. Across the nation, little leagues are disappearing, Rotary clubs are dwindling, and in all likelihood, we don't know the neighbor two doors down. Work isn't what we'd hoped: less certainty, few lifelong coworkers, shallow purpose. Stable families and enduring friendships—life's fundamental pillars—are in statistical freefall.

As traditional tribes of place evaporate, we rally against common enemies so we can feel part of a team. No institutions command widespread public trust, enabling foreign intelligence agencies to use technology to pick the scabs on our toxic divisions. We're in danger of half of us believing different facts than the other half, and the digital revolution throws gas on the fire.

There's a path forward—but reversing our decline requires something radical: a rediscovery of real places and human-to-human relationships. Even as technology nudges us to become rootless, Sasse shows how only a recovery of rootedness can heal our lonely souls.

America wants you to be happy, but more urgently, America needs you to love your neighbor and

connect with your community. Fixing what's wrong with the country depends on it.

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More Politics Can't Fix This

If they ever figure out time travel, i have my list ready.

There are certain moments in history I would love to see and hear. Socrates teaching in the marketplace in Athens. Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to the door at Wittenberg. General Cornwallis surrendering to the upstart American rebels at Yorktown. Harriet Tubman whispering across the fence to a soon-to-be-freed slave for the first time. There are certain moments that changed history forever.

I'm not supposed to say that, as a historian. The job of the historian is usually to be a spoilsport. It says so right there on the back of our "Professional Historian" identification card. I'm supposed to point out that these moments are few and far between, that most of human history has been pretty ho-hum, that the odds that the times we happened to be born into are genuinely world-changing are ... slim, and that the only reason we think our times are special is because we're narcissists, every last one of us. Lots of historians are now even certain the great moments weren't all that great: Socrates was just another wise guy trying to scrape together a buck, et cetera. It's a profession of party-poopers.

But here, in this book, I'd like to propose that we really do, in fact, live during one of the most extraordinary moments in human history. We're living through a revolution that is going to utterly transform the ways we live and work. We're living through an upheaval that will arguably dwarf the disruption our nation experienced a century and a half ago, when we morphed from an agricultural society into an industrial one. We're living through an unprecedented explosion of innovation.

Just take a quick inventory of what's in your pocket: namely, a supercomputer.

At this moment, you're connected to 2 billion people worldwide through Facebook—over one-fourth of the population of the planet. Have a question for someone in Argentina? Four hundred years ago, a message from the king of Spain to his royal governors in the Americas took months to arrive. Today, it takes seconds. (In fact, the king of Spain is on Twitter: @CasaReal.)

Do you need turn-by-turn directions through Timbuktu? No problem. (And you'll need them—I've been there, and the sand is constantly in your eyes—among other places.) You can even have those directions read to you in Morgan Freeman's glorious voice. But if driving is too much of a hassle, you can just order a ride from your phone ("Phil is arriving now!"), and use real-time satellite imagery to give him tips on dodging police on your journey.

Are the in-laws driving you crazy? You can catch the seventh inning from Wrigley under the table. (Just nod politely every now and then.)

It's all there, and more, in your hand.

At the height of the Cold War, MIT had big contracts from the Department of Defense to help manage our targeting exercises to prepare for a nuclear exchange with the Soviets. The computers they created—at the time, the most sophisticated machines ever invented—were the size of a gymnasium. And they were 2 percent as useful as the average iPhone or Android. (Additional fun fact: there's more computing power in the average digital washing machine today than was used to put the first man on the moon in 1969.)

We've become accustomed to instantaneous answers and moment-to-moment connectedness. But

the digital revolution that is making it possible was unthinkable just fifty years ago.

We're the richest, most comfortable, most connected people in human history.

And yet ..,

In the midst of extraordinary prosperity, we're also living through a crisis. Our communities are collapsing, and people are feeling more isolated, adrift, and purposeless than ever before.

We're not talking much about this crisis. Nonetheless, we all have a sense that something's not right. Our marriages aren't satisfying, our kids seem hypnotized. We quietly feel that adulthood has been a disappointment. We sense that somewhere along the way, everything went off the rails.

We have a crisis in this nation, and it has nothing to do with regulatory reform or marginal tax rates. This book is not going to be about politics. (Sorry to disappoint.) It's about something deeper and more meaningful. Something a little harder to quantify but a lot more personal.

Despite the astonishing medical advances and technological leaps of recent years, average life span is in decline in America for the third year in a row. This is the first time our nation has had even a two-year drop in life expectancy since 1962—when the cause was an influenza epidemic. Normally, declines in life expectancy are due to something big like that—a war, or the return of a dormant disease.

But what's the "big thing" going on in America now? What's killing all these people?

The 2016 data point to three culprits: Alzheimer's, suicides, and unintentional injuries—a category that includes drug and alcohol—related deaths. Two years ago, 63,632 people died of overdoses. That's 11,000 more than the previous year, and it's more than the number of Americans killed during the entire twenty-year Vietnam War. It's almost twice the number killed in automobile accidents annually, which had been the leading American killer for decades. In 2016, there were 45,000 suicides, a thirty-year high—and the sobering climb shows no signs of abating: the percentage of young

people hospitalized for suicidal thoughts and actions has doubled over the past decade.'

We're killing ourselves, both on purpose and accidentally. These aren't deaths from famine, or poverty, or war.

We're literally dying of despair.

And this is not even to mention the data about how we're having less sex and making fewer babies—both of which are, across history, signs of diminished hope in the future.

It turns out that the massive economic disruption that we entered a couple of decades ago and will be navigating for decades to come is depriving us psychologically and spiritually at the same time that it's enriching us materially. The same technology that has liberated us from so much inconvenience and drudgery has also unmoored us from the things that anchor our identities. The revolution that has given tens of millions of Americans the opportunity to live like historic royalty has also outpaced our ability to figure out what community, friendships, and relationships should look like in the modern world. As reams of research now show, we're richer and better-informed and more connected—and unhappier and more isolated and less fulfilled.

There is a terrible mismatch here.

We're in crisis.

I love to run with my kids.

In a uniquely memorable half-marathon two years ago, one of my daughters, then age 12, projectile-vomited just short of mile thirteen. I don't mean she got down on a knee behind a tree; I mean she made a giant splash in the middle of a crowd. But this kid has a will of steel; I knew she wasn't dropping out that close to the end. I was proud of her as she dug deep and continued to put one foot in front of the other. But I was also scanning the road ahead for water stations. It's important to stay hydrated even if you haven't decorated your shoes, but I knew water was going to be new life for her. When we saw a table up ahead—manned by friendly people extending encouragement along with their paper cups—it was like seeing an

oasis in the desert. We knew we were among friends.

When the Lincoln (Nebraska) Marathon came around last year, my team and I set up a water station like we do every May. We like to greet and encourage the 14,000-plus Midwesterners who lace up. I enjoy the marathon vibe: people coming out of their houses with coffee in hand to cheer on the runners, neighbors high-fiving strangers as they struggle by, dogs taking advantage of the Gatorade dribbling from discarded cups in the streets, homeowners setting up lawn sprinklers to provide some relief from the heat. Although I would have preferred to be running with my kids, I admit that sometimes it's nice to be the one handing out the water rather than the one in desperate need of it.

We had an ideal spot on Sheridan Avenue, a beautiful old boulevard with tall elms and oaks lining the road. Our station was just past mile marker four, so some runners slowed down to enjoy the shade before tackling the miles ahead. I often have my kids with me as I work across the state, and my 6-year-old son was there that morning. Some of our friends had brought their kids with them as well. Our dozens of volunteers delighted in the race, and the kids delighted in the challenge of keeping the water cups filled.

Shortly before the first runners arrived, a small group of people set themselves up across the street from us. Protesters, with signs—a familiar sight for anyone in office. But this was different. As the first runners approached our water station, holding out hands for a cup, the protesters began to shriek, clutching at their throats: "It's poison! It's poison! Don't drink it! He wants you to die!"

The runners flinched. The shrieking continued, as waves and waves of runners arrived. Some ignored the scene, but many declined a water cup with a soft, uncomfortable "I'm sorry." Nothing sours the occasion like murder charges.

Thinking back on it more than a year later, that morning still leaves a bad taste in my mouth. I've now had enough nasty experiences in my nearly four years in office to develop a thick skin. I've had property vandalized and blood thrown on my office door. I've had death threats credible enough

to require police visits. I've had interview video selectively edited and then pushed on social media. A conspiracy theory circulated that I had masterminded a human trafficking network in Omaha (the rocket scientists behind that narrative failed to catch that the alleged ring began before I was born). My wife has had angry constituents show up at our front door; my kids have heard me cussed out during family meals at restaurants. But that marathon moment was uniquely painful.

These folks planned and organized to show up in the morning at a water station at an amateur race to scream at runners that they were being poisoned. Why? Because we don't see eye-to-eye on every policy issue? How do you explain that to a bunch of confused young kids?

Something is really wrong here.

But truth be told, I don't think the protesters were actually yelling like that because we have different positions on policy. Something deeper is going on.

* * *

In 2007, my wife had a fluke aneurysm, which in turn produced three strokes. For two months, there was a decent chance Melissa would die.

We'd been married twelve years, and I was in shock that my best friend and the mother of our young children might not survive. For the first couple of weeks, I sat in the hospital day and night beside her, my life frozen. I wasn't paying my bills, getting the mail, sleeping, showering enough. The list of ugly was long. I forgot that I had left my car—back on day one at the hospital—in a spot that would become part of a rush-hour lane the following morning. After tickets and towing, that mistake ended up running to about \$800. Life was suddenly too big for us, even the small stuff.

One night, I decided to get some fresh air. I went to a TGI Fridays a block from the hospital, so I could order some food that didn't come on a metal tray. I stood in the waiting area—and stood—and kept standing. The host had overlooked me, several times, and seated other parties. All I wanted was to get my name on the list, so I could eat some food and get back before the doctor returned. Yet, there I stood—alone in the dark waiting area. Ignored. Suddenly, the anger welled up.

"Excuse me," I said, my pulse humming. "Don't you see me?" Then, I proceeded to let him know how he'd mistreated me and exactly what I thought of it. This wasn't any YouTube—worthy, viral video rant—but it was still a mistake. As a kid and then in college, I had had a bunch of jobs—from stadium vending to retail to painting dilapidated houses—that required me to interact with angry folks on occasion. I'd resolved not to be one of them. I've never once sent food back in a huff with the chef. I've always felt solidarity with any TGI Fridays server, not with the jackwagon reaming him out. But ...

... there I was: the jackwagon. As the host rushed to put me on the list, I felt embarrassed. I hadn't yelled, but I'd been rude to a guy for a simple mistake. I needed to apologize to him.

This stranger wasn't my problem. My problems were the stacks of bills and the confused kids and the uncertainty. My wife might die. I felt lonely and powerless. I didn't mean to get upset—but here, finally, was a problem I could fix. I could get my name on the dang list. I could get something to go my way. For a few seconds, I had the relief of a scapegoat, someone I could blame.

* * *

One of the rewarding things about being an elected official is get-ting to meet and listen to Americans who love our country and are concerned for our future. But the most common conversation I have with patriotic Americans these days—the most common, by far—is depressing rather than uplifting. I get the question endlessly when I'm out and about in Nebraska: "Why can't you guys in D.C. just get some commonsense stuff done?" (Sometimes it's an order: "You people need to do your eff'ing job!")

When I talk with people one on one or in small groups, it becomes clear how the dysfunction in D.C. is affecting their lives: "I don't know what to plant if I don't know if there will be crop insurance this summer. You get that, right?" "Why can't you all do a commonsense infrastructure investment bill without breaking the bank? I'm a trucker, but I'd pay more gas tax for better roads and bridges." "How is it fair to kids brought here as babies—through no choice of their own—to wonder if

they're gonna get deported? And how is that complicated mess an excuse for not securing the border?" "Shouldn't my son, who's been deployed to Afghanistan three times, know what our actual plan is in a war that started seventeen years ago?" "Why do we never have a budget?" "Will the annual spending bill happen in the middle of the night on the eve of a government shutdown again this year?"

This book is not about politics—but it is at least tangentially about the question "Why can't you guys in D.C. get anything done?"

Citizens are right to be discouraged. Governing really does always seem to take a backseat to partisan screaming and point scoring. I see it up close every week, and nearly a dozen different senators (from both parties), just in recent months, have confessed to me that they wonder if we're "wasting our lives." Contrary to a popular misconception, no one runs for Senate to get rich, and the nearconstant travel away from family makes most of the thoughtful folks here wonder things like—to quote one of my colleagues—"whether this is a responsible way for a grown-ass man to spend his time."

But I notice, too, that constituents are rarely just interested in solutions; they're also interested in assigning blame. I have been regularly informed by Nebraskans that our dismal situation is the fault of Mitch McConnell ("boo!") or Elizabeth Warren ("hiss!")—or any of a dozen others, on either side of the political spectrum, whose names have taken on a sort of talismanic role: shorthand for all sorts of diabolical scheming.

Political discontent is nothing new in American history, of course. But there's something different about the way Americans view policymakers today. Answer honestly: Do you have a visceral reaction when you read any of these names: Nancy Pelosi, Paul Ryan, Harry Reid, John Boehner, Chuck Schumer? Many people do. The assumption now isn't just that folks are incompetent but that they are evil.

We really don't like each other, do we?

There's an interesting military phenomenon that applies to this political moment—and even to my

TGI Fridays outburst. In urban combat training, there is a well-documented tendency to shift our focus from a distant but important target to a less important but closer target. If you're being attacked and your threat is fifty yards away, but a closer target pops up, you'll turn your attention to the new target—even if it's less of a threat. We tend to want to knock down the easier stuff. Conversely, we want to ignore or deny challenges that are farther out or more difficult.

It seems clear that in America today, we're facing problems that feel too big for us, so we're lashing out at each other, often over less important matters. Many of us are using politics as a way to distract ourselves from the nagging sense that something bigger is wrong. Not many of us would honestly argue that if our "side" just had more political power, we'd be able to fix what ails us. Fortunately, we can avoid addressing the big problems as long as someone else—some nearer target—is standing in the way of our securing the political power even to try. It's easier to shriek at the people on the other side of the street. It's comforting to be able to pin the problems on the freaks in the pink hats or the weirdos carrying the pro-life signs.

At least our contempt unites us with other Americans who think like we do.

At least we are not like them.

I'm not sure what caused those protesters to tell marathon runners that I was feeding them poison, but I am sure it wasn't my position on the omnibus spending bill. (I was against that monstrosity, by the way.)

We're angry, and politics is filling a vacuum it was never intended to fill. Suddenly, all of America feels marginalized and ignored. We're all standing there in the dark, feeling powerless and isolated, pleading: "Don't you see me?"

Why are we so angry?

Melissa and I married just after college in 1994, and my first post-graduation job took me all over the country. Because we didn't want to be apart, and since she was eminently employable as a science teacher willing to work in rough schools, we decided to follow my gigs from place to place,

rather than hassle with constant commuting. And so, for our first decade of marriage, we bounced back and forth across the country, two nomads with frequent-renter cards at U-Haul. In just over ten years, we paid taxes in a dozen states.

However, when we started thinking about the children we hoped to bring into the world, we knew we didn't want them growing up on the move. We wanted them to grow up in a close-knit neighborhood. We wanted our kids to live where they knew people, and where they were known. We envisioned other parents helping keep an eye on them. We saw, in our mind's eye, Little League and Main Street and familiar faces in the church pews. I imagined something similar to my own childhood.

In Fremont, Nebraska, in the 1970s and 1980s parents had a sort of informal alliance—adults versus kids, the community versus chaos. While my friends and I were free to roam the whole town on bikes, we knew that lots of the adults in town had been empowered by our parents to guide and correct our behavior. Twice in the first few weeks after I learned to drive, I arrived home to find Dad ready to quiz me about choices I had made at specific intersections. Other adults in town had already phoned in my ill-advised decisions. I didn't enjoy getting caught, but there was a sense of "we." The town was in it together.

Now, ready to begin our own family, Melissa and I wanted to find a place like that. But it seemed to exist only in my memory.

At first, we wondered if we couldn't find it because we had been wandering for too long. Maybe we were like the characters in a dozen country music songs, doomed to ramble because we'd warped our souls.

But as we met with college friends who were also looking to "settle down," we discovered that they were wrestling with the same anxiety. Perhaps it was because they, too, had been transients. But then I started talking about things with high school friends, some of whom had never left our Nebraska farm town—and they offered their own troubling reports. They said that if you go to a game at our high school gym on the weekend something's different—less community, less enthusiasm.

Elementary school kids aren't packed in the stands, imagining what it'll be like when they're old enough to wear the black and gold. They're not off to the side, working on their own crossover dribble with friends. And, after 2007, if kids huddled together at all, it was just each child "parallel playing" with their own phone or iPad—"alone together," to quote social scientist Sherry Turkle.

What was going on? What had happened to the tight-knit places so many of us had called home? Had the new popularity of sports like soccer and lacrosse—and the rise of year-round sports specialization—fractured the hometown basketball and football crowds? Is our disjointed feeling caused by having too many cable television channels, so that no one watches the same shows anymore? Has social media "friendship" changed our understanding of, and attention to, real-life friendship? Do the bigger houses we live in today—more than three times as large as sixty years ago, on average—offer us comfort but also generate isolation? Has our upsized real estate contributed to the rise of messy exurban sprawl at the expense of small towns and inner cities, with their town squares and neighborhood centers? I started looking into the studies of consumerism and "overchoice."

All these factors are part of the complicated explanation, but the net result is simple: Most Americans just don't have community cohesion like we used to. We don't feel that we're connected to our neighbors in any meaningful ways. We don't feel like we're part of something bigger. No longer are parents keeping an eye out on the roving bands of kids, making sure they aren't up to no good. No longer is the town packing the stands for the game.

This isn't a nostalgia-induced lament that can be condensed to the old adage, "You can't go home again." Rather, it's an exploration of why America seems to be tearing apart at the seams. This isn't primarily about Republicans or Democrats. Most policymakers don't seem to understand what's happening—and they certainly don't have any grand answers. It has to do with the deep bonds that join people together, that give their lives richness and meaning—and the fact that those bonds are fraying.

We can't fix this with new legislation. We don't need a new program, a new department, one more election. If our 2016 presidential election was the most lurid and dismaying election of our lifetime—and it was, without a doubt, a five-alarm dumpster fire—it was still only the consequence of deeper problems, not their cause. If we could wave a magic wand and make all of the political acrimony disappear, it might bankrupt some of the cable news networks, but it wouldn't do much to fill the hole millions of Americans feel in their lives right now. Getting rid of political strife would be like whitening the yellowed teeth of a smoker. It would simply erase one characteristic of a toxic situation, camouflaging problems that go much deeper.

What we need are new habits of mind and heart. We need new practices of neighborliness. We need to get our hands dirty replenishing the soil that nourishes rooted, purposeful lives. But how?

While Melissa and I were coming to the gut-punch realization that the in-it-together community in which we wanted to raise our babies might no longer exist, I happened across an article in *Sports Illustrated* that used the beautifully bizarre compound adjective, "that hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling."

That was it.

The "hometown-gym-on-a-Friday-night feeling" was what I'd known as a kid. My dad was a football and wrestling coach, and he had keys to the basketball gym, so my buddies and I logged enough hours there that it came to feel like an extension of our homes. (When President Trump accused me in 2016 of "looking like a gym rat," my family beamed with pride. There is no higher compliment.) On Friday nights, my family would pile into the car and we'd drive down to Fremont High. The community assembled in the gym. Those game nights were the best.

Obviously, we cared whether the basketball team had a winning or losing record—but there were more important concerns. The gym was packed either way—with bankers and farmers, nurses and preachers, teachers and parents who the teachers wanted to "have a word with." There were no rich and poor there—there were only Fremont Tigers. Everyone showed up for games, not just families of

current athletes. I used to think of those bleachers as "homeroom" for the town: the place where everyone gathered, made plans, swapped news and gossip, and solidified friendships. I have faint recollections of discussions of Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, but I always had the sense that those discussions were far subordinate to the stuff that really mattered.

People walked away from political conversations without thinking ill of each other, because that kind of talk happened in the context of actual relationships centered around local things that were a lot more important.

Right now partisan tribalism is statistically higher than at any point since the Civil War. Why? It's certainly not because our political discussions are more important. It's because the local, human relationships that anchored political talk have shriveled up. Alienated from each other, and uprooted from places we can call home, we're reduced to shrieking.'

So, the first third of this book is about the collapse of the local tribes that give us true, meaningful identity—family, workplace, and neighborhood. It's about the evaporation of social capital—the reservoir of relationships that help us navigate the world—and about the precipitous decline in recent years of the institutions that Alexis de Tocqueville, nearly two hundred years ago, saw as the heart and soul of America. It's about the waning influence of the Rotary Club and the Scouts, the VFW and the local bowling league. It's about the mountain of data showing that shut-ins are getting fewer casseroles with instructions written on a notecard: Bake at 325 until brown on top!

This book is not about legislative failures in Washington, D.C. This book is about the death of Little League in River City.

The second part will gesture toward some of our cultural fights, but I'm not trying to persuade anyone about politics in this book. Rather, we'll explore how anti-tribes—of news consumption more than political activism—have cropped up to try to fill the void left by the collapse of the natural, local, embodied, healthy tribes people have traditionally known.

These anti-tribes aren't succeeding at addressing our emptiness, and they're poisoning our nation's spirit in critical ways. But lacking meaningful attachments, people are finding a perverse bond in at least sharing a common enemy.

The third and final part of the book asks what we can do about it. If America is going to survive—and that's never an assumption to be taken for granted in a republic—we will have to find a way to restore the bonds of community that give individuals a place in the world where they can enjoy the love of family and friends, express their talents, and serve others in fulfilling ways. Chapter 5 explores what it would look like to recommit to America's history of principled pluralism. We want an America with free speech, religion, press, assembly, and protest—even for those we disagree with. In spite of the endless disagreements that flow from diversity, we want to be free to build local communities where we shoulder one another's burdens in compassion and generosity. Chapter 6 looks at the habits required to live in community in a digital age that constantly promises us we can be free from real places and real people. That's a sham. If we really want to be happy, we must plant roots and tend them. That means, in large part, thinking carefully about how to get the best out of the technology that liberates us from inconveniences—without letting our devices cut us off from the richest parts of life. (As we'll see, that task is becoming especially pressing as genuinely bad actors look to exploit our problems by manipulating new technologies to further undermine our interests.) Chapter 7 wrestles with the ways our lonely generations are segregating themselves from one another—and the refusal, among many, to accept the reality of aging bodies and ultimately death. Finally, Chapter 8 suggests how we might rebuild our crumbling institutions over the coming decades. Just as institutions were rebuilt to accommodate the urbanization and industrialization that swept the country 150 years ago, so too will we need to go about rebuilding institutions of community and trust for our mobile age. We will focus here primarily on how housing might be adapted to a mobile age, but soon we will also need to ask: How might secondary and higher education lend themselves better to our new economic modes? How might we rethink midcareer

retraining as job turnover becomes more frequent and as more people become permanent freelancers? And as life expectancy increases and workers retire earlier, how will people more meaningfully benefit from productive service to friends and neighbors in their golden years?

Above all, this book is an urgent call to name the problem that's ripping us apart.

It's not taxes or tweets; it's not primarily politics or polarization; it's neither an unpredictable president nor the #Resistance that wants to impeach him. It's not a new bill or a blue-ribbon commission. The real culprit has less to do with us as a polity and everything to do with us as uprooted, wandering souls.

Our world is nudging us toward rootlessness, when only a recovery of rootedness can heal us. What's wrong with America, then, starts with one uncomfortable word.

Loneliness. <>

[Vietnam: An Epic Tragedy, 1945-1915](#) by Max Hastings [Harper, 9780062405661]

An absorbing and definitive modern history of the Vietnam War from the acclaimed New York Times bestselling author of [The Secret War](#).

Vietnam became the Western world's most divisive modern conflict, precipitating a battlefield humiliation for France in 1954, then a vastly greater one for the United States in 1975. Max Hastings has spent the past three years interviewing scores of participants on both sides, as well as researching a multitude of American and Vietnamese documents and memoirs, to create an epic narrative of an epic struggle. He portrays the set pieces of Dienbienphu, the 1968 Tet offensive, the air blitz of North Vietnam, and also much less familiar miniatures such as the bloodbath at Daido, where a US Marine battalion was almost wiped out, together with extraordinary recollections of Ho Chi Minh's warriors. Here are the vivid realities of strife amid jungle and paddies that killed two million people.

Many writers treat the war as a US tragedy, yet Hastings sees it as overwhelmingly that of the

Vietnamese people, of whom forty died for every American. US blunders and atrocities were matched by those committed by their enemies. While all the world has seen the image of a screaming, naked girl seared by napalm, it forgets countless eviscerations, beheadings, and murders carried out by the communists. The people of both former Vietnams paid a bitter price for the Northerners' victory in privation and oppression. Here is testimony from Vietcong guerrillas, Southern paratroopers, Saigon bargirls, and Hanoi students alongside that of infantrymen from South Dakota, Marines from North Carolina, and Huey pilots from Arkansas.

No past volume has blended a political and military narrative of the entire conflict with heart-stopping personal experiences, in the fashion that Max Hastings' readers know so well. The author suggests that neither side deserved to win this struggle with so many lessons for the twenty-first century about the misuse of military might to confront intractable political and cultural challenges. He marshals testimony from warlords and peasants, statesmen and soldiers, to create an extraordinary record.

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Excerpt: The struggle for Vietnam—a poor Southeast Asian country the size of California, comprising mountains, jungles, and paddies that enchant twenty-first-century tourists but were uncongenial to twentieth-century Western warriors—lasted three decades and cost between two and three million lives. In the eyes of the world, and even those of the communists' Chinese and Soviet armorers, for the first twenty years, it was a marginal affair. During its last phase, however, the war seized the imagination, roused the dismay and indeed revulsion of hundreds of millions of Western people, while destroying one US president and contributing to the downfall of a second. In the wave of youthful protest against authority that swept many countries in the Sixties, rejection of old sexual morality and an enthusiasm for the joys of marijuana and LSD became conflated with lunges against capitalism and imperialism, of which Vietnam appeared an exceptionally ugly manifestation. Moreover, many older Americans who lacked sympathy for any of those causes came to oppose the war because it was revealed as a fount of systematic deceptions by their own government, and also seemed doomed to fail.

The 1975 fall of Saigon was a humiliation for the planet's most powerful nation: peasant revolutionaries had prevailed over American will, wealth, and hardware. The silhouetted stairway up which, on the evening of April 29, fugitives ascended to a helicopter as if toward Calvary, secured a place among the symbolic images of that era. Vietnam exercised greater cultural influence upon its times than has any other conflict since 1945.

The merits of rival causes are never absolute. Even in the Second World War, the Western allied struggle against fascism was compromised by its reliance upon the tyranny of Stalin to pay most of the blood price for destroying the tyranny of Hitler. Only simpletons of the political Right and Left dare to suggest that in Vietnam either side possessed a monopoly of virtue. The authors of all the authoritative works about the conflict are American or French. More than a few of the former write as if it was their own nation's story. Yet this was predominantly an Asian tragedy, upon which a US nightmare was overlaid: around forty Vietnamese perished for every American. Although my narrative is chronological, I have not

attempted to chronicle or even mention every action, but instead to capture the spirit of Vietnam's experience through three decades. As in all my books, while relating the political and strategic tale, I also try to answer the question "What was the war like?"—for Northern sappers, Mekong Delta peasants, Huey pilots from Peoria, grunts from Sioux Falls, air defense advisers from Leningrad, Chinese railway workers, and bar girls in Saigon.

I was born in 1945. As a youthful correspondent, I lived for almost two years in America, later repeatedly visited Indochina. My understanding was so meager, my perceptions so callow, that in the text that follows I shall not allude to personal experiences, instead summarizing them here. In 1967-68 I traveled widely in the United States, first on a journalistic study fellowship and then as a reporter during the presidential election campaign. I had brief encounters with many of the major players, including Robert Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Eugene McCarthy, Barry Goldwater, Hubert Humphrey, Ronald Reagan ... and Harrison

Salisbury, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, Joan Baez.

In January 1968, I was among a group of foreign journalists who visited the White House. Seated in the Cabinet Room, we were harangued for forty minutes by President Lyndon Johnson about his commitment to Vietnam, weeks before he stunned the American people by announcing that he would not run for reelection. That morning his personality seemed no less formidable for being close to the caricature. "Some of you like blondes, some of you like redheads, and some of you maybe don't like women at all," he declared in that deadweight drawl, gesticulating constantly to emphasize his points and making broad pencil strokes on a notepad before him. "I'm here to tell you what kind I like. I'm prepared to meet Ho Chi Minh any time in a nice hotel with nice food and we can sit down and talk to settle this thing."

After making his pitch, this big man left the room abruptly, without taking questions, merely loosing a Parthian shaft at antiwar columnist Walter Lippmann. We had risen and were gathering our notes, when suddenly the president put his head around the door again. "Now, before y'all go," he said almost coyly, "I want to ask: do any of you feel any different from anything you had read or heard about me before you came?" We were stunned into inarticulacy by this glimpse of Johnson's awesome vulnerability.

In 1970, I presented a series of reports for BBC TV's 24 Hours program from Cambodia and Vietnam, then returned in the following year to do more of the same, interviewing President Nguyen Van Thieu and also visiting Laos. Among other themes of those films, I accompanied men of the US 23rd Division on a sweep in the Hiep Duc valley, flew in a Vietnamese Skyraider on a strafing mission, and reported on the battle for Firebase 6 in the Central Highlands. Later that year, in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, I shook the hand of Zhou Enlai. In 1973 and 1974, I traveled again in Vietnam, and in 1975 reported the final campaigns, including the shambles of Danang just before its fall and later from the situation around Saigon.

I intended to remain among the handful of correspondents covering the North Vietnamese takeover. On the afternoon of the final day, however, I lost my nerve, forced a path through the mob of terrified Vietnamese around the US Embassy, and scrambled over its wall with some assistance from the Marine defenders. A few hours later, I was evacuated in a Jolly Green Giant to the USS Midway. The above episodes* yielded immature journalism, but today lend personal coloring to my descriptions below of the sweat-soaked, dust-clinging, bomb-happy "boondocks," as Vietnamese, French, and American fighters knew them. In later years, I met Robert McNamara, Henry Kissinger, and other giants of the Vietnam era. Arthur Schlesinger became a friend.

All wars are different, and yet the same. A myth has grown up, in the US at least, that Vietnam inflicted unique horrors on its participants, attested in countless veterans' anguished gropings into poetry. Yet anyone who lived through Rome's Carthaginian struggles, the Thirty Years' War in Europe, Napoléon's campaign in Russia, or the 1916 Somme battles would mock the notion that Indochina offered qualitatively worse experiences. The violence that men inflicted with spears and swords and unleashed on innocents in the path of armies was as ghastly in the second century as in the twentieth. An attacker set afire by burning oil poured from the walls of a medieval city suffered as terribly as one who fell victim to napalm. Looting, rape, black markets, and casual violence toward civilians and prisoners are inseparable from all conflicts. The 1939-45 cities of Europe hosted as many girls for sale as later did Saigon—recall London's "Piccadilly commandos." In times gone by, however, little was said to folks back home about such sordid manifestations. Film footage authorized for public screening excluded images that were deemed demoralizing because explicit.

In the new revelatory mood of the Sixties, however, suddenly the world witnessed nightly on prime-time TV the excesses and uglinesses perpetrated by US and South Vietnamese forces. Among images that inflicted special injury upon American purposes were those of Saigon's police chief shooting a Vietcong prisoner during the 1968 Tet offensive

and of a screaming child running naked in her agony after falling victim to a 1972 napalm strike. Hanoi released no comparable snapshots of cadres executing indigenous opponents by burying them alive or of Vietcong being mowed down in unsuccessful assaults. It broadcast only heroic narratives, together with heartrending footage of devastation inflicted by capitalist air power. The visual contrast between the war making of a superpower, deploying diabolical technology symbolized by the B-52 bomber, and that of peasants clad in coolie hats or pith helmets, relying for mobility upon sandals and bicycles, conferred a towering propaganda advantage on the communists. In the eyes of many young Western people, Ho Chi Minh's "freedom fighters" became imbued with a romantic glow. It seems quite mistaken to suggest, as did some hawks fifty years ago, that the media lost the war for the United States, but TV and press coverage made it impossible for Westerners either to ignore the human cost or to deny the military blunderings.

Hours before I myself, aged twenty-four, flew to Saigon for the first time, I sought advice from Nicholas Tomalin, a British Sunday Times reporter. He gave me the address of the Indian bookshop on Tu Do Street that offered the best rate for changing dollars on the black market. Then he said, "Just remember—they lie, they lie, they lie." He meant the US command, of course, and he was right. Like many other Western writers then and since, however, Nick ignored the important point that Hanoi did the same. This fact does not render acceptable the deceptions perpetrated by MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) and JUSPAO (the Joint US Public Affairs Office), but it provides a context often absent from judgments upon the so-called credibility gap.

Moreover, although American and South Vietnamese spokesmen peddled fantasies, MACV seldom barred reporters from getting out there and seeing for ourselves. In a fashion unmatched in any conflict before or since, free passage was accorded on fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters to journalists and photographers, many fiercely hostile to their carrier's cause. Relative American openness, contrasted with the communist commitment to secrecy, in my view constitutes a claim upon a

fragment of moral high ground. The egregious error committed by US statesmen and commanders was not that of lying to the world but rather that of lying to themselves.

In modern Vietnam, collectivist economic policies have been largely discarded; yet the legitimacy of its autocratic government derives solely from its victory in 1975. Thus, no stain is permitted to besmirch that narrative: few survivors feel able to speak freely about what took place. This opacity has been amazingly successful in defining the terms in which Western as well as Asian writers address the war. While it is unlikely that US archives still conceal important secrets, many must be locked in Hanoi's files. Liberal America has adopted an almost masochistic attitude, which has distorted the historiography as surely as do jingoistic works by conservative revisionists. I recently asked one of the most celebrated correspondents of the war era, "If peace demonstrations had been permitted in Hanoi, how many people would have shown up?" He replied unhesitatingly: "None. The North was one hundred percent behind the struggle."

This seems heroically naïve. Most normal human beings crave escape from an experience that is inflicting grief and hardship on themselves and loved ones. Many of those in the West who opposed the war made a well-founded assessment that the US was doing something unlikely to succeed, employing grievously haphazard violence. Some then went a step further, adopting a view that if their own nation had embraced a bad cause, the other side's must be a good one. Yet the Hanoi politburo and National Liberation Front caused the South Vietnamese people merely to exchange oppression by warlords and landlords in favor of even harsher subjection to disciples of Stalin. Democracy allows voters to remove governments with which they are dissatisfied. Once Communist rule has been established, however, no further open ballot is indulged, nor has one been under Hanoi's auspices since 1954.

In conducting its war effort, the Northern politburo enjoyed significant advantages. Its principals were content to pay an awesome price in human life, secure from media or electoral embarrassments. They could suffer repeated failures on the battlefield without risking absolute defeat, because

the US had set its face against invading the North. By contrast, when the South lost once, its fate was irreversible. There are significant parallels between the Vietnamese communists' struggle and the Soviet Union's 1941-45 war effort: Stalin yoked patriotism, ideology, and compulsion in just the fashion emulated by Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan a generation later. Beyond peradventure, the communists proved more effective warriors than the soldiers of Saigon, but it seems prudent to hesitate before anointing them the good guys in this saga.

<>

[Research Handbook on Contemporary Intangible Cultural Heritage, Law and Heritage](#) edited by Charlotte Waelde, Catherine Cummings, Mathilde Pavis, Helena Enright [Edward Elgar, Publishers, 9781786434005]

This [Research Handbook](#) explores contemporary *intangible cultural heritage* (ICH) from the perspectives of both law and heritage. It questions, probes and interrogates many different aspects of contemporary ICH, including the definitions and legal frameworks designed to safeguard it. In doing so the Research Handbook highlights not only gaps and inconsistencies, but also questions the relevance, of the legal framework as it applies to ICH itself.

Each chapter is concerned with a different aspect of contemporary ICH, international treaties and the law, including the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. A diverse range of contemporary examples are explored, ranging from the local and global identity of migrant children, to language and the Berlin techno music scene. Taken collectively, and with its focus on "contemporary" culture, this Handbook is a departure from the established discourse that tends to include some forms of heritage to the exclusion of others. The authors challenge the authority of existing legal instruments, expose their limitations and propose innovative ways in which contemporary forms of ICH can be safeguarded, whether via the law or other means.

This innovative Handbook will be of great interest to academics researching the legal protection of ICH and the relationship between ICH, human rights, communities, identity and international trade.

Those with an interest in the protection of a-typical intellectual property will also find this Handbook to be a source of valuable information.

Contributors include: L. Belder, J. Blake, M. Blakely, A. Brown, J. Brown, N. Chipangura, L. Colomer, C. Cummings, Y. Donders, H. Enright, A. Figaroa, S. Harding, L. Lixinski, F. Macmillan, M. Pavis, J. Schofield, V. Vadi, J. van Donkersgoed, A. Vavaide, C. Waelde

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Introduction to the Research Handbook on Contemporary Intangible Cultural Heritage
Charlotte Waelde, Catherine Cummings, Mathilde Pavis and Helena Enright

Cultural traditions are constantly in the process of selection and reselection of certain aspects of that society and within this state of continuation, existing ones fade out and new ones are introduced during different stages of change. In the analysis of contemporary culture, the existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition — establishing new lines with the past, breaking or re-drawing existing lines — is a radical kind of contemporary change.'

There are a whole range of reasons why research handbooks come into being. One is that a particular area is considered, by publishers and academics, to be of significant, and increasing, interest to a range of readers, another is where intellectual curiosity is stimulated, an academic event convened, papers submitted, edited and published as a collection. This collection arises from a combination of those, along with serendipitous

meetings between its four co-editors. Charlotte Waelde, Catherine Cummings, Mathilde Pavis and Helena Enright came together from working on different projects. Charlotte and Mathilde worked on Invisible Difference: Disability, Dance and Law, an AHRC funded project which ran from 2013-15; Charlotte and Catherine worked on RICHES, Renewal, Integration and Change: Heritage and European Society, an EU funded project which ran from 2014-16. Mathilde and Helena met after Mathilde saw a play at the Bike Shed Theatre in Exeter called The Exeter Blitz Project about the WWII bombings on which Helena was co-writer and director. Two have law backgrounds (Charlotte and Mathilde), one is a researcher in cultural heritage (Catherine) and the other a theatre practitioner and researcher (Helena). All shared an interest in intangible cultural heritage (ICH), and in particular contemporary ICH. During 2015, they worked together to challenge experts in the law and heritage sectors with an interest in ICH to think about contemporary ICH from a range of perspectives, including the legal frameworks, human rights, sustainability, authority and trade which, along with a series of case studies, now largely form the sections in this research handbook — of which we are very proud.

When we first proposed the collection, there was some scepticism both from the heritage and law communities. The first concern was in relation to this notion of contemporary ICH: how could something that, in terms of the legal framework is passed from generation to generation and from a heritage perspective is generally thought of as being in the past, possibly be thought of as contemporary? In this respect, the phrase 'contemporary intangible cultural heritage' may seem an oxymoron: heritage is associated with the past and what is thought worth preserving from the past to be handed down to future generations. But with a growing interest in the ways in which ICH is increasingly reused to shape contemporary identity and of the important contributions made by digitisation and co-creation to our ICH, there is mounting recognition of the need to re-think what ICH actually is as the processes of creation, transmission and transformation change in the wake of contemporary cultural and institutional practice. As outlined by UNESCO, ICH is traditional,

contemporary and living, and at the same time 'intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part'.

Our view is that contemporary ICH goes beyond the objective of remembering the intangible past. Contemporary ICH is embedded in and composed of current cultural practices which may dismember past (cultural) constructs to re-member the present and future narratives, the latter with their own heritage. Our focus, therefore, in this collection is on contemporary forms of intangible cultural heritage, as contemporary ICH more generally shifts preconceived boundaries between the tangible and intangible, and the material and immaterial.

A second concern was in relation to the collection being a law and heritage exploration. As a relative newcomer to ICH, and from a legal background, the curiosity of at least one of the editors has been piqued at the reaction of some heritage experts to the place of the law in relation to ICH, as it has sometimes been negative. The suggestion has been made that this is because some heritage experts may see law as part of the authorised heritage discourse (AHD), a heritage phenomenon that is explored and critiqued by several contributors to this handbook. Whatever the reasons, this collection has been edited by both law and heritage experts, and we believe makes a significant contribution to our understanding of ICH with particular emphasis on contemporary ICH. Our contributors have risen to the challenge in thinking about the contemporary in ICH, both in how that might (and might not) fall within the legal frameworks and be portrayed in heritage practices. Both law and heritage contributors have thought about notions of 'contemporary', 'community', human rights and obligations, and of identity and multiculturalism in a changing world. The legal experts have added a richness to thinking about ICH within the legal frameworks with particular regard to the role they may play in safe-guarding contemporary ICH. Their insights are contextualised by the ICH case studies on Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet, adult Third Culture Kids and their use of ICH, Ziwa and Matendera National Monuments in Eastern Zimbabwe and the

Banda Islands of Indonesia that, together, bring life to this collection.

As with all collections, it differs in some ways from what we originally envisaged. Because of the centrality of 'values' (broadly stated) in ICH, we wanted to include in-depth consideration not only of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003 Convention) but also of the Council of Europe's 2005 Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention). While some of our contributors have referenced the Faro Convention, these are in the minority. We argue that this illustrates how much work is yet to be done on this particular Convention to enable us to understand its place and importance in the heritage ecosystem. We had also envisaged one legal expert and one heritage expert responding to each of the sections that make up the framework of the book, and to each other. While we have not fully achieved that goal, and will return to it in our future planning, we think that the structure of the collection as it stands works really well.

These matters aside, the richness of the collection soon becomes apparent as does the contribution that it makes to our knowledge of contemporary ICH, law, and the multifaceted intersections between the two.

Converging Concerns and Discussions

Since the 2003 Convention, ICH has been in a state of flux and its safeguarding has raised many questions and challenges such as what constitutes ICH and how can it be safeguarded. ICH is intrinsically linked to the legal framework designed to safeguard it, but this has also expanded at a rapid pace and that adds not only to the complexity but also to the rationale for this research handbook.

This book challenges current thinking around contemporary ICH and the law. It questions, probes and interrogates many different aspects of contemporary ICH, including definitions, the AHD, and the legal frameworks designed to safeguard it. In doing so it highlights not only the gaps and inconsistencies, but also the relevance of the legal framework itself: do contemporary forms of ICH

need safeguarding? Are the legal instruments designed to safeguard ICH relevant for contemporary forms of ICH? Can ICH continue to exist and be transmitted to future generations without the authority of the law and international treaties?

Each chapter is concerned with an aspect of contemporary ICH, international treaties and the law. Taken collectively, this book is a departure from the AHD that works to include some forms of culture to the exclusion of others. It challenges and destabilises the authority of existing legal instruments, exposes their limitations and proposes that there are other innovative ways in which contemporary forms of ICH can be safeguarded, whether within the law or outside of it.

A number of themes emerge from the collection: identity; authority; human rights; youth culture; subculture; agency; empowerment; cultural appropriation; community participation; counter-culture; tradition; cultural diversity; globalisation; language; cultural creativity; sustainability; transnationalism and global migration; and ICH as a form of political resistance to legal and cultural authority. The dichotomy between tangible and intangible is discussed and the notion of tradition is questioned to allow for new forms of contemporary ICH and the concomitant complexities of contemporary ICH. The examples of contemporary ICH in this volume are not colourful, exotic and imaginary romanticised western perceptions of ICH, rather they are grounded in the everyday reality of the people and communities that have identified, practice and value the ICH.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, concerns regarding the definition of ICH, and of contemporary ICH within it, have surfaced under the pen of both heritage and law specialists. The contributions by Colomer, van Donkersgoed and Brown, Schofield, and also Pavis reveal, in different ways, that determining what is included or not, and what ought to be, is not a straightforward task. Both legal and heritage experts have also raised the question of how to best represent communities in the process of electing expressions of ICH worthy of safeguarding, as well as in the safeguarding processes. This is considered from different perspectives in the chapters by Lixinski, Blakely,

Blake, Colomer, Vaivade, Cummings, Belder and Figaroa, as well as Chipangura.

Another finding of this collection is the clash of paradigms in the way different fields create or represent knowledge, and in the ways in which they operate as between heritage and law. Their language, scales, values and priorities often differ and sometimes collide. Macmillan, Donders, Belder and Pavis all reflect upon the extent to which current legal frameworks, specifically, but not exclusively, dedicated to heritage protection, are ill-suited to cater for the concerns expressed by communities or the heritage sector. Indeed, most heritage legal frameworks suffer from the AHD (Lixinski, Macmillan, Blake); human rights are difficult to enforce by non-state actors and have only gained cultural traction fairly recently (Donders, Waelde); administrative law offers limited parameters within which to make a claim against traditions which offend contemporary society (Belder); intellectual property laws have mainly been designed to promote the commercialisation of cultural goods or practices rather than their preservation or safeguarding (Macmillan, Pavis); and so the list continues. But this 'clash of cultures' is not exclusive to law and heritage. It applies to other sectors understood more broadly and is reflected in their policies and/or modes of operations. This is notably the case between the world of heritage and that of trade as outlined by Macmillan, and detailed by Vadi in the context of WTO regulations. Policies concerning sustainable development and cultural diversity also show a lack of consideration in practice for ICH safeguarding agendas, according to Brown.

Finally, a theme permeating this collection is how it reveals the courtroom as a forum for claims of ICH protection or safeguarding, or put more bluntly, for claims of control. Lixinski, Vaivade, Blake, Blakely, Donders, Harding and Waelde all discuss ways in which the law in heritage regulation, human rights or intellectual property, may prop up claims of control over expressions of ICH, contemporary or not. What these contributions imply, and what also comes through in the respective contributions by Belder and Pavis, is that a number of claims are made on the basis of laws unrelated to heritage

protection or safeguarding. This means that decisions are handed down by judges on questions of how, say, administrative or intellectual property laws impact on the way individuals and communities are allowed to engage with, and safeguard, expressions of ICH. For this reason, it is argued that general courtrooms may, and arguably have already become, a forum for ICH safeguarding or control. Consequently, it is judges who are in the position to play the part of community representatives by ruling on claims brought before them, and decide how, when, where and who is allowed to perform ICH whenever human rights, intellectual property law or administrative law, are at stake.

However, there is little evidence that the ICH dimension of the dispute is taken explicitly into consideration and it seems that very little critical scrutiny has been paid to the role that the other laws play in this regard. This may be because a conversation is needed between experts in heritage and law for each to understand what is actually happening in this space. And this underscores the timeliness of this collection which helps to make these developments apparent.

Chapter by Chapter

The collection starts with a section on the framework of ICH in which the first contribution is from Lucas Lixinski on 'Regional and international treaties on intangible cultural heritage: between tradition and contemporary culture'. Lixinski discusses both the 2003 Convention and the Faro Convention and their inter-relationships. Lixinski is particularly concerned with the role of regionalism in safeguarding ICH, but argues that while contemporary ICH may not fall within the 2003 Convention at least in part due to the requirement of inter-generationality, while the Faro Convention defines heritage relationally, and seeks to create a heritage community separate from experts. Ultimately Lixinski concludes that there is a strong pull to the past, which makes it challenging to recognise the contemporary except through the avenue of safeguarding practices.

Fiona Macmillan, in her chapter on 'Contemporary ICH: between community and market', considers the 2003 Convention and the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the

Diversity of Cultural Expressions and argues that with their introduction it seems that ICH could be about 'anything at all to which we might attach descriptions like "culture" or "cultural"' with the result that it becomes almost impossible to regulate. Macmillan does argue that despite the breadth of the possible definition, it should not be automatically assumed that the AHD is the best way in which to draw parameters — which would almost automatically exclude contemporary ICH. She goes on to argue that the form of legal protection that might conceivably matter for ICH, particularly in relation to some types of contemporary cultural practices, is 'protection from the exercise of private intellectual property rights over cultural production'. Finally, she highlights the agency and power of communities as being central to ICH.

Yvonne Donders introduces the theme of human rights law into the collection through an analysis of the main similarities and differences between human rights and cultural heritage treaties in 'Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and human rights through international treaties: two worlds of difference?'. The 2003 Convention is rooted in human rights language, and its Article 2 states that only ICH 'compatible with existing international human rights instruments' falls within its scope of protection. Yet, as Donders shows, the relationship between the treaties is a tricky one — as Donders states, 'their protection may not always run parallel but seems to operate in two different worlds'. Human rights treaties are normative treaties, which include mutual rights and obligations between states parties and obligations on states to respect and protect rights for individuals and communities within their jurisdiction. Cultural heritage treaties on the other hand 'have a more contractual character as horizontal agreements between states parties. In particular, they do not create substantive rights for individuals and communities and are strongly linked with sovereignty and territory. Donders does however argue that the legal difference should not lead 'to the protection of human rights and cultural heritage drifting apart' and should try to link the different obligations in the fields of human rights and cultural heritage — something that they may try to do as

hinted at in the reports from states on the implementation of UNESCO Conventions.

Sarah Harding, in 'Contemporary ICH and the right to exclude', starts her chapter referring to Lionel Schriver, and goes on to explore the (mis)appropriation of cultural heritage. While she is of the view that appropriation of ICH can amount to cultural destruction she makes the argument that not all uses of ICH should be considered appropriation as not only is it not clear what interests are being served by such an approach, but it also has the potential to stifle cross-cultural communication — a finding that is particularly important in the context of contemporary forms of ICH as reworked by new generations. Indeed, she argues that employing a legal system as a defender of rights may be counterproductive.

Abbe Brown opens the second main section of the collection dedicated to debates within contemporary ICH. In her chapter entitled, 'ICH, cultural diversity and sustainable development', Brown explores the questions of cultural diversity and sustainable development policies as they impact on expressions of ICH. Brown notes a positive trend to perceive sustainable development in a holistic manner so as to include culture, and more specifically diversity in culture, which may have implications on our efforts to safeguard ICH. Yet, Brown argues that these collaborative sentiments are yet to be translated into concrete plans in the form of policies or regulatory mechanisms. However, her chapter also evidences a lack of clarity on exactly how sustainable development policies on the one hand and ICH safeguarding plans on the other interconnect. This suggests that these two 'strands' continue to be developed in silos, without dialogues between the relevant sectors and/or policy-makers. Brown comes to the conclusion that a shift in thinking about sustainable development, cultural diversity and ICH safeguarding which merge strategies to tackle these three concerns is necessary for a meaningful change in practice to occur.

In 'ICH and human rights: ICH, contemporary culture and human rights', Charlotte Waelde picks up on the theme of human rights introduced by Donders in the first section of the collection. Waelde envisages the extent to which the UK's refusal to sign the

2003 Convention may breach individuals' and communities' cultural human rights. She argues that the UK's failure to ensure the safeguarding of ICH could amount to a human rights violation, but her analysis stresses that the UK may safeguard ICH through other means rather than enforcing the 2003 Convention. This poses the question whether other existing frameworks protecting cultural life and cultural heritage, that the UK is party to, could be regarded as a suitable alternative and effective enough to satisfy the standards set by human rights.

The contributions to this collection by Anita Vaivade and Laia Colomer examine the sensitive question of identity in the context of expressions of ICH. Anita Vaivade's chapter titled 'ICH as a source of identity: international law and deontology' tackles the question from a legal perspective. Her chapter addresses the importance of cultural heritage as being of crucial value for individuals and communities in relation to their cultural identity, a connection that has become a substantial precondition for heritage identification and an argument for its protection. She highlights the omission of reference to identity in most of the major global international conventions in the field of cultural heritage. In a concern for cultural identities and their protection she stresses the importance of developments in human rights law for the protection of rights to cultural heritage and rights to cultural identity.

Laia Colomer's chapter 'ICH and identity: the use of ICH among global multicultural citizens' engages with the connection between uses of ICH and identity in the context of multicultural children who experienced various cultures growing up, none of which they fully feel they belong to. In this regard, Colomer's discussion accentuates the fragility of both ICH and identity in environments which are increasingly globalised. Her case study explores the meaning of the notion of 'transmission from generation to generation' provided by the 2003 Convention, in a world of global nomads who grow up in different cultures. Colomer's conclusion stresses that identity or the sense of belonging which may define a community cannot be standardised in a linear or predictable fashion. Instead, it is a highly individual experience, despite the homogenous

nature of the socioeconomic profile of these children.

Authority is the next theme explored by two contributors to this collection. John Schofield envisages the interaction between ICH and notions of authority by looking at musical night-life. This he calls 'heritage after dark' as a shorthand to refer to a range of cultural practices such as the Berlin techno music scene or the small music venue circuits in the UK known as the 'Toilet Circuit'. While Schofield reaffirms in his chapter that contemporary ICH does exist, and is indeed alive and well even in developed countries like the UK (joining Waelde and Pavis on this point), he questions the validity or suitability of frameworks such as the one provided by the 2003

and Faro Conventions in safeguarding forms of 'heritage after dark'. The dogmatic approach of a one-size-fits-all model, and the necessity for ICH to be recognised by a community and passed down from generation to generation appears antithetic to the forms of ICH he reviews in his piece. For this reason, Schofield concludes that this type of ICH may, after all, be better off without being included within generic ICH safeguarding policies. Instead, Schofield suggests that tailored 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) measures may be a better fit for the 'heritage after dark'.

In turn, Megan Blakely explores the notion of authority in relation to the Welsh language, in 'ICH and authority: the Welsh language and statutory change'. Blakely investigates the extent to which expressions of ICH, as the expression of a group's identity, has been utilised by authority to exert political power over a minority group. In her case study, Blakely posits that the Welsh language should be regarded as an expression of ICH which has been controlled for political ends under English domination.

Last but not least, three chapters are dedicated to the notion of 'safeguarding' to explore the wide-ranging debates this concept has triggered in heritage and legal communities. First to tackle this question is Janet Blake in her chapter 'ICH and safeguarding: legal dimensions of safeguarding the ICH of non-dominant and counter-culture social groups'. Blake's chapter reports her insight on the

political uses the safeguarding opportunities provided by the 2003 Convention have enabled. More specifically, Blake stresses the extent to which ICH safeguarding tools may be, and have been, 'high jacked' by a dominant community to silence minority voices, or erase their representation within a society's culture. Blake's piece draws attention to the underground river of social and political motivations which may fuel the decision to safeguard or not to safeguard, a concern which is raised by a number of contributors to this collection, including Lixinski, Donders, Vaivade and Blakely.

Catherine Cummings raises yet another range of questions arising from the notion of 'safeguarding' from a heritage perspective. One of the most important aspects of the 2003 Convention is the implementation of it through the safeguarding of ICH, and this is addressed in her chapter, 'ICH and safeguarding: museums and contemporary ICH (let the objects out of their cases and make them sing)'. She discusses how the 2003 Convention resonates with other organisations that specifically promote and regulate professional museum practice both in their aims to implement and safeguard contemporary ICH by states that have ratified the 2003 Convention and those that have not, such as the UK. New museum practices, based on communities, inclusion and participation reflect those recommended in the 2003 Convention and museums are therefore ideal arenas in which to safeguard contemporary ICH and implement the 2003 Convention. She includes examples of contemporary ICH, such as graffiti that sit outside the AHD, that are not listed or safeguarded by legal instruments, but continue to flourish due to being identified by communities that value it, practice it and define their identity through it. The dichotomy between tangible and intangible are discussed and she argues that these terms are interdependent, supplementary and permeable.

In the last chapter of this sub-section dedicated to the meanings of 'safeguarding', Mathilde Pavis envisages the possibility of framing copyright as another ICH safeguarding tool, alongside the 2003 Convention. Pavis turns to copyright as an alternative to the 2003 Convention which appears to be ill-suited to protect the most contemporary forms of performances for they may fail the

requirement of generational transmission imposed by the international treaty (Art. 2(1)). Copyright on the other hand does not and, as such, offers possibilities on this point. However, Pavis's analysis of various national copyright laws (UK, US, Australia and France) reveals that copyright may be prone to patterns of AHD. This finding corroborates the reluctance or scepticism of heritage specialists, practitioners or scholars, to engage with the discipline of law. Nevertheless, Pavis concludes that the heritage discourse of copyright is not inherently 'authorised' and argues that judges and practitioners can, with adequate critical support, steer the framework of copyright away from AHD so that copyright can achieve its potential as complement to the 2003 Convention.

The last section of this collection focuses on the various ways in which ICH finds contemporary uses. Four contributors each offer a case study from different regions of the world. Each bring a practical perspective on concerns raised by previous authors in this collection.

Lucky Belder and Aydan Figaroa put forward the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas as a form of contemporary ICH in 'Living cultural heritage in the Netherlands: the debate on the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas'. They examine the controversies that the Sinterklaas tradition has triggered in the Dutch community for the racial stereotypes it conveys, notably through the figure of 'Black Pete'. The authors retrace the ways in which different representatives of various communities within Dutch society expressed diverging views on how the Sinterklaas tradition ought to be, or not to be, performed. One of the fora for such claims was the courtroom. Belder and Figaroa's account of the disputes reveals how unsuited existing legal processes, based here on administrative law and human rights, may serve as a platform for such purposes. Belder and Figaroa's conversation sits at the crossroads of discussions held by Blake in relation to majority/minority dynamics and offensive forms of ICH, Donders and Harding in relation to human rights as well as Vaivade for her comments on identity-based claims in law.

Moving to the Banda Islands of Indonesia, Joëlla van Donkersgoed and Jessica Brown's chapter reasserts the diversity of ICH as they stress the

necessity for landscape and seascape to be framed as an integral part of ICH. In 'ICH as the prime asset of a cultural landscape and seascape: A case study of the Banda Islands, Indonesia', van Donkersgoed and Brown document the historical and cultural dimension of the oral history of singing and rowing in the natural sites of the Banda Islands. In their view, the Banda islands should be classed as a 'mixed' site, deserving of international protection for both its natural cultural dimension. This example sheds light on yet another difficulty in seeking protection under international treaties, one which arises from community representation but, more simply, from the many kinds of listing and forms of international protection available.

In 'Cultural heritage sites and contemporary uses: finding a balance between monumentality and intangibility in Eastern Zimbabwe', Njabulo Chipangura discusses the attempts at preserving the cultural practices at Ziwa and Matendera National monuments in Eastern Zimbabwe by the local communities. In this chapter, Chipangura argues that, historically, protection measures have tended to marginalise the voice of the communities in favour of the views of experts, an approach which is reminiscent of approaches consistent with the AHD. Chipangura's chapter illustrates in concrete terms how a community's practice of its own identity, traditions and/or ICH has been disrupted by dominant, and in this case colonial, management practices following a pattern of AHD. Chipangura also notes a lack of representation and involvement of the community attached to the sites of heritage being managed in early stages of preservation policies. The chapter describes the extent to which management practices evolved to later involve the local community while being driven by a rationale of economic sustainability.

Valentina Vadi's chapter on 'ICH and trade' raises an interesting paradox. While the risks brought by international trade on ICH are well-known, trade and ICH legal frameworks have failed to enter into any form of cooperation or collaboration to date. Going further, Vadi stresses the clash of culture and understanding between international ICH safeguarding mechanisms and frameworks of economic governance or trade regulation. Some of the sharpest evidence of this contrast of cultures lies

perhaps the fact that WTO procedures are entirely focused on promoting international trade and is equipped with highly effective tools/means to do so, whereas the 2003 Convention is, as Vadi describes, poor in what it achieves substantially and overly focused on cumbersome procedures to afford/grant protection. Moreover, the worlds of the WTO and the 2003 Convention operate on different scales: the first is global, the second favours localism and regionalism.

Concluding Remarks

The 2003 Convention only came into operation in 2006 — but already there are more than 175 states parties.³ That should, in and of itself, be an indication of how seriously ICH is now taken by the heritage community and regulators alike. That said, there is still much to be learnt about ICH and its parameters. The aim of this collection was to invite fresh thinking around how 'traditional' conceptions of ICH might be rethought, most particularly in response to the re-working of traditional practices in contemporary society, the multi-faceted ways in which society is re-shaping itself and how that is impacting on both traditional and 'new' ICH.

The continued absence of some players from the 2003 Convention remains a running sore. Given its recent total withdrawal from UNESCO, the US is unlikely to sign up to the Convention any time soon. But what about the UK? Why has the UK seemingly set its face against the Convention and all it stands for? While there have been some attempts at explaining why the UK has not signed up, none seem sufficient. Perhaps the time has come for more strenuous and coordinated efforts to change this position. Some current initiatives have been noted in this collection including the creation of the Scottish register of ICH, and the fact that UK museums and policy-makers are more aware of the importance of ICH has also been referred to. Leaving aside the politics, establishing an English register could start to highlight the rich and varied ICH that exists here in the UK, as it would in Wales, and in Northern Ireland. Given Brexit and the economic uncertainty that the UK currently faces, perhaps a project highlighting the potential economic benefit that could flow from signing up to the 2003 Convention might help to persuade the UK Government that such a move would be beneficial. A project

undertaken by Marta Severo and Francesca Cominelli on 'Mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage in France' has revealed interesting insights into the permeation of ICH in France in the wake of the 2003 Convention. While the project does not highlight specifically economic benefits, it does identify the main actors related to ICH in France and the links among them. This is done through web mapping — tracing hyperlinks among websites that have relevance to ICH. The results, made available in the form of diagrams showing these links, are startling in their numbers and complexity.⁴ It would be a fascinating exercise to do the same for England (and the UK) and then to devise a methodology that would help us to understand the economic consequences of our absence from the Convention.

Finally, while the links between contemporary ICH, the law and international treaties continue to be debated, as Smith and Akagawa state in relation to the 2003 Convention, the consequences have yet to be fully realised.⁵ This research handbook contributes to that debate, most particularly in its challenge to encourage thinking beyond what John Schofield calls in this collection, 'the wall', the boundary between heritage and 'everything else'.⁶

[In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of George Washington and the Victory at Yorktown](#) by Nathaniel Philbrick [Viking, 9780525426769]

The thrilling story of the year that won the Revolutionary War from the New York Times bestselling author of *In the Heart of the Sea* and *Valiant Ambition*

In the fall of 1780, after five frustrating years of war, George Washington had come to realize that the only way to defeat the British Empire was with the help of the French navy. But as he had learned after two years of trying, coordinating his army's movements with those of a fleet of warships based thousands of miles away was next to impossible. And then, on September 5, 1781, the impossible happened. Recognized today as one of the most important naval engagements in the history of the world, the Battle of the Chesapeake--fought without a single American ship--made the

subsequent victory of the Americans at Yorktown a virtual inevitability.

In a narrative that moves from Washington's headquarters on the Hudson River, to the wooded hillside in North Carolina where Nathanael Greene fought Lord Cornwallis to a vicious draw, to Lafayette's brilliant series of maneuvers across Tidewater Virginia, Philbrick details the epic and suspenseful year through to its triumphant conclusion. A riveting and wide-ranging story, full of dramatic, unexpected turns, [In the Hurricane's Eye](#) reveals that the fate of the American Revolution depended, in the end, on Washington and the sea.

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The Land and the Sea

For five years, two armies had clashed along the edge of a vast continent. One side, the Rebels, had the advantage of the land. Even when they lost a battle, which happened more often than not, they could retire into the countryside and wait for the next chance to attack.

The other side, the Empire, had the advantage of the sea. With its fleet of powerful warships (just one of which mounted more cannons than the entire Rebel army possessed in the early years of the

war), it could attack the Rebels' seaside cities at will.

But no matter how many coastal towns the Empire might take, it did not have enough soldiers to occupy all of the Rebels' territory. And without a significant navy of their own, the Rebels could never inflict the blow that would win them their independence. The war had devolved into a stalemate, with the Empire hoping the Rebels' rickety government would soon collapse, and with the Rebels hoping for the miraculous intervention of a powerful ally.

Two years before, one of the Empire's perennial enemies, the Rival Nation, had joined the war on the Rebels' behalf. Almost immediately the Rival had sent out its own fleet of warships. But then the sea had intervened.

When France entered the American Revolutionary War in the spring of 1778, George Washington dared to hope his new ally had put victory within reach. Finally, the British navy's hold on the Atlantic Seaboard was about to be broken. If the French succeeded in establishing what Washington called "naval superiority," the enemy's army would be left open to attack from not only the land but also the sea. But after two and a half years of trying, the French had been unable to contain the British navy.

First, an inexplicably protracted Atlantic crossing prevented French admiral Comte d'Estaing from trapping the enemy's fleet in Philadelphia. Shortly after that, d'Estaing turned his attention to British-occupied New York, only to call off the attack for fear his ships would run aground at the bar across the harbor mouth. A few weeks after that, a storm off the coast of southern New England prevented d'Estaing from engaging the British in a naval battle that promised to be a glorious victory for France. Since then, a botched amphibious assault at Savannah, Georgia, had marked the only other significant action on the part of the French navy, a portion of which now lay frustratingly dormant at Newport at the southern end of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay. By the fall of 1780, amid the aftershocks of devastating defeats at Charleston and Camden in South Carolina and Benedict Arnold's treasonous attempt to surrender the fortress at West Point to the enemy, Washington

had come to wonder whether the ships of his salvation would ever appear.

For the last two years he'd been locked in an unproductive standoff with Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander in North America, in and around New York City. What fighting had occurred had been, for the most part, in the south, where British general Charles Cornwallis sought to build upon his recent victories by pushing into North Carolina. Between the northern and southern theaters of the war lay the inland sea of the Chesapeake, which had enjoyed a period of relative quiet since the early days of the conflict.

All that changed in December 1780, when Clinton sent his newest brigadier general, the traitor Benedict Arnold, to Virginia. Having already dispatched the Rhode Islander Nathanael Greene to do battle with Cornwallis in the Carolinas, Washington sent the young French nobleman whom he regarded as a surrogate son, the Marquis de Lafayette, in pursuit of Arnold.

Thus began the movement of troops that resulted nine months later in Cornwallis's entrapment at the shoreside hamlet of Yorktown, when a large fleet of French warships arrived from the Caribbean. As Washington had long since learned, coordinating his army's movements with those of a fleet of sail-powered men-of-war based two thousand miles away was virtually impossible. But in the late summer of 1781, the impossible happened.

And then, just a few days later, a fleet of British warships appeared.

The Battle of the Chesapeake has been called the most important naval engagement in the history of the world. Fought outside the entrance of the bay between French admiral Comte de Grasse's twenty-four ships of the line and a slightly smaller British fleet commanded by Rear Admiral Thomas Graves, the battle inflicted severe enough damage on the Empire's ships that Graves returned to New York for repairs. By preventing the rescue of seven thousand British and German soldiers under the command of General Cornwallis, de Grasse's victory on September 5, 1781, made Washington's subsequent triumph at Yorktown a virtual fait accompli. Peace would not be officially declared for another two years, but that does not change the

fact that a naval battle fought between the French and the British was largely responsible for the independence of the United States.

Despite its undeniable significance, the Battle of the Chesapeake plays only a minor part in most popular accounts of the war, largely because no Americans participated in it. If the sea figures at all in the story of the Revolutionary War, the focus tends to be on the heroics of John Paul Jones off England's Flamborough Head, even though that two-ship engagement had little impact on the overall direction of the conflict. Instead of concentrating on the sea, the traditional narrative of Yorktown focuses on the allied army's long overland journey south, with a special emphasis on the collaborative relationship between Washington and his French counterpart the Comte de Rochambeau. In this view, the encounter between the French and British fleets was a mere prelude to the main event. In the account that follows, I hope to put the sea where it properly belongs: at the center of the story.

As Washington understood with a perspicacity that none of his military peers could match, only the intervention of the French navy could achieve the victory the times required. Six months before the Battle of the Chesapeake, during the winter of 1781, he had urged the French to send a large fleet of warships to the Chesapeake in an attempt to trap Benedict Arnold in Portsmouth, Virginia. What was, in effect, a dress rehearsal for the Yorktown campaign is essential to understanding the evolving, complex, and sometimes acrimonious relationship between Washington and Rochambeau. As we will see, the two leaders were not the selfless military partners of American legend; each had his own jealously guarded agenda, and it was only after Washington reluctantly—and angrily—acquiesced to French demands that they began to work in concert.

Ultimately, the course of the Revolutionary War came down to America's proximity to the sea—a place of storms and headwinds that no one could control. Instead of an inevitable march to victory, Yorktown was the result of a hurried rush of seemingly random events—from a hurricane in the Caribbean, to a bloody battle amid the woods near North Carolina's Guilford Courthouse, to the

loan of 500,000 Spanish pesos from the citizens of Havana, Cuba—all of which had to occur before Cornwallis arrived at Yorktown and de Grasse sailed into the Chesapeake. That the pieces finally fell into place in September and October 1781 never ceased to amaze Washington. "I am sure," he wrote the following spring, "that there never was a people who had more reason to acknowledge a divine interposition in their affairs than those of the United States."

The victory at Yorktown was improbable at best, but it was also the result of a strategy Washington had been pursuing since the beginning of the French alliance. This is the story of how Washington's unrelenting quest for naval superiority made possible the triumph at Yorktown. It is also the story of how, in a supreme act of poetic justice, the final engagement of the war brought him back to the home he had not seen in six years. For it was here, on a river in Virginia, that he first began to learn about the wonder, power, and ultimate indifference of the sea. <>

[Aesthetic Theory, Abstract Art, and Lawrence Carroll](#) by David Carrier and Tiziana Andina [Aesthetics and Contemporary Art, Bloomsbury Academic, 9781350009561]

Boldly developing the central traditions of American modernist abstraction, Lawrence Carroll's paintings engage with a fundamental issue of aesthetic theory, the nature of the medium of painting, in highly original, frequently extraordinarily successful ways. [Aesthetic Theory, Abstract Art, and Lawrence Carroll](#) explains how he understands the medium of painting; shows what his art says about the identity of painting as an art; discusses the place of his paintings in the development of abstraction; and, finally, offers an interpretation of his art. The first monograph devoted to him, this philosophical commentary employs the resources of analytic aesthetics. Art historians trace the development of art, explaining how what came earlier yields to what comes later. Taking for granted that the artifacts they describe are artworks, art historians place them within the history of art. Philosophical art writers define art, explain why it has a history and identify its meaning. Pursuing that goal, [Aesthetic Theory, Abstract Art, and Lawrence Carroll](#) roams freely

across art history, focused at some points on the story of old master painting and sometimes on the history of modernism, but looking also to contemporary art, in order to provide the fullest possible philosophical perspective on Carroll's work.

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Excerpt: Boldly developing the central traditions of American modernist abstraction, Lawrence Carroll's paintings engage with a fundamental issue of

aesthetic theory—the nature of the medium of



Lawrence Carroll: Who has the Patience, 1997-2002. Oil on Canvas.

painting—in highly original, frequently extraordinarily successful ways. My goal is to explicate and defend this important claim. This book will explain how Carroll understands the medium of painting; show what his art says about the identity of painting as an art; discuss the place of his paintings in the development of abstraction; and, finally, offer an interpretation of his bold art. The true significance of Carroll's works for philosophical aesthetics can only be established through close analysis of specific examples—that is the premise and promise of this book.

Carroll makes objects that are patched together. He slices off sections of his paintings, which prompts us to look at the sides, the tops, and the bottoms, as well as their fronts. "In my early paintings, it was impossible to see the entire painting all at once. It was also a way to slow down the viewer, to quiet down the room". Carroll loves visual imperfection. Often his paintings are thick objects that extend some distance outward from the wall. Cutting into their surfaces is how he draws. As he says, "The edge becomes the drawing of the painting, especially when set against the other edge behind it. The edge is the way of drawing. It is the linear element in the painting". Carroll sometimes hangs

his paintings on the wall, like traditional European artworks. But he also often puts them directly on the floor, places them as low hanging shelves, or orients them vertically, with one edge attached to the wall. Some of his paintings are as large as classic abstract expressionist works. Many, however, are relatively small. He's not an installation artist, but he likes to construct temporary installations from groupings of his paintings, usually using works that he made some time ago. Identifying the elective affinities between diverse paintings and finding the best setting for groups of those works are very important for him.

This discussion of Carroll's paintings uses his own eloquent and now extensive reflections to place them within the contemporary art world. I will tell how he understands his place within the history of recent art, and how he interprets his paintings. For thirty years, he has exhibited widely in American, European, and Japanese art galleries and museums. Much collected, he has long been internationally celebrated. This, the first monograph devoted to him, however, draws upon my experience of his art, upon his own published reflections and those of his commentators, and upon our many conversations and e-mail exchanges over the past few years. And it builds upon my long experience as an art critic. The book explains why his art is important, points out its distinctive qualities and identifies its legitimate place in the history of abstract painting, and within our larger contemporary visual culture.

Carroll is a very immediate artist who thinks and paints in entirely intuitive ways. His works have no iconography and contain no hidden symbolism or obvious political content. Nor are they especially autobiographical. And although he is well traveled—he is a great frequenter of American and European museums—his art is not usually concerned to make direct allusion to prior works. (We will find some occasional exceptions to this generalization.) Nor do his abstractions convey any direct visual response to the varied cities and landscapes he is familiar with. Carroll is a great artist because his paintings provide seemingly effortlessly wide-ranging demonstrations of how an apparently limited physical format can yield a variety of results, and because he shows how the

most banal artistic materials can be the basis for art that has genuinely far-ranging spiritually expressive resources. As he has said, "My work for the last 25 years has been exploring the possibility that ideas can have another life, that nothing is truly exhausted, and that ideas can unfold in time in the hands of the artist or later in the hands of another and new meaning can form". His painting thus changes how we understand older artworks, in ways that we will explain in some detail.

The basic narrative frameworks of most books about contemporary painters are modeled on art history writing. Adapting the approaches of scholarship devoted to old master and modernist art, they describe present-day works, placing an artist or some group of artists in an historical perspective. It's natural to narrate art's history; thus, early, later, latest, that's the almost universal form of such stories whether they cover an individual artist; a particular regional visual culture; or, as in some ambitious accounts, the world's art history. This book, however, is something completely different, a philosophical analysis of Carroll's art. My account is driven by a conceptual framework, which I will develop by stages. The best way to understand his paintings, I will argue, is through philosophical analysis. Such commentary is particularly well suited to Carroll's painting, because it often poses questions about its identity as a painted artwork.

Since such philosophical art writing is a relatively unfamiliar literary genre, which develops ways of thinking that are not well known to most readers of art history, it will be helpful at the start to explain something about the form of our analysis. The body of this book focuses on Carroll's paintings. Here, however, in the Introduction I define and explain the nature of such a philosophical art writing. I do this in two stages: first I identify and describe this form of writing, which is based upon aesthetic theory, explaining how it functions and how it is organized by contrasting it to art historical writing and, also, to art criticism. Then I briefly say something about my career, because explaining how I moved from doing philosophy to writing about visual art will help motivate this account.

For the aesthetic philosopher what matters is conceptual analysis; and so, our books move from

the more basic concepts to those of subsequent significance. Thus this account will start by asking the most basic questions relating to Carroll's art: "What is art?" and then, "What is a painting?"; it will continue to consider the nature of the contemporary art world in which such questions are posed; then it goes on to discuss his place in the history of painting and, more particularly, in the development of abstraction; and, finally, it will offer an interpretation of his art. Art historians usually are concerned to trace the development of art, explaining how what came earlier yields to what comes later. Taking for granted that the artifacts they describe are artworks, art historians place them within the history of art. For many of these writers, the history of old master and modernist art can be continued into the present. We philosophical art writers have somewhat different concerns. We are preoccupied with defining art, explaining why it has a history and telling how to identify its meaning. Pursuing that goal, my study of Carroll roams freely across art history—focused at some points on the story of old master painting and, also, sometimes on the history of modernism, but often looking also to contemporary art, in order to provide the fullest possible philosophical perspective on his work.

To fully understand how the distinction between these two genres of writing, art history writing and philosophical art writing, originated, one needs to look into the sources of academic art history writing within German philosophy. Immanuel Kant (and some other German philosophers) developed very subtle accounts of the nature of art. Then, in his 1820s lectures on aesthetics, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel offered a recognizable anticipation of our present surveys of art history. And academic art history and what accompanies it, the public art museum, soon developed in Berlin and elsewhere. The story of that process, in which art from every visual culture and, starting in the early twentieth century, also contemporary art was written about and displayed in museums, has often been told. What's significant for our present purposes is understanding that this distinction between philosophical art writing and art history writing developed because there was a division of labor between writers Of abstract philosophical accounts, focused on identifying the nature of art,

and the authors of art historical commentaries, which guide the practice of art museums.

Art historians are trained to think historically. They place new works within the history of art—and understand the place of older painting within these traditions. To be an art historian, at least since the time of Giorgio Vasari (1511-74) (and his ways of thinking derive, in part, from Roman antiquity, from the writings of Pliny the Elder) and Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68) involves thinking historically. Art changes, and so the historians' goal is to understand each period in relation to its essential intrinsic nature. Frequently, then, art historians are historicists.

Philosophers however, at least philosophers in my analytic tradition, are concerned with a basically timeless mode of analysis. We are fully aware, of course, that there are changes in the culture, and also, therefore, in visual art. But we understand these developments within a basically ahistorical framework of thinking—even philosophers like Giambattista Vico, Hegel, and Arthur Danto, who are attracted by historicism, think in these ways. Danto, as we will see, understands the essence of art in a basically ahistorical way. This means that our philosophical definitions of the nature of art describe its essence without reference to temporal change. And that is what this book will do in its account of Carroll's painting. Michael Padro, whose account has influenced mine, speaks of German philosophical aesthetics as concerned "to explore particular works in the light of our conception of art—of those principles

which governed art as a whole". His analysis nicely identifies the contrast between straightforward art history writing and a philosophical analysis. In making this distinction, it's not my intention to suggest that there is a rigid distinction in kind between philosophical art writing and art history writing. Philosophical writers need to describe the history of art—and often art historians tackle philosophical concerns. What is crucial, still, for our present purposes is the real distinction in the ways that these two distinctly different forms of writing about visual art are organized.



Typically, the organization of philosophy books is conceptual—while the structure of art history writings usually is chronological. This difference reflects a real difference in the concerns of these disciplines. Philosophers critically present and analyze abstract arguments, while art historians aim to describe and interpret some body of artworks. In contrasting the usual art history writing and philosophical accounts of visual art in this way I do not mean to suggest that philosophers neglect the historical development of art. But historical analysis does not organize their entire commentary, as is the case in art history writing. Some books on aesthetic theory offer an entirely abstract account, with only occasional examples. Others, however, often intersperse examples into the discussion of theory, using particular case studies to propel forward the analysis: Hegel and Danto narrate in this fashion. And this book, too, adopts that second approach.

You can clearly see this basic difference between aesthetic theory and art history writing by comparing the tables of contents of two distinguished books in these two very different fields. Danto's *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* has these chapters:

Works of Art and Mere Things
Content and Causation
Philosophy and Art
Aesthetics and the Work of Art
Interpretation and Identification
Works of Art and Mere Representations
Metaphor, Expression, and Style (1981)

"We do not explain pictures: we explain remarks about pictures—or rather, we explain pictures only in so far as we have considered them under some verbal description or specification" (Baxandall 1985: 1). Then, after some tentative remarks about a description of Piero della Francesca's Baptism of Christ (1440-50), he adds: "Every evolved explanation of a picture includes or implies an elaborate description of that picture. There is a problem about quite what the description is of" (1985: 1). To ask one relevant question here: are we describing Piero's picture itself or its subject?

The three paintings discussed in detail in *Patterns of Intention* are this Piero; a Chardin genre scene *A Lady Taking Tea* (1735); and Picasso's *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* (1910), a cubist portrait of Picasso's dealer. These very different pictures are perfect examples for Baxandall's purposes, and also ours, for they illustrate the dramatic development of European painting over the period, from 1450 to 1910. And so, it's a real challenge to come up with a theory which plausibly describes the interpretation of all three. To mention just one obvious point, Baxandall needs to consider both Piero's visual culture, where the patrons commissioned the artwork, and Picasso's very different situation, in which it was up to the artist to set what Baxandall calls the brief, a useful verbal definition identifying the visual problems that his work solves.

It's obvious, Baxandall writes, that Piero's brief differed drastically from Picasso's: "the market was structurally different," which, speaking in our philosopher's vocabulary, is also to say that Piero and Picasso had very different concepts of art. Baxandall is not a philosopher, and so he's not dealing directly with our present concern—defining art. But to rephrase his claims in our terms, obviously Piero, Chardin, and Picasso made very different kinds of artworks. For our present purposes, however, it's most economical to begin by noting briefly the similarities between these three works of visual art, in order to contrast them with Carroll's paintings. Baxandall makes a very useful (and familiar) distinction between participants' and observers' understanding of a culture. "The participant," the person inside a culture, "understands and knows his culture with an

immediacy and spontaneity the observer does not share. He can act within the culture's standards and norms without rational self-consciousness". In a later book he usefully discussed in more detail part of this story, analyzing what might be called in our contemporary terms, the art theory which provided the basis of Chardin's visual culture.

Patterns of Intention is concerned with reconstructing the historically distant visual cultures of Piero, Chardin, and cubist-era Picasso. Our different task, writing as participants in Carroll's contemporary visual culture, is to reconstruct its standards and norms. And our starting point in that discussion is asking: What is a work of art? Baxandall describes three very different representations. We're dealing with Carroll's non-figurative paintings, artworks that pose quite different dilemmas. I certainly don't mean to suggest that Carroll, who is a very intuitive artist, was inspired or influenced by study of the bookish commentaries that we will analyze. Our aim, rather, to speak again in Baxandall's useful terms, is to articulate verbally the standards and norms of Carroll's culture. We need to find the right words to describe these abstract paintings.

Carroll's brief differs from those of Piero, Chardin, or Picasso. He is not working on commission for a public work, like Piero; nor, like Chardin or Picasso, is he painting some subject in a way that calls for his image to be matched with what it depicts. The brief of his 1980s New York art world may be spelled out thus: make a painting which shows your knowledge of the recent developments, in an original way that advances tradition. Needless to say, this brief, which in this elliptical account is hopelessly vague, was not given at the time by anyone in so many words. I am reconstructing Carroll's situation three decades after the fact. And, of course, other artists responded to this brief in quite different ways. In Chardin's culture and in Picasso's the painter was expected to create a figurative work; that constraint was taken for granted, and so didn't need to be spelled out in their brief. But in the 1980s doing figurative art was just one option.

So far as I know, Baxandall never wrote about either contemporary art or abstract painting. And that means that he didn't have to wrestle with some of our present concerns. Carroll's paintings look

very unlike the figurative works in *Patterns of Intention*, but because they all belong to the tradition of European painting, Baxandall's analysis of descriptions of art raises what are just the right questions also for our purposes. In context, Baxandall is discussing three very different pictures—a sacred painting, a secular genre scene, and a modernist radical play with the conventions of representation. Now, however, when we compare and consider the works in "Ghost House," the common features of those earlier pictures become apparent. Because Baxandall's examples all are figurative, it makes sense for him to compare looking at a picture and reading a description, and to ask: "Does or might a description of a picture reproduce the act of looking at a picture?" (Baxandall 1985: 3). One obvious reason that abstraction has always been extremely challenging to describe is that these very well-entrenched techniques of European art writers cease to be relevant, for there is no longer necessarily any distinction between the picture itself and its subject. Sean Scully offers a pithy account of the difference between figurative and abstract art, which is relevant here:

I once watched a film of Cézanne painting.... Back and forth in a triangular relationship between the painter, the subject and the painting. This Morandi did also, since [he] was painting his jars or the view.... Always in a triangle. When I paint, I look at the canvas on the wall, and I paint it. I move back and forth between my seat and the painting, in a straight line, between me and the work. The painting being the subject and the object, all in one. There is no triangle. Everything I need to make the painting is in me when I start.

Since Scully's abstractions are very much involved with art historical awareness, what follows is that he has internalized the history of modernist abstraction.

How, then, should we describe Carroll's paintings? What we seek right here at the start is an overview. Key philosophical issues will include: why they are paintings; what place they have in art's history; and how to interpret them. A full account of abstract art would need to consider Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian; and then some figures from the era of abstract expressionism: Jackson

Pollock, Eva Hesse, Lee Krasner, and Agnes Martin. Once we add, also, the near contemporaries of Carroll named in my review, it's obvious that the works by this group of abstract painters are as varied as Piero's, Chardin's, and Picasso's in his cubist moment. And so, finding some effective way of describing all of them is not easy.

Fortunately, however, we don't need to start from scratch—for there is a long tradition of art writing, which we will draw on, devoted to discussing abstraction. Baxandall's analysis places his select examples of figurative works by Piero, Chardin, and Picasso in historical context. Similarly, the best way for us to begin, I think, is to set Carroll's art in context by piecing together a general description of his sensibility. A slightly naïve description is best for our immediate purposes—it's most helpful at the start to focus on seeing how very surprising, how truly odd his paintings are. I'm always surprised that more viewers visiting art exhibitions don't consider how very strange-looking some of the best contemporary art is. When they see Carroll's paintings, most gallerygoers don't even blink. Approaching them as a child, with a child's sense of perplexity, might sometimes be a better, more instructive procedure. At least as a starting point.

"A sculptured as much as a painted figure is conceived," so David Sylvester writes in his account of Giacometti, "not as a self-contained entity but as inseparable from a spatial context". I believe that this description nicely applies also word for word to Carroll's paintings. His paintings usually, but not always, are painted the color of the canvas itself, which is neutral off-white. That color gives a significant unity to groupings of his physically diverse works, as we see in the Bologna retrospective. And that's why there is something oddly soothing about viewing his group shows. Not glamorous, his paintings don't call attention to themselves. Carroll gives impoverished materials a sense of dignity.

My account of Carroll's exhibition describes artifacts with these banal physical qualities. How very different this commentary is from Baxandall's discussion of Piero, Chardin, and the cubist Picasso! Traditional aesthetics explains why the very diverse works of Piero, Chardin, and Picasso all are

paintings. Usually that was done by focusing on the nature of visual art as representation. Moving, then, to an analysis which also would include Carroll's works, as we have just described them, is not easy. To take this point a step further, even if we had a secure understanding of why the works of Kandinsky, Malevich, and Mondrian, and also Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, and Agnes Martin, were paintings, we might still wonder about Carroll's works, which are very different from these earlier paintings.

Here, then, we face a very simple, extremely important question, seemingly too simple, or too philosophical, perhaps, to be discussed in my exhibition review. In such journalistic writing, after all, the working assumption is that what's on display in the art gallery are artworks. How, however, do we know that the artifacts that Carroll makes are paintings? One important working assumption of my review, implicit there, which deserves explicit consideration here, is the claim that the artifacts Carroll makes are artworks—and, to refine that claim in an important way, that they are paintings. Arguing about that conclusion, which requires a serious philosophical analysis, is too elaborate a task for an exhibition review. But it's a suitable starting point for this book, which is, as I have said, a study in the philosophy of art.

Typically, art history writing devoted to contemporary artists focuses narrowly on the immediate present. It's distracting and irrelevant, so we art critics are usually taught, to look too far afield for art historical precedents. Write, we are told, just about what you see on display. But for the philosopher, restricting the range of discussion in this way is unduly limiting, since satisfactory theories of the nature of art, of interpretation, and of the role of public art displays must be general. Any adequate answer to the questions "what is art?" or "how do we interpret this art?" must accommodate all art made anytime anywhere. When, however, in this book I speak of painting, I mean "European painting?" I have a great interest in art from elsewhere. Indeed, in another book I discussed other artistic traditions in considerable detail; but here, with one brief exception, the account of the essence of painting in Chapter 2, my concerns will be culturally parochial, for Carroll's

art is almost entirely a product of European visual culture.

The first four chapters of this book introduce some of the philosophical concerns which are essential for the understanding of Carroll's art. I use a series of contrasts with works by other artists to focus on the distinctive qualities of his paintings. Then, the next four chapters present Carroll's place in the history of contemporary art and offer an interpretation of his painting. The goal by the conclusion is to achieve a synthesis, demonstrating how our account of aesthetic theory brings his art into focus. Our culture has a great fascination with gossip—in part, I think, because gossip's a way to make the concerns of otherwise exotic-seeming artists accessible. Like almost all of us, they have love affairs, emotional conflicts, good and bad days, and sometimes-stormy personal lives. There is a long tradition of art writing that is concerned with gossip: you find it in Vasari and, also, in the literature of Chinese and Islamic art, as well as, of course, dominating very many commentaries on contemporary art. But the trouble with merely personal narratives is that they cannot explain what really matters—the creativity of artists and writers.

It may seem paradoxical that Carroll's completely intuitive art elicits my bookish analysis, which certainly builds upon his comments to very different effect. In fact, however, this result is not at all surprising. It's relatively easy to write academic commentary on Poussin, for many of his subjects are essentially bookish—and so need to be explained in words, especially nowadays for a contemporary audience, since we have lost touch with classical literature. But in the case of Carroll, who doesn't have such subjects, analysis needs to create a verbal equivalent to his intuitive procedures. In his essay on Chardin, Proust says:

In the same way a gynecologist might astonish a woman who has just given birth by explaining to her what had taken place in her body, by describing the physiological sequence of the act she has had the mysterious energy to carry out but of whose nature she knows nothing; acts of creation, in fact, proceed not from a knowledge of their laws but from an incomprehensible and obscure capacity

which is not made any the stronger by enlightenment.

I believe that the critic dealing with contemporary art should think in similar terms. My account, which builds closely upon Carroll's statements, is quite different from what he says. <>

[The Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#) edited by Moritz Neumüller [Routledge Art History and Visual Studies Companions, Routledge, 9781138667396]

[The Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#) is a seminal reference source for the ever-changing field of photography.

Comprising an impressive range of essays and interviews by experts and scholars from across the globe, this book examines the medium's history, its central issues and emerging trends, and its much-discussed future. The collected essays and interviews explore the current debates surrounding the photograph as object, art, document, propaganda, truth, selling tool, and universal language; the perception of photography archives as burdens, rather than treasures; the continual technological development reshaping the field; photography as a tool of representation and control, and more.

One of the most comprehensive volumes of its kind, this companion is essential reading for photographers and historians alike.

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Unencompassable Photography by James Elkins

Photography is in astonishing flux. This winter, I have two engagements with photography: to read this book and contribute whatever I can by way of a Foreword; and to take photographs of the holiday season, using two cameras. The first is a roll-over scanner, the SVP PS4100, which I pull over any surface to get a high-resolution scan. I plan on using that to take "pictures" of things like people's shirts, carpets, wallpaper, and china plates: it's a kind of photography without lenses, and without people—a postmodern way of avoiding having too many relatives in my holiday

pictures. The second camera is a Yashica Mat 124G medium-format TLR, which uses old-fashioned 120 format film. I have replaced the focus screen with a brighter one, an operation involving nearly microscopic screws and minuscule metal springs. The focus screens of those old film cameras are magical: they have an intimate, grainy look and a shallow depth of field; and on my camera, the image is reversed right to left. It's an entirely different world from the brilliant sharp digital screens most photographers now see.

This is by way of saying photography is multiple. It isn't a medium, like oil paint, and it isn't just a social practice, a curatorial problem (as in the excellent contributions by Erik Kessels and Alessandra Mauro), a market phenomenon, or a technology. Even in material culture studies, thing theory, and actor-network theory, photography is an enigma. Alison Nordström puts that well when she says "part of the way we have lived with photographs is as things we kiss, things we burn in protest, things we rip up in anger, things we write on, things we fold in half so that they fit into an envelope, things we put in albums, or in frames on a gallery wall."

Photography's unmanageable diversity is very well reflected in this [Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture](#). This is a wonderful book, with a really surprising diversity of contents. There's an essay by Roger Ballen, meditating on his desperate images, and later there's a sober report about MOOCs at MoMA. There's an essay on "kick-off images" (photos that get threads and viral streams started), and an unsettling chapter on the current state of image copyright (it turns out forgers can invoke copyright to avoid having their work analyzed). There's a wonderful chart of the cameras journalists brought to different wars, and, in another chapter, an overview of Chinese landscape photography, a subject linked to the complex field of Chinese landscape painting, which stretches from the tenth century to the present. It seems there's no limit to what counts as scholarship on photography, and that's as it should be.

Given this multiplicity it makes sense that the theory of photography is in spectacular disarray. I became aware of this when I edited the book *Photography Theory*. I expected arguments about Peirce's index, and I got some; but many of the

book's forty-odd contributors didn't have a position on photography's realism, and—what surprised me even more—they didn't have a reason for not having a position. It's not surprising that photography doesn't depend on a single theory, whether it's Peirce, Flusser, Bourdieu, or Barthes, but it is surprising that many people don't have any particular theory, and don't mind that they don't. In this book, too, theory comes and goes. Sometimes it's front and center, and other times it's as if photography needs no special conceptualization. Bernd Stiegler's opening essay takes theory seriously, but he also theorizes theory's dispersal (into a "pragmatic-praxeological orientation"), which may be itself more articulate than many practitioners and scholars require.

Along with the historian Erna Fiorentini, I've been writing a big textbook on the visual world. Our chapter on photography gave us special trouble, because it seems to us people not only think about photography, but think by means of photography. When we talked about focusing on problems, making sharp analysis, contrasting one thing against another, and framing our topics, we were talking in the languages of photography. This is a variant on an old claim made by Joel Snyder, that vision is something we picture, and the ways we picture the world are informed by photography. These sorts of Klein-bottle conundrums aren't solvable: they can only be acknowledged and articulated as well as possible.

Out of this nearly unlimited field I'll just remark on three issues, which submerge and resurface throughout this book. The three have to do with overlaps and new configurations of three fields: art history, visual culture, and art theory.

Photographs and Language

Several theorists haunt this text, especially Mitchell, Tagg, and Burgin. In different ways they have insisted on the constructed nature of photographs, on their entanglement in and dependence on language. Several essays show how unsettled people are about that legacy. Indeed, as Peter Smith says, "We may . . . wish to step back from a position of doubt," and "accept that photographs have a certain resistance . . . to theoretical translation and . . . structures of meaning," including language. That possibility has long been open in

image theory, most notably in the German tradition. A photograph, as an exemplary visual object, might not sit easily with the discourse that purports to present and support it, and that gives rise to what Jean-Luc Nancy nicely calls "a distinct oscillation": a relation that isn't captured by formulas like "imagetext" or "picture theory," but resonates with concerns voiced by Gumbrecht, Moxey, Boehm, and others. There isn't a simple answer here: in the book *On Pictures, And the Words That Fail Them*, I wrestled with the hope that images might be visible off to one side of language. Eventually I decided it was more challenging to try to understand how these battles work themselves out in academic discourse (as in the book *What is An Image?*).

One of the highlights of this book for me is the interview with Federica Chiocchetti about words and images. A longstanding fear and mistrust of images persists among writers; Chiocchetti notes Henry James's mistrust of illustrations, which he felt despite the hundred-year tradition of illustrating novels, which has been documented by Paul Edwards's *Soleil noir*. And now, despite scholars such as Jan Baetens (who is also a poet), and despite the overwhelming academic approval of Sebald's project, contemporary novelists either avoid images or use them tentatively (Jonathan Safran Foer, Jesse Ball, and Ben Lerner are among many examples). An enormous amount of work needs to be done by curators, historians, and theorists to elucidate the possibilities of writing that accompanies images. Writing with Images, my own ongoing project, is a start; I think it's important to look precisely and slowly at individual artworks and books. Another option is to create new forms: Maria Fusco did that with the *Happy Hypocrite*, and Tan Lin with his re-launch of *Seven Controlled Vocabularies*. Research into the relation of photographs and words has to include academic writing—most importantly, all of art history and visual culture studies, as in this book.

Politics

John Mraz's interesting study of the political commitment of photographers of the Mexican Revolution suggests the work that still needs to be done about unacknowledged political affiliation among contemporary photojournalists. Lars Blunck's

essay on "staged" photography draws on Rudolf Arnheim's distinctions between authenticity, correctness, and truth, which is a promising way forward beyond the impoverished discourse of the NPPA Code of Ethics. People who police honesty in photojournalism pay fastidious attention to staging and manipulation, but have nothing to say about the staged nature of photography itself.

On December 13, 2016, for example, the New York Times published a color photograph on its front page, showing a room in the Democratic National Committee headquarters. Later the paper had to apologize because the photographer admitted to removing a picture frame from a wall, because, he said, it produced glare. An article in *Petapixel*, December 15, reprinted the photojournalist's Code of Ethics, and noted that the photographer was correct to apologize. But the Code of Ethics does not capture the political commitment of such a photograph—its dour, grim lighting and largely empty space, connoting gloom over the recent Presidential election. It may be anodyne examples like this, in which there is none of the trauma Rita Leistner and Susan Sontag describe in the case of war photojournalism, that best show how the current conversation on objectivity and truth in photography remains ethically inadequate.

Visual Culture and Art History

Visual studies' interests, such as politics and the expanded field of photography outside of fine art, are sometimes combined with residual art historical and fine art values, such as the question of how "difficult" it is to take a "good or great" photograph (as Michelle Bogre says). One possible subject for photographic education—the subject of the penultimate section of this book—could therefore be the difference between the leveled playing field of visual studies, and art history's ongoing interest in fine art, media, and historical narratives.

Art history has also long been concerned with its narratives: the Gombrichian Story of Art, and, in modernism, the notion that one master narrative leads from Manet or Cézanne through to postmodernism. Gael Newton wrestles with a version of this when she asks about the assumption that there is only one world history of photography,

that "nothing originates outside of Euramerica" She associates that unitary narrative with photographic technology, which developed in a few places and was disseminated throughout the world. That is a temptation in photography studies, but a deeper reason for the assumption is the art historical insistence on a single narrative; and conversely, it hasn't been so much a "visual culture or regionalist approach" that has counteracted the single narrative, but a series of art historical studies beginning in the 1990s. A visual culture approach to this issue would be to bypass it entirely. The more that scholars become interested in the differences between national histories of photography, the more they enter into a field whose terms are provided by art historical discussions. Essays like Irina Chmyreva's "Perestroika Photography" or Susumu Shimonishi's are examples of contributions that would fit well with art historical concerns. The interview with Chris Jordan and Swaantje Güntzel on eco-activism is more a matter of visual culture: it's about politics and practice, rather than historical reception.

Visual culture's strength has been the social, experiential, gendered, and political life of ordinary images, like the family photo albums or wedding photos in Mette Sandbye's excellent contribution, Wolfgang Ullrich's essay on contemporary trends in copyright in images, Alexander Rotter's firsthand report of the auction scene, Lisa Richman's study of the reception of Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, or Erika Goyarrola's informative history and analysis of the photo booth.

This isn't to say there is some special value in keeping visual studies, art theory, and art history in distinct parts of the academy: it's to say that without a literature meditating on the intellectual genealogies of those fields, studies of photography can end up as mixtures of partly incompatible values and interpretive strategies, such as the embrace of popular media alongside an investment in fine art, or a curiosity about art theory alongside an interest in pragmatics.

Photography just gets more interesting each year: less coherently framed, more historically and materially diverse, more entangled in politics, social life, democracy epistemology, artificial

intelligence, surveillance, ethics, the market, and our everyday sense of ourselves. It is already complex well beyond what any individual observer can encompass: surely an optimal condition for a thriving intellectual field.

James Elkins Chicago, IL Why not skip introductions? Especially when it comes to compendiums, exhibition catalogues and other anthologies of seemingly unrelated texts, it might appear more practical and fun to flip through the book, back to front, have a glimpse at the index and then just start with any text of the collection. The shorter ones with promising titles and lots of illustrations are seen as accessible starting points. The next step would be to read the more complicated contributions (recognizable not only by their length, but also by long titles and lack of illustrations). It is only after being immersed in the book for a while that we might consider going back to the beginning, to have a look at the preface and introduction — which makes sense in a way, because the texts were actually written in that order. In case you have arrived at this place in this fashion, please allow me to welcome you and to put into context what you have read so far, before you continue on with your journey.

If you are a more methodical reader and have started the book from page one, you will now find what you were probably looking for: A short background information to what to expect in the following four-hundred odd pages, written by more than forty authors with diverse backgrounds from around the globe: scholars, artists, educators, curators, activists, publishers; people who work in the advertising industry and for photo agencies, auction houses, and archives; museum professionals and independent writers, collectors, bloggers and computer scientists. It really is a quite colorful crowd of individuals who have followed my invitation to contribute to this compendium, with the aim of defining the current state of theory and research in this field, but also to create a foundation for future scholarship and study.

The introductory texts to each of the seven chapters of the book will follow the convention of briefly presenting the authors and the focus of their work. They also feature a sentence or two about why they have been chosen, including, where

applicable, an anecdote of how we got to know each other, or why I appreciate their work. This might be a rather unusual and overtly personal gesture, especially in the realms of Academia. However, I believe that this glimpse into the editor's kitchen will be in the interest of the methodical clarity and transparency of the work, as it helps to understand the motivations behind the selection of authors and themes. Furthermore, these elucidations will allow a better understanding of the essays, case studies, and, especially, the interviews, as they contain allusions to personal relationships and ties within the photographic community. It should also be mentioned that the personal links to some of the authors helped to convince them to spend their valuable time on writing or adapting a piece for this book, as many of them are not full-time researchers and had no motivation to contribute, other than to share their knowledge, and I highly appreciate their generosity.

I also want to thank those colleagues who had to decline my invitation, for various reasons (mostly lack of time, which seems to be the plague of the twenty-first century), but were kind enough to put me in touch with other professionals in the field, to cover a certain research question. One of them was Liz Wells, whose *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (2015) was also one of my main inspirations when conceiving this book, together with Elkins' *What Photography Is* (2011), and Mirzoeff's *How to See the World* (2015), to name but a few.

Mostly, I would like to thank the photographers and artists who have released their images so we can use them to illustrate the articles, particularly Chris Jordan, for letting us use a detail of his famous *Gyre* (2009) as the cover image of the book. It was thanks to Olivia Estalayo (who coordinated the image rights for this book) that we managed to convince them to help us make this publication visually more attractive.

Even if these images have not been expressly created for this book — while the articles and interviews have — the fact that we may use them for a scholarly publication, not a fancy art catalog, is a treasured privilege that has become less common nowadays (see Chapter 5.4). I will use the chapter introductions to speak about these images

and their authors briefly, where applicable and/or necessary.

The overall aim of this Companion is to provide a comprehensive survey of photography and visual culture, which addresses the main research questions in the field, such as truth value, materiality, gender, image rights, the art market and many others, but also to map out the emerging critical terrain around post photography, tactile photography, social photography (a confusing term to describe image-making for the social media). Besides introducing the fundamental topics and ideas, this collection of essays, case studies, and interviews also represents the diversity of the research field and the complexity that arises when placing photography in the visual studies context.

In other words, what this book intends to be is a seminal entry point for students and professionals in the field of photography, both theoreticians and practicing artists. Photography, as of today, finds itself in a constant dialogue with a globalized society that feeds on visual input. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that people have become more visually literate — at least, not as much as could have been expected from a society where everybody has become a producer and consumer of vast numbers of images (see Chapter 6.6).

Cultural Studies has shown us ways to analyze the photographic medium in the framework of Visual Culture: Photography as Art, as memory, as a proof of things that have been, the photograph as an object, but also as pure information, data to be mined and collected and (re)searched and stored by machines, by an Apparatus, in Vilém Flusser's sense of the word (2000:70). A tool of repression and control, a useful device in the fields of the news, the fashion and advertisement industry, tourism, but also in medicine, psychology, and in the realms of political and ecological activism. The open boundaries of the photographic medium make it unique, powerful and vulnerable. Cameras and mobile phones produce still and moving images alike; they can scan objects to be 3D-printed as photosculptures (see Chapter 4.5); they can be used in installations, projections and performances; and they appear in publications of all kinds, including websites and blogs, newspapers

and magazines, pamphlets and posters, books and Apps.

If photography is treated as a material form of (and for) cultural expression, further problems arise: How should photographs be collected, conserved, showcased, marketed, described, valued, and spoken about? Traditional views are contrasted with the new reality of an oversaturated global market, as the current situation of change has produced phenomena such as astronomic auction prices on the one side, and near-to-free stock photography on the other; a declining publishing industry, parallel to a boom of fanzines and self-published books; the digitalization of archives, in order to get rid of the physical materials, while preserving and indexing the content; and many other paradoxical developments.

To summarize, the book you hold in your hand gives an overview on the traditional way of looking at a photograph, in times of accelerated image consumerism; in a world where peripheries have become centers; access to visual information is seen as more important than property; copyleft meets copyright; the truth value of an image has become negotiable or even superfluous. It also sketches out current and future discussions and technological developments that promise to reshape the field of practice and investigation.

In this sense, the Routledge Companion to Photography and Visual Culture gives an overview of the history and future of the medium, the field of debate of photography as art, document, propaganda (including self-propagation in the form of selfies), a pure selling device, or a new universal language, with all its strengths and weaknesses.

Images, Photographs And Visual Culture

This publication is laid out in seven chapters, each of which may be read separately, although there is a certain hierarchical, or rather narrative structure. Naturally, there are points of connections between the contributions, and overlapping themes. The first chapter is maybe the most dense and hardest to digest. In exchange, the reader will be rewarded with a complete and often surprising spectrum of

the main research questions in contemporary photographic theory.

Bernd Stiegler's claim that the praxeological turn might open up "a different history of photography" and, indeed, a "Copernican Revolution of photography theory," shows the profound changes we are seeing in our field. It is—together with Parr and Badger's "revisionist" history of photography through the photobook (Chapter 6.2), Gael Newton's view from the periphery (Chapter 2.1) and Friedrich Tietjen's essay on post-post-photography (Chapter 7.5)—a true challenge for how we traditionally have told (ourselves) the story of the photographic medium. The translation of this particular piece gave us many headaches (my special thanks go to Claudi Nir for helping me in this monumental task), and some of the sentences and terminological intricacies might still reflect their origin in a German research context, which will make it a somewhat challenging text for American and British readers. However, I believe that the originality of the piece sets the right tone for the book, even if—as James Elkins has stated in his brilliant foreword—it may be "more articulate than many practitioners and scholars require."

Another key contribution to this book is Alison Nordström's elaborate analysis of the photograph as an object. I had heard her lecture on this issue more than ten years ago, at a conference in Birmingham, UK, organized by the great and much missed Rhonda Wilson. A woman with many obligations, Alison told me early in our discussions that she would not be able to write an essay, and that I should look for

someone else to step in. But how could I accept that? Alison had been involved in the thought process for this publication from the very beginning and had even helped with a preliminary list of possible contributors, some of whom have made it into the final selection of authors. Furthermore, one could hardly imagine anybody with more insight into the question of materiality of the photographic medium than she has. After many years at the George Eastman House, she is now an independent curator, and thus sees the museum from a privileged point of view that had to be included. Thus, I gambled everything on one card and asked her if we could do an interview instead of an

essay, to address the questions of photographic materiality in the framework of recent technological, social and institutional changes. Alison has been rigorous in the editing process, to ensure that all the arguments are well presented and clear, and that the resulting interview captures both the dynamism and the passion that this subject engenders.

For similar reasons, Charlotte Cotton also elected the interview format. What interested me as a starting point was the motivation behind, and conceptual context of her two seminal books *Photography as Contemporary Art* and *Photography is Magic*. I have known Charlotte since the early 2000s and have followed her work closely, including many of the exhibitions she has curated around the globe. However, I had never had the privilege of having a longer conversation with the author of the two publications that nearly all my students cite in their artist statements and final theses. I was impressed by her precise verbal expression during our Skype conversation, and even more so when I listened to the recording afterwards and realized that Charlotte's impeccable clarity allowed a direct transcription to the written page, with hardly any editing necessary. Perhaps the most surprising argument Charlotte makes is that 9/11 effected a more seminal change in the creative industries, particularly the editorial, publishing, advertising and commercial sectors of photography, than the establishment of digital technologies or the economic crash.

One of the big achievements of visual studies is the inclusion of questions of gender and identity into the discourse of art history, and it was clear that this had to be reflected in the choice of authors and subjects of this book. David Martin, whom I met at the 2016 conference of the Society for Photographic Education (SPE), seemed to be the perfect choice. He proposed to take on the task of (re)defining the Male Gaze together with Suzanne Szucs and James W. Koschoreck. The only problem was that they produced an article that was double the size of what I had asked for. So we agreed to make two pieces out of it, and the best place to break the chapter would be immediately after the discussion of Robert Mapplethorpe's work. I am

deeply grateful for their brilliant double-contribution that explores the complexities of the gaze through photography and visual culture.

If the gaze is directed at the reflecting display of a camera phone, we are confronted with a visual form of expression that has become a decisive cultural phenomenon in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the selfie. When looking for somebody to reflect on this subject, however, I saw that many authors demonized the selfie as a narcissistic and void gesture, a caricature of the traditional self-portrait, and a pitiful side-product of the democratization of photography. While I do share the opinion that for a serious student or practitioner of photography, it is important to be able to make self-portraits that go beyond the duck-face gesture, and I feel deeply disturbed when I see them taken at inappropriate places or situations such as Holocaust memorials (if you do not believe it, google Shahak Shapira's *Yolocaust* project, or the photobook hashtag by Marta Mantyka), I wanted to include a study on the phenomenon that goes beyond the common selfie-shaming discourse. Thus, I was relieved when I found out that Alise Tifentale—whom I had met years ago at the Kaunas photography festival, when she was still editor of the formidable *Foto Kvartals* magazine—had participated in a research project called *Selfiecity*, together with a team led by Lev Manovich at the City University of New York. Her essay reminds us that funeral selfies and other faux pas "do not necessarily represent the whole genre—rather they are outstanding exceptions," and presents a case study that shows us that there are significant differences among the selfies posted from different cities, suggesting preferred styles and aesthetics.

At the same SPE conference where I met David Martin, I also heard Lisa Richman's talk on the other *Migrant Mother*, a Mexican woman with her child photographed by Dorothea Lange, one year before her world-famous image of a Californian pea picker. Despite the similarity between these images in aesthetics, emotion, subject, perspective, and pose, the Mexican *Migrant Mother* has remained for the most part one of thousands of unseen images within the FSA archive. Richman claims that the radical difference in their circulation

begs the question, why the 1936 Migrant Mother became the icon while the 1935 Migrant Mother remained unknown. Further complicating the reception of this New Deal Madonna, is the fact that the human subject, Florence Thompson, is actually of Cherokee descent. However, the absence of any racial marker within the caption (and later the title) made it possible for the national US audience to identify her as European American and see in her what they wanted to see: American strength in the face of adversity.

The last contribution in this chapter is also based on the comparison of image-pairs. It starts with a personal memory of the author, which leads us to the core subject of the article, an analysis of Stefan Koppelkamm's documentation of buildings and streets in Görlitz and other places in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). He first photographed them in 1990, just after the fall of the wall, and visited the very same places again, ten years later. Always taken with the same lens, the same focal lengths and from the same position, Koppelkamm's archive of before and after pictures, according to the author, Ines Weizman, allows us to practice Walter Benjamin's "telescoping of the past through the present," a stereoscopic reading in the course of which the past can be experienced and remembered thanks to the montage of fragments of history. The issues at stake have been further developed by Ines and Eyal Weizman, in their book *Before and After*, which shows image-comparisons as a means of analysis and surveillance.

I would like to thank Stefan Koppelkamm for allowing us to showcase his Görlitz series, and Alise Tifentale for the illustrations to her study. The other two photographs in this chapter are by Dorothea Lange; one has become an icon, the other is practically unknown, even though they show nearly the same content and were taken only one year apart. These images are freely available for download on the website of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, as are many other works from the FSA/OWI Collection. I chose to show the standard, retouched version of the Migrant Mother, but want to mention that in the original version a thumb can be seen in the right foreground of the image. Lange had it retouched,

for aesthetic reasons, something that annoyed Roy Stryker, the director of the FSA's photographic unit, who insisted on the objective documentary character of the project. In this context, it is recommended to also study the contact sheet, showing the mother and children in the tent, taken at different ranges and angles, in order to understand the making of one of the most important photographic icons of the twentieth century.

Territories

The invention of photography in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only a combined (and in some cases, parallel) effort of various researchers in different countries, but also a technological strategy to satisfy previously foreseen social needs, or, as Geoffrey Batchen has put it, a widespread social imperative. It has been argued that most of the necessary elements of technological knowledge were in place well before 1839: pinhole images seem to have been used by artists for thousands of years, and the camera obscura became widely popular in Europe in the Renaissance; finally, light-sensitive chemicals such as silver nitrate were in use from at least the thirteenth century. Thus, the significant question is not so much who invented photography but rather why it became an active field of research at that particular point of time. It is hardly surprising that photography became an essential tool for scientific rationalism—a mechanical and apparently neutral representational device, used as a yardstick and as an instrument for validating theories on the performance of nature and for naturalist studies on human beings, in such an "obscure time" as the nineteenth century, as Alejandro Castellote has put it. He links this need to quantify, visualize and prove—by means of photographic techniques—with the rise of Positivism, "which affirmed modern European individuals as the it prototype of an optimum model for mankind". A positivism of rationality that had been won through argument, technology, and power.

Colonialism, war and photography have a shared history. First, because the camera can be used as a weapon—Susan Sontag reminds us that the language of military maneuver and hunting such as "load," "aim," "shoot," and "snapshot" is central to

photographic practices; and that the camera can be pointed at the other, or rather "the Other". Second, because photography objectivizes its subjects. In the form of images, the subjects can be compared, possessed, and categorized.

In the early days of the medium, reactions to the man with the camera were often skeptical and even negative, sometimes as an intuitive rejection, others on a pseudoscientific basis: Just remember the (possibly true) stories of Native Americans who refused to have their pictures taken because it would take away their spirit; or Balzac's obscure Theory of Specters, which said that all physical bodies are made up of an infinite number of layers, like skins laid one on top of the other, and every time someone had his or her photograph taken, one of these "spectral layers" would be transferred to the photograph, until nothing was left of it. In both cases, the refutation is based on the fear of being personally (in a bodily and/or spiritual way) affected by the image-making process. In a way, they anticipated the symbolic relation between photography and death laid down by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida* (1981).

Accordingly, it has become increasingly important to remember who is looking and where they are looking from (not only what they are looking at). Contemporary studies take this into account, and it is in this chapter that post-colonial practices are especially well represented.

"Other World Histories of Photography" by Gael Newton is a great example of a text that goes beyond the historiography recorded from what she calls a Euramerican point of view. While the role of London, Paris, Berlin and New York in the invention and industrialization of the medium is unquestioned, photography spread rapidly over the globe, far from the geopolitical, economic and cultural axis of the major metropolises of Europe and America. Newton, a former Senior Curator of Photography at the National Gallery of Australia, focuses on the history of photography across the Asia-Pacific region; however, her conclusions seem applicable to many regions. While the different levels of scholarship regarding Asia-Pacific photography by foreign or local scholars makes comparative studies difficult, she still succeeds in giving an overview of

the field that should attract serious study, in order to transform Western perceptions of artists who had been previously dismissed as inferior copyists of Western models.

Newton's opening statement and focus on the Asia-Pacific region is followed by three studies and an interview that treat concrete subjects in other latitudes: Latin America, the former USSR, and China. We will start the journey just south of the US border—a highly controversial demarcation line these days. Originally from the field of film-theory and media studies, John Mraz moved to Mexico more than 30 years ago, and is now considered a preeminent expert on the history of Mexican photography, and Latin American visual culture in general. When I found out—thanks to Rita Leistner—that Mraz was to come to Barcelona in 2016 as a visiting professor, we set up an initial meeting that soon led to a number of pleasant conversations on the subjects of photography, politics, the art world and academia. In one of these talks, I dared to ask him to contribute to this book and he gladly agreed, proposing a chapter on the photographic representation of the Mexican Revolution. Only a few weeks later, the piece—a brilliant summary of his writing on that subject—was ready, and he even personally took care of the image rights!

If working with John was a stroll in the park, the interview with Timothy Prus and Marcelo Brodsky was more akin to tightrope walking without a net. I had unwittingly mixed an explosive cocktail by pairing these two authors. When we had a Skype conversation, we immediately drifted off the subject (the use of photographic archives for making art) in a way that made it necessary to relocate the piece into this chapter. Second, the ostensibly vast differences between their characters—an Englishman with an anarchistic world-view who has built up an archive and publishing house like none other, versus an Argentinian photographer who had made the leap into the art world and is now an activist for visual literacy—led to controversy and heated discussions. And yet, the result of this exchange was an astonishing bridging of separate worlds, that only people with a wide intellectual horizon and a free spirit can achieve: from Korea to Colombia,

from the 1968 movement to social media, from Europe to Latin America, from physical to digital archives, from art to activism, and back again. To be honest, I was left open-mouthed during most of the conversation and some of the details in the sharp debate only became clear to me when I was transcribing them.

The next contribution is more structured and classifiable. It tells the story of Perestroika Photography, in the form of a historic analysis, from the mid-1980s to the 2000s. Irina Chmyreva is one of the major experts on the history of Russian photography, which is why she was invited, together with Evgeny Berezner, to curate the main program of Houston FotoFest 2012 on the subject. I have worked with Irina for many years, in different projects and constellations, such as the steering committee of the History of European Photography project, and the European Master of Contemporary Photography at IED Madrid (a program that I direct, and in which she teaches a workshop each year). Her encyclopedic knowledge and elegant writing have generated an easily digestible, and yet comprehensive summary of photographic movements in the vanishing USSR.

The last contribution in the Territories chapter is on the fascinating, and highly contemporary, subject of Chinese Landscape Photography. The author, Yining He, works as a curator and she was introduced to me by Beate Cegielska, who is herself a remarkable curator and generous networker. Yining is a graduate of the London College of Communication with a MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography and a regular contributor to many art and photography publications. Among many other things, Yining initiated the Go East Project, which aims at introducing contemporary Chinese photography to the West. She is uniquely able to explain the different methods of artistic practice that Chinese and Western artists use to represent the landscape in a straightforward way—take, for example, the importance of linear perspective in traditional Western landscapes, which has no equivalent in the representation of Chinese landscapes. Moreover, she uses her transcultural thinking to describe the situation of a country that is "in full swing," but also lives with the collapse of faith, disorder of value

systems, conflicts of interests, polarization of wealth, social apathy, rash impatience and so on. Accordingly, she states, "in terms of bizarreness and absurdity, there is no other country with which one could compare today's China to" Within this logic, it makes sense that Chinese photographers apply Western paradigms to create images of alienation from their own culture, turbo-capitalism and hyper-modernization in their country.

Of course, it is not easy to understand the value-systems of foreign countries and their translations into a visual language. What seems accessible at first glance becomes utterly complicated once we approach it closer, as it's impossible to judge beyond our own aesthetic tradition. The intention of this chapter is not to explain the world through photography, nor to foster a multi-cultural understanding of photography around the world. Rather, in this time of political protectionism, nationalism and segregation, I try to provide small loopholes in the walls that separate us from other (photographic) cultures. Hopefully, we will be able to tear down more walls than the politicians promise to build, and not only in a metaphorical sense.

Finally, I am very thankful to the authors of this chapter who have directly managed the image rights, in order to provide us with truly stunning pictures from the second decade of the twentieth century in Mexico; the 1980s and 1990s in Russia, including works by Olga Chernysheva, Alexey Goga, Sergey Vasiliev, Valery Shchekoldin, and Boris Mikhailov; and contemporary China, featuring images by artists such as Zhang Jin, Sui Taca, and Chen Xiaoyi.

Useful Photography

When anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss put together his collection of fieldwork photographs from the Amazon region, many years after they were taken, he was left with the impression of a void, a lack of something the lens is inherently unable to capture. Craig Campbell interprets this as a "binding condition" of photography itself. For him, photographs, no matter how real or convincingly true they might seem, "always fail" (1996: 58). In fact, Lévi-Strauss found the smell of his old journals more apt to trigger his (affective) memory, and to bring him back to

the savannas and forests of Central Brazil, inseparably bound with other smells — human, animal or vegetable — as well as sounds and colors. For as faint as it now is, this odor — which for me is a perfume — is the thing itself, still a real part of what I have experienced.

Lévi-Strauss's surprise when confronted with the failure of photographs to have a mnemonic effect (while other sensory inputs make him remember himself as a witness, as co-present with the artifact itself at a given time and place) can be easily replicated by looking at family albums: "What? Did I seriously have that haircut?"; "Who is the man beside aunt Mary?"; "Where was this taken?", etc.

Many of the key arguments for the usefulness of photography have been dismantled by post-modern thinking; for instance, the idea of photography as a truthful, objective and disinterested medium. The advent of digital image manipulation has accelerated this process immensely, as it seems easier to understand the manipulative power of Photoshop than other tricks the camera can play on us. The fundamental factor is, of course, the context in which an image is viewed. The history of misidentifications in photo lineups and police portraiture is a good example for this argumentation.

Of course, retouching and cropping has always been an integral part of image production. It also appears, in the form of cutting and tearing, in the realm of family albums. I remember that my grandmother had to make use of her scissors to remove children who made indecent faces or gestures on the family photographs, which of course made it all the more interesting to do them. Choosing the right photographs, while throwing away those "gone wrong" is another editing effect, which can be incredibly useful, in the creation of our family-image, and our (public) self-image.

Finally, photography can be used to change the world. Despite all warnings that a photograph is not a transcendental index of truth, but a subjective interpretation of it, we still want to believe that what we see in an image is true, and thus can be moved, made conscious and even called for action. A well-known example is Napalm Girl, the picture by Associated Press photographer Nick Ut, showing a badly burned young girl running naked amid

other fleeing villagers. Once the image made it to the newsroom, John Morris had to convince his fellow New York Times editors to consider the photo for publication because of the nudity issue, but eventually they approved a cropped version. When he saw the image on the front page of the New York Times on June 11, 1972, President Nixon apparently wondered, "if that was fixed"—by which he meant "manipulated". Other interesting details: The photographer, born as Huỳnh Công Út in Vietnam, began to take photographs for the Associated Press when he was 16, just after his older brother, another AP photographer, was killed. After snapping the photograph, Ut took the girl—called Phan Thi Kim Phuc—to a hospital in Saigon, where she had numerous surgical procedures including skin grafts, before she was able to return home. Phuc was removed from her university as a young adult studying medicine and used as a propaganda symbol by the communist government of Vietnam. Later, she was granted permission to continue her studies in Cuba, where she met her future fiancé, another Vietnamese student. On the way to their honeymoon in Moscow, they left the plane during a refueling stop in Gander, Newfoundland, and asked for political asylum in Canada, where they now live. But it's not over yet: On September 9, 2016, Norway's largest newspaper published an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg after Facebook censored this photograph, which was on their Facebook page, and half of the ministers in the Norwegian government shared the photo on their own Facebook pages. Several of these posts, including the Prime Minister's, were deleted by Facebook. Nudity was again the problem—although this time it was algorithms that decided not to publish the photograph. As a reaction to the letter, Facebook reconsidered its decision and republished the posts later that day, recognizing "the history and global importance of this image in documenting a particular moment in time".

The story of this image has it all: The personal involvement of the photographer, and his Vietnamese nationality, remind us of Sophie Riestelhuber's claim that photographers should rather work in places they know and have control of, instead of going to far-away destinations to cover conflicts they don't understand. The

manipulation and making of an icon (which could be compared to the making of the very different, but also iconic image of the Migrant Mother, see Chapter 1.7), its role in the Anti-War movement, the continuing problem with nudity, but not with violence, in the media, and finally, the story of the photographic subject herself, who is now an UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. The close connection of war, images and lies is reconfirmed by another fact: After one of Phuc's speeches, Rev. John Plummer, a Vietnam veteran who claimed he took part in coordinating the air strike with the South Vietnamese Air Force, met with Phuc briefly and she publicly forgave him, but later Plummer admitted he had lied, saying he was "caught up in the emotion at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the day Phuc spoke". Maybe he was, but the real motives seem to have been the urge to be forgiven, the longing to be part of a story, and the identification with a visual representation of what cannot be expressed in words. The contributing authors to this chapter talk about these issues at stake, and many more, from war photography to activism, via advertising, family albums, architectural photography and the history of the photo booth.

The first contribution is a highly didactic yet still personal text on the relationship between photography and armed conflicts. I first met Rita Leistner at the Portfolio Reviews of the Toronto Photography Festival and was fascinated by her Palladium Prints, made from iPhone images while she was embedded in the Afghanistan War. Later she sent me her book *Looking for Marshall McLuhan in Afghanistan*—her own way of processing the current "technological turn in history," with the help of McLuhan's theories—which contained interesting references to drones and surveillance imagery. Thus, she was the logical choice when I was looking for somebody to write on War Photography, because she has not only thought about the theme, but had also been present in active war zones.

Useful Photography, the title of the chapter, is originally the name of a magazine focusing on overlooked images taken for practical purposes, co-edited by the Dutch multi-talent Erik Kessels, a publisher, artist, provocateur and co-founder of the advertisement company Kessels-Kramer. In the

following interview, which took place in fall 2016 in Barcelona, Olivia Estalayo asked him about recent developments in commercial photography, agencies, and the ethics of the advertising business. As is well known, Kessels is a keen collector of vernacular photography and the curator of the widely acclaimed exhibition *Album Beauty*, so it is no surprise that Mette Sandbye mentions his work in her article on the Family Album. Sandbye has researched and published extensively on these themes, and thus was the obvious choice to write on this "understudied part of visual culture." She also excels at linking "traditional analogue family photographs," which were taken for a future audience, with the new form of recording our world, that is, digital photographs taken by mobile phones, to be seen immediately by a wide and distant audience. While many of the aspects and functions of this kind of photography remain the same, the practice has changed radically: Less family and more friends, more everyday experience and daily life occurrences, more selfies, pets, and food. In other words: the everyday life made public. This anticipation of the public dimension of a private issue, love (in the best case), and the founding of a new family, is also the core of *Wedding Photography*, which is the subject of Sandbye's case study.

Architecture photography, which also falls into this category of useful, or applied photography, has attracted less critical attention than "the history of popular photography" (Wells, 2015: 7), maybe because it not only has to "sell" (or at least show off) the building and its architect, but also has a more conceptual edge to it: It converts a three-dimensional structure into a flat, publishable form that highlights the main achievements of the building and its creator. In his enlightening essay, Rolf Sachsse reminds us that architecture was the first playground of photography, and highlights the medium's role in the rise of Modern Architecture. Sachsse is certainly one of the most prominent authors in his field: an architect, photographer and scholar, his many writings cover practically all possible aspects of the relation between the two disciplines, and their fusion into architectural photography. Recommended by PhotoResearcher editor Uwe Schögl, I had asked Rolf the favor of curating a small exhibition on architectural

photobooks for the first edition of Aarhus Photobook Week in 2014, and he kindly agreed. Therefore, I hesitated a bit before asking him for a favor again, this time to contribute a piece of writing to this book. I truly thought he would say No, and yet: Not only did he accept but he delivered a solid and didactic essay, and a perfect entry point for anybody interested in the subject.

Compared to heavyweight Sachsse, Erika Goyarrola is still at the beginning of her academic career. She recently finished her PhD in humanities from Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona with a thesis on Self-referentiality in Contemporary Photography, highlighting the work of Francesca Woodman, Antoine d'Agata and Alberto Garcia-Alix. It is fair to say though that her articles and essays for journals and magazines have attracted much attention, as has her curatorial work, especially the exhibition cycle $1+1=12$. Encuentros de Fotografía Contemporánea at Institut Français Madrid in 2014. To counterbalance the focus on the globalized barrage of images taken by mobile phones, it seemed necessary to take a closer look at the history of the traditional self-representation machine, the photo booth. Since its invention, nearly a hundred years ago, it has been a fundamental instrument for autobiographical purposes and has become part of one of the major strands of photography in the second half of the twentieth century. Or as Goyarrola puts it, "the photo booth brought a new style, and thus a new viewpoint of photography in particular and visual arts in general."

The last part of this chapter is dedicated to photography as a way to encourage critical thinking about the world we live in. And—even if a handful of politicians and scientists still want to convince us of the opposite—our world's major problem today is neither terrorism nor migration, but global warming, plastic waste and pollution of our vital resources, water, air and soil. I met Chris Jordan at the Spanish festival PHotoEspaña in 2005, and was so fascinated by his series on consumerism and waste that I invited him to participate in the festival the following year, with the large-format images from Katarina's Wake. Since then, his work has become referenced and widely exhibited all around the globe. It was only

shortly before I contacted him again to contribute to this book that I learned about Swaantje Güntzel's work, via an introduction by a common friend. While treating the same issues (plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean), their way of working, and the end products, could not be more different. I could not help asking her right away if she would be willing to participate in a conversation with Chris and myself on the subject of photographic eco-activism, and we set up a Skype meeting. In the resulting interview, I limited myself to throwing in a few keywords, to break the ice, and then let the conversation flow. It is interesting to see that on both sides of the Atlantic, artistic work with an environmentally concerned focus is still having trouble being taken seriously by the art world, and not being put in the drawer of "activism," a term that according to Jordan, "is deeply infused with hypocritical judgment and telling people how they are supposed to behave." Güntzel adds that a main problem for her is that collectors don't trust her market value (as she is not in the high-end segment of the art market yet), but just look at the work in terms of "Would I want to have this in my living room?", and then decide that they don't.

The difficult equilibrium between delivering a message and making the work sellable (as art, as news, as a commercial product ...) has been an intrinsic problem of the photographic medium from the moment of its inception. However, as photography is much more than art, different to text, film, or music, and due to its ever-changing role in society, as well as its implied truth-value, this situation is unlikely to change any time soon.

Due to the near limitless applications of the medium of photography, clearly this chapter cannot explain the usefulness of photographic images in an exhaustive way. Medical, technical, and didactic images have not been taken into account, nor have fashion and editorial photography. We have tried, however, to analyze some of the aspects and functions of the photographic image in a way that can be applied to others. Mette Sandbye, Rolf Sachsse and Erika Goyarrola have helped to provide the useful images for their articles, which come from historic and contemporary artists, such as Edouard Denis Baldus, Heinrich Heidersberger, Ahmet Ertug, H.G. Esch, Hansjörg Buchmeier,

Brenda Moreno and Juan de la Cruz Megías. A special thank you goes to Alasdair and Kirsty Foster for sending us their personal wedding photograph from the 1970s (unfortunately, they have forgotten the name of the photographer). Rita Leistner, Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, Kael Alford, Thorne Anderson, Chris Jordan and Swaantje Güntzel have allowed us to use their own works, some photographed by collaborators, and the illustrations for the interview with Erik Kessels come mostly from the KesselsKramer website, except for the installation shot from his 24-hour photo installation at the CCCB, which is courtesy of Marc Neumüller Esparbé.

Redefining The Photographic Medium

Since the invention of the photographic medium, the relationship between photography and art has been problematic in many ways, and it continues to be. Although the distinctions between such categories have become increasingly blurred in recent years, it would be more precise to speak of a cross-fertilizing relation than a competing one. The most vital difference is that "Art" is no longer defined by its materials, appearance or content; instead it is defined by the context. Some contemporary photography suits the artistic context very well. In many cases it is created exclusively within this context, and engages directly with it. Other contexts, as mentioned in Chapter 3, include advertising, medicine, journalism, political activism, the family album, scientific investigation, as much as the representation of architecture, portraits, weddings, and so on. As all of these other contexts illustrate, photography is an incredibly versatile medium that cannot be confined exclusively to the artistic context. Or, as Aaron Schuman has put it: "Yes, photography can be 'Art', but it is also much more than 'Art.'" Of course, the reverse is also true: in countless ways, art stretches far beyond the limits of photography, and serves many roles that photography never will (Schuman, 2010). For him, the most interesting development occurring today is that photography has reached a level of maturity whereby it is no longer simply a medium that exists within or is applied to other contexts, but has begun to establish a context of its own: "'Photography' (with a capital P)." Today, the medium seems to have gained enough confidence, prominence, momentum and status—and has gathered enough

of a cohesive community around itself—that it no longer needs to hang onto the coat-tails of "Art" in order to be recognized or respected; instead, it's beginning to redefine itself, exist and flourish as "Photography".

It is within this context that I have invited a number of scholars and practitioners to explore the borders of the medium, such as moving versus still images, documentary versus staged photography, the single image and the series, as well as sculptural and tactile dimensions, research-driven methodology and psychological borderlines.

Most of these aspects are as old as the medium itself but have undergone considerable variations with the arrival of the digital age. The convergence of media has a great impact on the differentiation of static and moving images. For a photograph not only reflects a decision on the part of the photographer, his sense that a certain moment in time—let's call it a decisive moment—is worthy of being recorded; the true strength of a photograph resides in the time it contains. This freezing of time—Bazin speaks of a mummification of the moment in photography—is of course related to Barthes' punctum. What happens in film is a mummification of events as they take place, since the time span of events here corresponds directly to that of reproduction. In the case of the electronic visual media, TV and video, viewers can synchronously witness this mummification on the screen. This simultaneity of recording and reproduction, the visual feedbacks and interferences it creates, were central to the earliest experiments with the medium of video, first and foremost in the work of Nam June Paik. Digitalization has now rendered photography equally capable of producing absolutely instant images. Moreover, multiple image formats are commingled in the recording device itself: digital cameras have long learnt to record video as well (some of them even producing ready-for-YouTube files), and video cameras store photographs. Mobile phones do both, producing imagery they forward directly to other terminals or to the Internet. That is not to say, of course, that forms mixing still and moving images are something new. They are present, too, in the medium of film itself, which, in contrast with video, consists of individual

images, or frames. But digitalization engenders a new relationship with technology: photographers and media artists are no longer tinkerers; they no longer need to (nor in fact can) fully understand the technology they are employing. The computer is a black box that we do not have to open; we merely need to know how to use it. Learning consists in locating and filtering information, not in making knowledge our own (as will be argued in the next chapter, also). What counts is access to the necessary know-how, not a firm grasp of it. This adaptation to fast-paced technology has profoundly shaped the new generation of artists who have never known the pre-digital world, and cannot imagine creating without menu-driven image editing, and the "Undo" function (Manovich, 2017). Depending on the desired end result, they blow up their pictures into large-format works, project or stick them on the wall, publish them on their own blog, or convert them, at a click of the mouse, into a photography book. They record their videos now in cinema-quality HD, with their mobile phones. Their fame and influence depends in a large part on how networked they are within their "community" and on how the latter evaluates their work.

In his essay, Stephen Chalmers talks about his photographic projects and the research-based methods he shares with other photographers such as Joel Sternfeld, Taryn Simon, and Chloe Dewe Mathews. I met Stephen at the Pingyao Festival in China some years ago, where he had curated an exhibition that included Chris Jordan's work. Soon, I also learned about Stephen's own practice, and his teaching. When he decided to publish his long-term project *Unmarked*, he asked me for some advice in the editing and design process, and the result was a small but very interesting book. The work is based on long trips by car back and forth across the country, that Stephen had made for different reasons and several life changes. During these trips, he had passed numerous roadside memorials with weathered stuffed animals, bits of lace or flowers tied to the post of a road sign, denoting that "something bad happened at these locations at some point in the past." In all of his projects, Chalmers draws on the limitations of the media of photography to represent these events, to prove anything, to document or reveal the hidden yet charged histories of places.

Alexander Streitberger's article reflects on images that are neither photography nor film: As "images generated by images" (and not taken from reality) they are photofilmic images situated on the threshold between stillness and movement: freeze frames, flip books, chronophotography, photodynamism, slide shows and immersive 3D experiences are some of the examples he analyzes. Many of these techniques allow the film to reveal its basic principle as a moving image composed of photographic stills, a kind of self-reflexivity of the medium. Digital technology has unleashed a revival of serial and sequential editing of photographs to time-lapse videos and enabled new effects and experiences in the no-man's-land between the still and the moving image. I was first introduced to Alexander Streitberger by our common friend Lars Blunck, the author of the next article in this collection, and we have since organized many seminars and workshops for the students of both our universities, in Leuven and Madrid. Together with Hilde Van Gelder, Streitberger directs the Lieven Gevaert Research Centre for Photography, Art and Visual Culture which has become a true research hub for the medium in the last years. They are also the co-editors of the Lieven Gevaert Series, a major series of substantial and innovative books on photography launched in 2004.

Lars Blunck was my fellow intern at the Museum of Modern Art in the late 1990s, but we lost contact for several years, until his book *Die fotografische Wirklichkeit* (The Photographic Reality) fell into my hands, and I contacted him via the publisher. He has also been one of the docents for the European Master of Contemporary Photography in Madrid, and recently invited me to hold a workshop for his students at the Nurnberg Academy of Fine Arts. Beside his expertise on Duchamp's optical devices and readymades, Blunck has published extensively on the connection between truth and fiction in photography. His article focuses on staged photography, an umbrella term that gathers concepts as disparate as Arranged, Constructed, Creative, Directorial, Fabricated, Manipulated or Tableau Photography, and how it relates to traditional photographic requirements such as correctness, authenticity, and truth. From suspended World Press Photo winner Giovanni Troilo to

Hippolyte Bayard, via Robert Capa and Ralph Bartholomew Jr., Blunck shows us the role of narration and fiction in supposedly "unstaged" photographs.

The territory shared by text and image is the playground of Federica Chiocchetti's conversation with Nina Strand. Chiocchetti, whom I met at a colloquium at the Birmingham Library, organized by Pete James and Nicola Shipley, has a background in comparative literature, and developed her interest in photography through literature. Overwhelmed by photography theory, she felt the need for a more playful and experimental way to engage with her research and set up the photo-literary platform Photocaptionist to promote the "concubinage" between photography and literature, images and words. Her conversation with Nina Strand, the co-editor of the Scandinavian magazine *Objektiv*, touches not only on image—text and photo—text intersections after the pictorial turn, but also on very contemporary matters, such as filter bubbles in the social networks, "the irritating intrusion of algorithms," and the current political turmoil in the US, which, according to Strand, could easily be described as "a triumph of pure image over other kinds of information."

My own contribution on "Tactile Photography" is co-authored with Andreas Reichinger, a computer graphics and computer vision researcher at VRVis, the Viennese Zentrum für Virtual Reality and Visualisierung Forschungs GmbH. We first introduced the concept of tactile photography at a conference on Materiality and Immateriality in Photography in Vienna in 2012, the proceedings of which were published in the magazine *PhotoResearcher*. Since then, we have continued our research into 3D-Printing in the field of cultural heritage, and presented it at international conferences, in publications, and at curatorial meetings. This proposal begins with a short introduction on the rise of multisensorial art practices and projects in the field of tactile interpretation. Thereafter, we focus on our main field of research, the use of stereoscopy to create 3D-printed reliefs: its premises, technical description, its cultural and artistic impact, and

finally, its potentials in the field of education, of inclusivity and in exhibition design.

Roger Ballen is one of the few collaborators in this publication I have never met personally. A huge fan of his work, I have seen many exhibitions, books and videos made by and with him, and finally got to know him via email and phone, to coordinate his participation in the Daegu Photo Biennial in Korea, which I co-curated in 2014. I vividly remember framing and hanging some of the images that now illustrate his text, together with the chief curator of the Biennial, Alejandro Castellote. To create the composition that was to be hung on the wall, we put all the pictures on the floor, then one of us stood on a ladder, and instructed the other to move the frames from left to right and back again, until we had a convincing result that we could hand over to the mounting team. Roger Ballen's photographs include drawings, calligraphies, masks and many mythological allusions that call on "ancient shamanistic visions, sacred symbols inherited and embedded through time," as he put it himself. I am very thankful that he has contributed his text and all the images in a timely manner and without asking any second questions. Other photographers who have supplied their works for this chapter are Stephen Chalmers (for his own text, Chapter 4.1), Noah Kalina and Jutta Strohmaier for Chapter 4.2, and Francesca Catastini for the conversation between Chiocchetti and Strand (Chapter 4.4). The illustrations for the Tactile Photography piece (Chapter 4.5) have been provided by Andreas Reichinger, our collaborator Florian Riest, and myself. Finally, I want to thank Cynthia Young for her help in our being able to publish the famous photograph of the Falling Soldier by Robert Capa from *Life* magazine (July 12, 1937), courtesy of the International Center of Photography, in New York.

Rights And Markets for Photography

The desire to possess a thing in order to enjoy the exclusive pleasure of having it is probably as old as mankind itself. A desire, which, of course, also applies to art objects under the term "collecting". The most significant changes to the art market arise in the second half of the nineteenth century, when artists began to work as free entrepreneurs. The upswing of the modern art market after the Second World War, especially from the 1960s onwards, is

rooted in the developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but is essentially characterized by two new components. In addition to the greater liquidity of modern capital, it is the new way of looking at the work of art as a fungible and profitable investment which made the boom of the art market possible in the 1980s. While the motif of prestige and the motif of decoration—for the spontaneous art lover as well as the systematic collector—continues to exist in the area of private art buying, a number of specific goals, such as corporate image, customer care or employee motivation, have become motivations for the establishment of Corporate Collecting. There have been efforts to "measure" the performance of art as investment, and comparative studies between the art and stock market since the 1970s, yet it has only been in recent years that Art Market Studies have become an important part of cultural studies.

The market for image rights, that is, not the object itself but the right to use it, has a history of its own, and is currently facing a critical moment. Traditional picture agencies and collectives, which take care of the commercialization of their members' images, are disappearing or being bought by bigger players on the market. Authored and commissioned images are being substituted by cheap stock photography (and now also video) available online.

Collaborative efforts in the world of photography seem to respond to times of change. Magnum Photos, the classic example of a photographic co-operative, was founded in 1947. The artist-run agency Ostkreuz was formed in East Berlin just one year after the fall of the Wall; around the same time the collective Tendence Floue was founded through "a generous and ecstatically wild friendship". The main purpose of these agencies and co-operatives was, and to a certain extent still is, to protect its members' (copy-)rights and to promote them in the publishing market, which is now in decline. While many prestigious agencies have closed, we are seeing a true renaissance of Photography Collectives. The vast majority of these collectives have popped up in the last 15 years, such as Supay Fotos, NOPHOTO or Sputnik Photos. Some festivals and centers have already

responded to this new trend by inviting collectives to meet, debate and show their work. For example, E.CO 2010, organized by Claudi Carreras, invited 20 photographic collectives from Europe and Latin America to Spain. The rise of the P2P philosophy field of art and image rights alike corresponds to emerging possibilities around collaboration, sharing and exchange. Collective models of production, consumption, and ownership have grown in our networked societies, which allow user-generated content, crowd-funding and collaborative consumption. These changes have begun with the rise of the Internet, survived the dot-com crisis and keep spreading, regardless of economic development. On the other hand, the global financial crisis has certainly accelerated the renaissance of traditional practices such as lending and bartering, since complex trading instruments have fallen into disrepute. Platforms based on participatory and commons-oriented paradigms seem to invade more and more social, economic and cultural fields.

This chapter consists of three interviews and one essay around contemporary issues in the commercialization of images, collecting photography, and reproduction rights. The first interview features art market expert Alexander Rotter, former director of the contemporary art department of Sotheby's New York, and now in a similar position at Christie's. I met Alex when we both studied Art History in Vienna, many years ago. As he is not a person who gives interviews on a regular basis, and only agreed to have the conversation for our old friendship's sake, I am deeply grateful for his trust, and his frankness when speaking about the open secrets of the business. Another thank you goes to Katelend Rosaen who has helped with the transcription and editing of this interview.

Simone Klein, who I met in Berlin some 15 years ago, also worked in the auction business before joining the prestigious agency Magnum to take care of the Print Sales. She is thus able to speak about the market for photography from many angles—a market that is divided into three sectors: nineteenth-century photography, classic vintage photographs, and contemporary photography. She explains that limited editions are something that

came up in the 1970s/1980s due to a growing market for photography, as it was necessary to make people understand that what they buy is limited and rare. As Simone explains, the practice of limiting editions of photographs, albeit typical for technologically reproducible works of art, is borrowed from printmaking, and a purely commercial practice, which "has been applied onto photography to make it fit for the market".

With Pavel V. Khoroshilov and his daughter Anastasia we look at the other side of the coin, the collector's point of view. I met them via Irina Chmyreva (the author of Chapter 2.4) and we decided to have a conversation that would orbit around the motivations of a collector of photography, taking into account the special circumstances of the Russian art market and Pavel's personal history. As in the case of the two other interviews in this chapter, it was a rare opportunity to find out more about the operating mode of the art market, which can now be shared with a wider public. I wish to thank Anastasia and Pavel for their time and their kindness, and Julia Gelezova for her help with the translations.

The last text in this chapter is by Wolfgang Ullrich, a cultural scientist and freelance author from Germany whose work I have followed for many years. When I asked him to contribute to this compendium, he proposed to write on reproduction rights of photographic images for scientific texts. This is clearly an issue that moves him personally, as it becomes more and more difficult to illustrate scholarly essays and books, due to restrictions from certain artists, their galleries or their heirs. Interestingly enough, permission to publish an image is also often refused in order to prevent the artist in question from appearing in connection with certain other artists. In particular, foundations devoted to the works of a deceased artist impose strict conditions as to the context in which a work may or may not be reproduced. By determining the context in which reproductions appear, these right holders understand the reception of art as something that can be influenced by them, as "Copyright becomes a postproduction tool".

I would like to thank the Collection of Anastasia Khoroshilova and Pavel V. Khoroshilov for giving us the right to publish some of their gems, such as

Gustave Le Gray, Nikolay Kuleshov, Varvara Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko, in this chapter and remind the readers that although they do not have a website, their collection is "always open" for proposals.

Dissemination and Education

The following chapter is dedicated to the distribution of photography through the classic channels—that is, exhibitions, books, and magazines, as well as teaching. Needless to say, these days they are complemented (and partly substituted) by the Internet, in the form of electronic books, websites and online learning platforms. As social media and the future of photography will be analyzed in depth in the next chapter, the essays in this part of the book will concentrate on the history of exhibitions, the revised history of the photobook, a case study on a Japanese photography magazine, one on a Spanish publishing project, and a historical perspective on photography education, before looking at the future of photography education, through Visual Literacy programs and MOOCs.

Alessandra Mauro's book *Photoshow* (2014) provided us with a long-awaited history of the photographic exhibition. It provides the answers to questions such as "When was the first photography exhibition held?", which actually cannot be answered in a simple way, as several events qualify in different ways. More importantly, though, Mauro analyzes the *raison d'être* of the photographic exhibition, as a montage of attractions, a term she borrows from Sergei Eisenstein. While the first presentations of the medium in libraries, auctions and showrooms, later at industrial fairs and World exhibitions, and then in salon-style shows at Camera Clubs lacked a "curatorial" approach, the exhibitions at Alfred Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, active from 1905 until 1917, opened a new era for photographic exhibitions. Other selected milestones in this history are Edward Steichen's monumental *Family of Man* (1955), the project here is *New York* (2011), *The European Dream* by Alessandro Penso (an itinerant exhibition about migration that was set up in the inside of a truck, which drove from Greece to Brussels in 2013), or the installation *Wall on Wall* by Kai Wiedenhöfer

(2014). In comparison to traditional museum exhibitions of painting,

sculpture, drawings, and other original art works, a typical photo show at a festival or art space is made up mainly of "exhibition prints." These prints can be adapted to the space in terms of size, paper quality, and mounting, and therefore can be quite unique pieces. However, it has become common for them to be destroyed after deinstallation of the show (Read 2008).

It has also become common practice to show photographic books mounted on tables or in glass cases, along with the prints on the wall, or even to concentrate an event on the book form alone. This is the case with the photobook festivals that have popped up around the globe in the last few years, from Melbourne to Moscow, from Kassel to Istanbul. These festivals, together with the fairs and book markets (such as the UNSEEN photobook market, Cosmos, and Offprint), are vibrant and lively meeting points for the photobook community, and showcases for the latest publications.

In addition, there is a growing interest in reinterpreting the history of photography through the role of publications and printed photographs. A particularly influential reinterpretation, which has been crucial for the renaissance of the medium and the formation of a true Photobook Phenomenon, has been put forward by the photographer and collector Martin Parr and the critic Gerry Badger, published in three volumes (2004, 2006 and 2014). We can speak of a neophyte field of what is currently designated as "photobook" studies at least since Horacio Fernández's exhibition *Fotografía pública: Photography in Print 1919-1939*, in the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid in 1998. At a time when photography was struggling to prove its status as Art and to enter the museum in the form of ever-larger prints in massive frames, here was a show of loose pamphlets, well-thumbed magazines and yellowed photography books: a true "paradigm change" that placed special emphasis on the "specific intrinsic value of photobooks according to primarily aesthetic criteria" (Schaden 2008: 439). Jose Luis Neves' forthcoming dissertation will be the first research project to question and re-evaluate the hegemony of the terminological, historical and ontological

proposals developed by the general historicization process of the "photographic book" initiated in the early 2000s. Neves highlights the most significant historiographical and critical studies dedicated to the study of photographic publications in book form, while highlighting their contribution towards the construction of the identity of that book production.

The interview with Martin Parr and Gerry Badger took place in Arles, France, in 2016, during the Rencontres festival, and in the framework of working together on the exhibition *Photobook Phenomenon*, which opened its doors in Barcelona, in March 2017. This exhibition, according to one reviewer, "invites the audience to interact with its displays through digital technology," and "doesn't glorify print or imply that it's of higher moral standing than the web, but rather it reveals the curatorial value of the photobook as distinct but just as worthy of discussion as exhibition design" (Morley 2017). When Parr and Badger speak of a "revisionist" history of photography through the photobook, they follow up on Horacio Fernández's argument that photobooks have been responsible for a good part of shifts of style and content matter in the history of photography, especially between the 1950s and 1970s, the "golden age" of the photobook. It seems reasonable to state that photographic books have significantly aided the acceptance of photography as an art form and the establishment of many photographic careers (Fernández 2017). But can we really speak of "two histories of photography," as Fernández claims, one composed of a "canon of masterworks" and the other "in the form of books with nearly unlimited (re-)editions, which can be found in libraries, rather than museums"? The major concern of scholars such as Neves seems not so much whether we can write this alternative history of photography, but who is writing it, and how.

Photobooks also have a shared history with magazines. In Japan, for example, photobooks were often assembled from bodies of work that had first appeared in magazines. Actually, from the 1950s to the 1990s this practice was an outstanding characteristic of Japanese photo publishing. A prominent example is Shomei Tomatsu's *Nippon*, released in 1967, which brought

Tomatsu's main serialisations from the end of 1950s to the mid-1960s together in book form. Each of these series is an independent body of work and, at the time of their original publication, there was no plan to compile them into one volume. It was not until years later that they were organized into a single book with a very broad theme (Kaneko 2017). Susumu Shimonishi presents a Case Study on Shoji Yamagishi, the legendary editor of the Japanese photography magazine *Camera Mainichi*, and co-curator of the exhibit *New Japanese Photography*, held at MoMA in 1974, with the participation of 15 Japanese photographers such as Eiko Hosoe, Masahisa Fukase, and Daido Moriyama. Shimonishi's article gives an insight into the role of photography magazines in post-war Japan, with the tragic anecdote of Robert Capa's visit to Japan, shortly before he died. When I first met Susumu, he did not speak a word of English, and our conversations could only take place with the help of a translator, and a lot of imagination. Now he is not only a fluent speaker of English, but also a recognized scholar and an admired artist. His research of Yamagishi's archives is exemplary for a new interest of scholars around the world in the history of the printed image.

Today, more photobooks than ever before are produced, read, traded, and collected. Independent publishing and self-publishing of books—as well as fanzines—has become a phenomenon that has had a considerable impact on contemporary culture (Neves 2015). There is an evident return to the printed page and the tangible object, even though we are at the height of the digital era—or at least at the beginning. Today, many of the sales happen over the Internet; marketing campaigns are done through social networks; and financing often uses crowd-funding. Consequently, bookstores that specialized in the medium, such as Kowasa in Barcelona and Schaden in Cologne, had to close their doors, while more and more online distributors are popping up. The strongest markets are still the US, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, France and the UK; however, in recent years Spain has become one of the key players, at least in terms of production. Jesús Micó's *Kursala Edition* is an important part of that success story. In 2012, we were invited together to talk at

the PhotobookWeekend in Bristol, and I asked him for the transcription of his lecture, to make it accessible to a wider audience. Apart from being a curator, Jesús is also a teacher of photography, which builds the bridge to the last three contributions to this chapter.

Joan Fontcuberta once told me in an interview that for him, formal education has always suffered from logocentrism, maybe due to historical reasons. He claimed that "today, the politicians who run the administration of education should realize that more and more of our experience of the world is visual and consequently there should be an emphasis on the education of visual content". Today, basic photographic techniques can be easily learned from tutorials on the Internet, some workshops and practice. What students of photography still need are people who support them and give them input, advice, and courage—in fact, this is maybe the single most important thing a teacher can do. Of course, it makes a difference if we speak of photography as practice or as part of the curriculum of humanities, art history and visual studies.

Peter Smith's and Michelle Bogre's pieces are complementary. When I asked Michelle to contribute to this book, she proposed that Pete should write on the historic context and she would draft a more manifesto-like text, making the case for Visual Literacy as a means of making people fit for understanding our world of images. Smith states that traditional schism between theory and practice is now quite rare in universities where photography education "is characterized by responsiveness in ambitious practice to critical theorization." He highlights major changes in the intellectual scope of photography education at university level from the late 1970s to the present day and underlines how key debates in the humanities and social sciences entered the field of study. Finally, he acknowledges the alignment of identity politics with postmodernist photography, and recognizes the role of New Photography Theory.

Michelle Bogre's text, on the other hand, deals with the idea that photographic education is in crisis, and discusses the challenges it faces. She starts by stating that photography education has been questioned and criticized almost as long as it has

been a field of study, and that, if there is a problem in photo education, it is self-inflicted: "We cannot agree on the definition of photography, so we can't decide what we are teaching." Her main conclusion, similar to Fontcuberta's, is that Photography is the language of the twenty-first century, as we "now punctuate our texts with images, not grammatical marks." For Bogre, understanding how to read a photograph is the new literacy, and only visually literate photography students will be adaptable to whatever technological or communication changes the future holds.

One of the major changes in education is the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). While distance learning goes back to the nineteenth century (in fact, nearly the same year that photography was "invented"), large-scale interactive participation and open access through the Web or other network technologies, are rather recent developments. The last piece in this chapter is Sara Bodinson and Sarah Meister's description of MoMA's learning program *Seeing through Photographs*, which was produced for the Coursera platform and uses works from the Museum Collection as a point of departure to encourage participants to look critically at photographs through the some of the diverse ideas, approaches, and technologies that inform their making. I know both authors from when I was working at MoMA in the late 1990s, and they were kind enough to accept my invitation to contribute with this case study that gives an insight into new learning strategies in a museum context.

Finally, I am grateful to the ICP for the permission to print Robert Capa's little known *A Cook and a Woman in Atami*, as well as to *Tres Tipos Gráficos* for their images from the Kursala Edition, and Sara Bodinson for the screenshots of the videos from MoMA's *Seeing through Photographs* program.

Outlook

In Summer 2011, the visitors of the *Rencontres d'Arles Photography Festival*, in Arles, France, had a lot to discuss. Clement Chéroux, Joan Fontcuberta, Erik Kessels, Martin Parr, and Joachim Schmid presented a ground-breaking exhibition called *From Here On*, with a Joint Manifesto that began:

NOW, WE'RE A SPECIES OF EDITORS. WE ALL RECYCLE, CLIP AND CUT, REMIX AND UPLOAD. WE CAN MAKE IMAGES DO ANYTHING. ALL WE NEED IS AN EYE, A BRAIN, A CAMERA, A PHONE, A LAPTOP, A SCANNER, A POINT OF VIEW. (Gergel 2012 [capitalized in the original])

The exhibit included the work of 36 international artists whose work consists mainly of appropriated popular imagery from the Internet, using vernacular sources from social media, search engines, archives, surveillance technologies, Google Street View, cameras operated by animals, webcams, and hacked laptop cameras. I gave these latter categories the name *Unmanned Photography*.

We have become accustomed to the camera eyes in the sky, above all, in the shape of spy satellites rotating around our planet in their thousands since the 1960s. Long before that, however, the pioneers of rocket photography, like Amédée Denisse, Alfred Nobel and an engineer from Dresden called Alfred Maul, recognized the potential of the photographs taken "from a great height." The rocket device with built-in plate cameras and parachute could provide images from a height of up to 600 meters. Another curiosity dating from that era is pigeon photography, developed by the apothecary and amateur photographer Julius Neubronner, and making it possible to take up to twelve photographs per flight. What is more, the winged photographers were quiet and inconspicuous, and thus perfect spies, especially in war-time.

Other kinds of animals were also used for image-making--be that hunting dogs with special camera jackets, or house cats, like Nancy Bean, whose works were on show in *From Here On*. The transfer of the photographic act from man to animal goes hand in hand (or rather, paw in paw) with a high degree of authenticity, for action taken by an animal, crude, accidental and clumsy, does not falsify anything. When it comes to the issue of the documentary value of the photograph, therefore, unmanned photography is a special case, and a very multifarious one at that.

Eliminating humans from the image-making process is done not necessarily for their protection, but rather for the sake of efficiency. The physical need to sleep, eat and excrete waste, and also the fact

of aging on long flights into space, are annoying obstacles to the success of a mission. The very act of photographing functions better without people: today's fully automatic cameras can produce perfect images, if only they are allowed to. To produce really bad, or unusual, photographs, you would really have to pit your wits against the machine.

For his No.4 Vienna MMIX, during the Vienna Opera Ball, Jules Spinatsch used a programmed camera system to capture a certain area in columns from left to right, following a precise grid over the entire duration of the event. The single images are then assembled in chronological order into one large panorama. The resulting images are a contradicting liaison of control and failure. Two competing agendas—the schedule of the event versus the programming of the camera—construct a new narrative and trigger speculation about time, image and the real, as the image plane is split into unintended time fragments. Just as in Jorge Luis Borges' story of the cartographers, this machine-managed and objectified reality is so close to reality that it becomes useless. The best example for this might be Heisenbergs Offside, which was created during the World Championship Qualification game of Switzerland against France. Spinatsch produced 3003 still shots from an interactive network camera over the course of the whole game, but not a single one shows the ball.

Light-field cameras promise the next technological revolution in the field of photography. They allow changing the focal distance and depth of field after a photo is taken. This is possible because they record the direction that the light rays are traveling in space, in addition to light intensity. The idea to take "integral photographs" is more than a hundred years old, but it has only been in the last few years that we have seen the first working prototypes and some commercial products. This way, any part of the image, be it in the foreground or at the back, can be made sharp in the post-production process, without having to take a binding decision in the "decisive moment" of taking the picture.

The advance of surveillance technology for domestic use is a growing source of worry for the secret service people, particularly in those countries that use drones extensively, that is to say, Great

Britain, the United States and Israel. But even if they were to succeed in banning mini- or micro-drones in the air, the next threats are lurking on the high seas (mini-submarines), on land (telepresence robots) and above all in space (swarm-financed microsatellites). The opening up of space for the average consumer could soon become a security risk; after all, official satellite images are still subject to strict censorship. NATO military bases are pixelated (as artfully shown in Mishka Henner's Dutch Landscapes book), and when Google Earth was first up and running, the White House was blurred (today it is shown in supposedly "outdated images"). Organizations like the American National Reconnaissance Office (motto: Vigilance from Above) will certainly not be short of work in the years to come.

Another strategy is the infiltration of the private sphere with cameras, like Delivery for Mr. Assange: A Live Mail Art Piece, by the media group Bitnik, who—modeled on Tim Knowles' Spy Box—sent a cyclopic package to the WikiLeaks founder. Surprisingly, it was actually delivered to the addressee, who recognized it as a transmission medium with artistic intent, and even used it performatively. One cannot help but think of media artists like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer or Ricardo Iglesias, who have been working for years with electronically controlled and partially autonomous surveillance devices. But surely the most perfidious form of photographic intrusion was found by Kurt Caviezel: for his The Users project, he hacked his way into the webcams of harmless Internauts so as to make portraits of them.

In most cases, these images are fished from the infinite stream of data, are particles in a constant process of photographing by millions of camera eyes. In this machine-managed and objectified reality there are rarely any breaches or disruptions that might grant us some surprising moments. It is this apparent contradiction that makes unmanned photography so interesting for the theorists of post-photography. For highlights such as the 2013 Chelyabinsk meteor photographs taken by Russian dashboard cameras cannot conceal the fact that surveillance camera images are usually dreadfully boring.

The first essay of this chapter is by Annekathrin Kohout and describes a now-common phenomenon on the Internet, a kind of ludic visual conversation triggered by what she calls Kick-off Images and then echoed back from all ends of the Network. In her witty and yet serious analysis, #foodporn meets Foucault, and Marshall McLuhan stares at a pierced pair of lemons. For her, a kick-off image is a picture that acts as an initiation for new variants or reblogs, similar to how jokes are told and retold in real life. A surprising/absurd constellation of motives in the image, and the environment of social media form the breeding ground for this phenomenon. The images must be removed from their original contexts, and freed from the authorship, so they can be shared, adapted and re-contextualized without inhibitions.

Robert Cook's essay is just as analytical and clever, but written from a personal point of view and with his tongue in his cheek. I asked Robert to reflect on the disappearance of the decisive moment, and gave him full freedom to develop a style that he has described as "lyrical, explorative and personally-conceptual" in one of our email conversations. This free-style way of writing may feel a bit strange in this rather scholarly context, yet it enables him to make brilliant points about our changing relation to cameras, as fetishized tools and amplifiers of self-representation on the social networks.

The last Case Study in the book is on a prominent online platform for photography, LensCulture, in the form of an interview with its founder Jim Casper. I have known Jim for many years and respect his great work for the photographic community, but also wanted to raise some critical questions about its commercial exploitation. The result is an honest and passionate conversation with somebody who believes in what he is doing, and who wants to be part of the future of the medium: "I'm eagerly looking forward to whole new ways of using photography—maybe it will be like a new form of literature or global activism or immersive cinema or jazz"

Joan Fontcuberta has been mentioned and quoted several times already, and for many reasons. An educator, critic, curator, and conceptual artist using photography, he has shaped the understanding of

the medium in many forms. His widely acclaimed book *Pandora's Camera* consists of various essays on the state of the art, and the future of photography. *Homo Photographicus*, the small piece we publish here, had first appeared in the *Matador* magazine, vol. 5, in December of 2016, and is a compressed form of his thinking about a future where hyper-visibility becomes consolidated, and where post-photography prepares us for a world of mental pictures, ubiquitous images with neither body nor support.

While the term post-photography is becoming widely used in the photographic community, some scholars have come up with another terminology: post-post-photography. According to Friedrich Tietjen, co-organizer of the annual After Post-Photography conferences, the basic questions of post-post-photographic research orbit around three aspects concerning the history, the definition and the pragmatics of photography. In other words, it comes back to the truth of photographic images (indexicality), ontological questions of the medium (what is a photograph?), and finally, how it can or should be used (praxeology).

After all, it seems that we finish where we started. Photography is still haunted by the same ghosts as at the moment of its inception, networked hyper-ghosts caught in small black coffin-shaped boxes we hold in our hands, with shiny mirror-like displays that remind us of the first daguerreotypes. The *homo photographicus* still lives in Plato's cave, even if he is now connected with other cavemen all around the globe. He has constructed camera-eyes to explore the outside world and send back images which can only be read after machine decodification, but what interests him—and her—most, is still how they are seen by their cavemen-friends. While photography is no more an index of truth, the images themselves now do leave traces. They are filtered, screened and interpreted by the same entities that have put the cavemen in chains, in order to prevent them from finding out the truth. In fact, it seems that we are further away from ever leaving our caves than ever before.

My most honest thank you to Gorsad Kiev, Tony Futura, and Philipp Baumgarten for letting us use their images to illustrate their kick-off effect; Jim

Casper for the screenshots from LensCulture; and NASA for the "photograph" of Venus. <>

[THIRTYTHREE A New Horizon of Photography at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest](#) edited by Róna Kopeczky [Hatje Cantz, 9783775744522]

This book is published on the occasion of the exhibition [THIRTYTHREE](#) at Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center, Budapest, Hungary 8 October 2018 - 9 December 2018

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Thirty-three Years

It was 1984 in the Orwellian world. At the end of a politicized 20th century full of losses, we launched a new channel of expression. In 1984 we established a tertiary-level photography course. We brought radical changes to the decades-old public life of photography; we impinged on interests and generated uncertainty, although all we actually desired was dialogue. For ultimately what we emphasized was synchronicity with world events and the simple recognition that we needed to make the genre of photography equal in rank to other branches of art, and to expand its elemental power within the academic sphere of those art forms—in a sphere where visuality is key, where interdisciplinarity does away with boundaries and generates new standards.

Doubt haunted us for a considerable time, the naysayers' chorus rang out loud and long, yet we did not lose faith. We believed only in the work we were doing, in the development of a new photographic channel, and we believed that photography would finally find its rightful place at academic level in Hungary, too. We were pioneers, we had a mission. Our struggle was on behalf of those for whom photography meant a way of thinking, and who focused not on the peripheral, genre-based categorization of the profession, but on connections.

The establishment of photography on an academic level was also important because doing so sends a message in the given social context: it elevates the profession, creates parity, and takes responsibility. When developing and introducing the university program, I considered it vital that it should be about thinking and searching for connections. At that time, it was not clear what kind of changes digital technology would bring, but its appearance further reinforced my belief that we should prioritize thinking rather than the fetish of technology. A basic principle was to think not in terms of photographic genres, but philosophy. The

relinquishing of that principle would have forfeited the legitimacy of the course.

Our fundamental vision is to provide university students with an intellectual workshop, within the framework of which they have time to develop the structure of their thinking and to discover and strengthen their personalities in an environment where the influences of other arts and various fields of knowledge are unavoidable. The focus has not been changed by the emergence of the digital world: we did not participate in the analogue versus digital debate; much rather, we focused on open attitudes, high standards, and interdisciplinarity.



Benedek Bognár

There were sources we learnt from; there were people who inspired us. Moholy and his circle, the outstanding figures in the history of photography, showed us an example of how to think, how to establish a school, and how to achieve a worldwide reputation. We did not consider those things to be obstacles for us either. For we knew there was only one field of competition—the international one. And we are still making progress along it. Thirty-three years, hundreds of photographers, a new channel of expression. The manifestation of thinking.

For a small, landlocked European country with no shared language, Hungary's role in the history of photography is disproportionate. Without the contributions of André Kertész (born Kertész Andor), Brassai (Gyula Halász), László Moholy-

Nagy, and Robert Capa (Endre Friedmann), the world of photography today would be very different—without even mentioning the contributions of the lesser-known Martin Munkácsi (Márton Mermelstein), Robert's brother Cornell (Kornél Friedmann), Lucien Hervé (László Elkán), or György Kepes.

Many of these artists turned their backs on their native country to live and work in the diaspora. Brassai became famous for his photographs of Paris at night, while Robert Capa is widely seen as the prototype of the dashing male photojournalist working in the world's hot spots. It is important to be aware of one's tradition. But tradition can also be an anchor that holds you in place, preventing progress. Decades under direct and indirect Soviet rule contributed much to Hungary becoming a photographic backwater until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Then, the symbolic fence cutting by the Austrian and Hungarian foreign ministers provided some of the most inspiring visuals of a new era (contrast this with the recent erection of new border fences in Hungary). But it is less the larger political situation in Europe that contributed to the country's rebirth as a vibrant location for photography than the emergence of a single school, the Photography Department at Budapest's Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (in Hungarian Moholy-Nagy Művészeti Egyetem, short MOME).

In 2018, the department celebrates its thirty-third anniversary, the occasion of which demands a look back. Yet quietly but steadily a new strand of photography emerged that is Hungarian in origin but mainly contemporary in essence.

Marrying its uniquely Hungarian cultural (and of course photographic) tradition with larger trends observed in and imported from countries abroad, MOME's photography department has produced an impressive number of skilled and talented artists, many of whom have already made their marks outside of their home country.

Founded in the academic year of 1984-1985, the department has so far had four heads, Gábor Kopek, Tibor Miltényi, Abel Szalontai, and Gábor Máté. Each of them brought their own distinct personality and ideas to the table, with Kopek's task being the most daunting: how to get a new

department off the ground and localize it in the larger world of photography? What should be its overall aim? Should there be a focus? As already noted, a few years after its founding the Iron Curtain was dismantled, transforming the country's society and opening it up to Western European ideas. To what extent this vast transformation has been a success or not is less interesting than the fact that it happened at all. For this writer born in West Germany, 1989 and the following years was a rupture only to a relatively small degree. I find it difficult to imagine having been born roughly 200 kilometers further east and having to readjust my life to new realities.

These new realities arrived during the department's relative infancy, and it is important to keep this in mind. But of course now, near the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, a generation of photographers has emerged who are largely oblivious to the upheaval, either because they lived through it only as children or because they were born afterward. What did not change was Hungary's overall role as that relatively small country with its own unique language, even now as a member of the European Union.

While originally heavy on a classical documentary approach, the department has now embraced a much larger variety of photography, a fact easily apparent from the variety of its graduates' work. "I believed in the necessity of academic education," says Gábor Kopek about the beginnings, "but my emphasis was on creating new publicity for the medium and initiating an intellectual workshop. [...] By founding and defining photography as an independent course, I wanted to elevate it to the same level as fine art, theatre, film, etc."

For him, the key was and still is "to work on philosophies and not in genres (portrait, commercial, journalism, etc.)." This approach enabled the department to weather photography's transition from analog to digital technologies: "We did not take part in the debate between digital and analog. We have focused on free thinking, interdisciplinary approaches, and quality."

Gábor Máté stresses Hungarian photographers' critical attitude as a central aspect of both the

classics and today's practitioners: "The location and language have not changed too much, so we have the same kind of motivation of understanding and the ability of empathy." As current head of the department, Máté makes this the central tenet of his ideal of how the department should function. "I try to drive the department to keep this tradition of critical attitude and understanding by making courses with titles about relevant issues," he says.



Julianna Nyíri: Better Place

An engagement with photography beyond borders is equally important for him: "My goal is to integrate more and more students into our education from abroad. [...] I try to push contemporary young Hungarian photographers more into the international scene." Abel Szalontai mirrors these sentiments: "The main goal [is] to make our photography program an active member of an international network. Our focus was and has been cooperation and dialog between universities and different professional partners." And: "I still consider photography to be a way of thinking, not only a practice." It is this push and pull—that meeting of the uniquely Hungarian with everything offered beyond its borders—that contributes to the

department being such a vibrant place and producing such high-quality students.

"MOME is my second home," head of the master's program Gábor Arion Kudász states. "I started to work here while still a student 16 years ago. Today I am the second youngest teacher in the department and my career as an artist closely overlaps with my experience as a teacher." A graduate of the class of 2003, Kudász might sit at that crucial point where the department had already opened up to larger ideas beyond the documentary form, while not having become as established as it is now. Students eventually becoming teachers in places at which they studied is not an uncommon sight in many places. All too often, these students then essentially end up carrying the old torch forward. In MOME's and Kudász case though, the torch is less a fixed way of doing things than an idea—the idea of pushing photography forward while operating between the two poles of the classics and all those various influences flowing in from abroad.

Whether it is a generational difference I am not qualified to say, but unlike Máté, Kudász is quite a bit bolder concerning ideas around his home country: "Hungary has learned to value being walled off. Even today with Internet trends [they] arrive here with a delay, but then with extra strength. I see that the success of a Hungarian photographer can/should only be measured in the global context, and I believe that our cultural dissimilarity is the basis of a unique photographic approach." But again, these are uniquely Hungarian influences meeting what is offered beyond, resulting in the fact that "MOME has inherited the role to be [a] gateway to enter the international discussion." This specifically includes using international networks provided by European art universities.

The expression "the proof is in the pudding" might be an abbreviated form that omits the fact that you need to taste the pudding to know whether it is any good or not. Given this, the work of students who graduated from MOME should provide the benchmark for whether or not the ideas laid out by Kopek, Máté, Kudász, and colleagues led to the desired results. With a wide set of activities around photography (presence at international festivals,

working with international organizations, etc.) and an embrace of the photobook as one of its important aspects, the department has been putting their money where their mouth is.

As the diverse work presented in these pages demonstrates, it is not just the framework used at the department that is at the forefront of contemporary photography. There are now also many photographers who are willing and able to make a claim that they are as much a part of Hungarian photography as the classics.

Predominantly photographed in color, the work by these MOME graduates would not be out of place in any other major European photography school.

Clearly, many of the trends currently visible in contemporary photography have made their mark in Budapest, whether it is in the form of Ildikó Péter's very formal landscapes, Adél Koleszár's diaristic observation of life, or Dávid Biró's studio still lifes that run along the lines of the New Formalism movement (to give just a few examples). Whether or not there is indeed a Hungarian sensibility that is driving the work I could not tell. What I can tell, however, is that the idea of a department interconnected with the larger world of photography has been very successful.

Its unique language and history aside, Hungary itself has become a part of a European landscape that is increasingly looking to form its own tradition. There is considerable pushback against this from populists, nationalists, and the far right. But to go back to an idealized time that, in its imagined form, never existed in the first place, doesn't offer any solutions. What is true in society at large also plays out in the world of photography.

The Photography Department at MOME could have decided to emulate the classics, to create clones in their image. But the decision was made not to do that. Instead, an embrace of contemporary photography as practiced everywhere else has put the department on the map as one of the very best photography schools in Europe. I'm convinced that with time—the world of photography is notoriously conservative and slow-moving—Hungarian photography will be known not merely as being the work of those various émigré artists, the classics. Instead, there will be many other names. It is very

likely that many (possibly most) of them will be graduates of MOME's Department of Photography.
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[About Design: Insights and Provocations for Graphic Design Enthusiasts](#) by Gordon Salchow
[Allworth Press, 9781621536543]

A treatise on the development and practice of the graphic design discipline.

[About Design](#) offers an enlightening and opinionated, albeit concise, excursion concerning many facets of the field of design. It emphasizes the discipline of graphic design, while incorporating a taste of the author's makeup. It is a definitive, expansive observational, and knowledge-infused treatise that is expected to be particularly engaging for students and educators as well as for design practitioners. However, much of the content could tempt any readers who may be marginally inquisitive concerning visual art, design, and the web of "creativity."

This informative, and sometimes scrappy, expedition is founded on the author's fifty-five years' entrenchment in design practice and higher education. Consequently, there are many pointed and sometimes novel perspectives, but it is essentially grounded on the commonly acknowledged doctrines that exist within the field. Some of the particular chapter topics deal with:

- defining the elements of visual form
- an analysis of the concepts of aesthetics and creativity
- establishing some usable guidelines for effective designing
- outlining many factors that are involved with design education, including a sketch of its history
- miscellaneous related subjects, such as considerations of what makes something exceptional

The aforementioned themes, along with others, are interspersed with interludes that challenge certain long-held assumptions, provide contextual references, offer insights and suggest some fresh ways to analyze how we see, choose, inspire, and do.

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Excerpt: Designers analyze existences in order to conceive and to create improved manifestations. Graphic designers plan and produce in a rational and an interesting way in order to promote communication.

Graphic designs may inform, persuade, beautify, direct, identify, clarify, or entertain. Design helpfully transforms commonalities while contributing to and thereby documenting our civilization.

Innovative design additionally elevates the human spirit and serves to reveal new insights and intrigue while occasionally birthing significant creative artistry.

We live in a visually compelling world where everyone is a player.

Everybody makes daily design decisions through their purchases of objects and clothing, furniture arrangements, organization of editorial copy, and in the production of documents for bosses, clients, or the government. There are everyday, often automatic decisions concerning communications, purchases, and our environment. Everyone exercises their opinions about and even produces design. Ideally, aspects of this book will help all readers to be able to better appreciate, select, or make design-related decisions. I hope that its content is clear enough to assist amateurs. Aspiring designers should consult as many such sources as possible. For the most experienced, this material may add an alternative way to analyze what is encountered and to create, or it might clarify an individual's own points of view. In particular, I believe that chapters 1, 3, and 5 could be illuminating for any adult concerning our visual world. Additionally, chapters 2 and 4 are perhaps a bit more targeted toward design/art students and educators.

My approach is occasionally unique—maybe even original—and sometimes assertive, but it is

grounded in some humble but long-term experiences and thoughtful objectivity. Much of what follows reflects simple common sense, sometimes so obvious that it has not been previously documented or described.

I can make a sandwich but I'm not a chef; I can play an accordion but I'm not a musician. However, many graphic design greenhorns unabashedly inflate their preparedness or authority.

Anyone who has reasonable smarts along with some basic skills can drive an automobile, care for simple injuries, or play a sport, but there are vast differences between the skills of a novice and those of professionals. I have now been driving for six decades. I began with some structured lessons and I then passed the licensing tests. My current traffic instincts developed as the result of thousands of hours behind the wheel while focusing on that activity with a decent degree of concentration. This combination of training and experience provides a level of safety for others and gives me some instinctual confidence. I know that I am a better driver now than I was as a teenager, but I would not survive on a competitive racetrack. Indeed, in most fields, the more that we know about some activity as avowed amateurs, the more we are likely to appreciate the accomplishments of our heroes.

Conversely, in the visual arts, aside from some college art/ design majors, instruction often tends to be superficial, biased, or purely subjective. We are asked to copy pictures, use the proper color within the lines, or to simply "express." Often, art class is a therapeutic respite between studious work on other topics. Even in some schools dedicated to the creative and performing arts, the visual arts lessons are less rigorous and often supportive of the performing events (doing the posters or painting the stage sets for high school plays). Children are expected to simply make art while their parallel interest in music is rewarded with serious lessons and hours of practice before they are asked to compose or even perform complete works. If we aspire to competitive athletics, instruction, conditioning, and drills become a dedicated and pragmatic way of life. Visual acuity is at least as complex but also as teachable as is driving, piano playing, or soccer. It includes

inspired subjectivity but it also incorporates a ton of objective knowledge and many elusive intellectual, visual, and motor skills.

People favor familiar designs even though such preferences have usually been formed by a tattered fabric of accidental lifetime encounters (i.e., traditional-looking furniture pieces that are often tacky imitations, copycat buildings, and mundane pictures) as opposed to open-minded study. Also, there is so much design junk around us that it causes a kind of ugliness fatigue to set in, making us immune to such environmental grime and the derivative violations.

Everyone designs. Amateurs and professionals, as well as the occasional geniuses, create our visually digested world. Most design is casual, and much of it is imposed on us without our being able to select the most enriching pieces. Condescending graphics infest our mailboxes. We are daily forced to encounter constructed buildings and monuments. Self-serving organizations impose clumsy objects, like sidewalk publication dispensers or funky vacation knickknacks, on our psyche. We are so inundated with this vomit that our conscious minds become numbed to its existence while our subconscious absorbs it. We are bombarded by visual swill that goes unnoticed while parallel noises and stink offend us. It is ironic, consequently, that some people so easily interpret the lack of knowledge and skill in visual art as exemplifying primitive charm while clumsiness in any other form of human endeavor (dance, basketball, politics, etc.) is unlikely to be forgiven. Parallel to this is the common assumption that skillfully realistic imagery reflects creativity, although we realize that skilled mechanics are not likely to be inventive engineers, nor are crossword puzzle whizzes consequently equipped to craft romantic poems.

A situation becomes high art/design only if proficiencies, theoretical underpinnings, and creative instincts are manifested, along with purpose, while permeating the viewer's soul. Most Western citizens have not grown up amid a pattern of environmental orientation, information, and education concerning design that parallels our growth in other fields. Our musical tastes progress because we evolve from simple jingles through more and more elegant arrangements. We

selectively expose ourselves to works that are formed by the most accomplished musicians. Similarly, we gradually move from mother's milk to alternative tastes and end up considerably choosing which foods are preferred and what restaurants to support. As parents we will attend any number of junior swim meets, but we also have strong feelings about the athletic strengths and weaknesses of our favorite professional teams. If they're not playing at a superior level, we know it and will likely resist endorsing them with our ticket investments. Olympians in many unheralded sports spend four gut-wrenching years training and sacrificing to have the ability to compete during one captivating week. We individually prefer a certain sport, one ethnic food over others, and a type of music, but we have encountered, respect, and know quite a bit about the alternatives in each category. We usually experience healthy portions of some variety before exercising the notion of individual taste. The public's visual naïveté is mirrored by an inconsistent quality of education in art/design even at the college level, where the studio courses are often not as information driven, skills intensive, or focused on critical seeing and thinking as those in almost any other field.

Individual taste is not the thing that determines whether a design is good or bad. We are not born with the "gift" of good taste or mature artistry any more than we are born with the "gift" of automatic musicianship or basketball prowess. We do not hold equal credentials for doing and judging design quality just because most of us are sighted from birth or because we "know what we like."

I believe that all of us have a share of latent talent and that everyone certainly has the need to participate—but just like all other activities, education and practice greatly enhance one's abilities and the credibility of one's judgments.

After pluralistic knowledge and skills have been soaked up, meaningful spontaneity is possible and it becomes legitimate. It took many lessons and awkward practices before I was comfortable with a proper service motion for tennis. Now I serve spontaneously (although some opponents suggest that it's still quirky). An experienced tennis player reacts without thought but is supported by years of preparatory information and training. There is no

chance of experiencing "the zone" if Joe Shmoe has not paid some sweaty dues, no matter how "naturally gifted."

Eventually, a few people in any field are able to add their own magic to a foundation of knowledge and skills by producing work that excels.

I appreciate superior athletes and recognize my parallel shortcomings, partly because of my own time and efforts on tennis courts. It is interesting that, in most endeavors, what we identify as "acceptable" is simple to achieve, while "good" is just OK and "great" looks, but is anything but, simple.

I will mostly use common terms, but some terminology may be inappropriate or misleading because we have occasionally developed popular definitions that contradict the original intentions, or because given words that may be broadly applicable are too closely associated with one aspect of design. Consequently, a few unique terms and explanations will surface in this document.

There are always latent concepts and previously undiscovered but helpful viewpoints that can contribute to our dialogue. In fact, common beliefs provide the basis for and an encouragement of examination and elaboration or alteration rather than automatic repeating. I believe that my particular engagements have provided me the opportunity to formulate a few fresh insights. So while I do not intend or claim to be revolutionary, my text is sometimes cheeky and will occasionally introduce some virgin ways to consider and clarify design principles and methodologies. Students of my forty-five years as a design educator have tested and employed these ever-evolving initiatives while I have continuously examined and adjusted their validity and use. At the least, I hope to add to the already rich existing art/ design conversation. Conversely, I acknowledge that the lion's share of this content is based on many long-established tenets that have provided the shoulders for my subsequent perspectives to stand on.

This content admittedly leans toward graphic design, but I believe that much of it has parallel validity for considerations inherent to other design and visual art disciplines. We share in the reliance on form and aesthetics as our foundation.

[The Crisis of Ugliness: From Cubism to Pop Art](#) by Mikhail Lifshitz, translated by David Riff [Historical Materialism Book, Brill, 9789004366541]

Mikhail Lifshitz is a major forgotten figure in the tradition of Marxist philosophy and art history. A significant influence on Lukács, and the dedicatee of his [The Young Hegel](#), as well as an unsurpassed scholar of Marx and Engels's writings on art and a lifelong controversialist, Lifshitz's work dealt with topics as various as the philosophy of Marx and the pop aesthetics of Andy Warhol. [The Crisis of Ugliness](#) (originally published in Russian by Iskustvo, 1968), published here in English for the first time, and with a detailed introduction by its translator David Riff, is a compact broadside against modernism in the visual arts that nevertheless resists the dogmatic complacencies of Stalinist aesthetics. Its reentry into English debates on the history of Soviet aesthetics promises to re-orient our sense of the basic coordinates of a Marxist art theory.

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Mikhail Lifshitz: A Communist Contemporary by David Riff

The year 1968 looks very different from a Soviet perspective than it does from a Western one. The

newsreels and tv programmes made in the USSR at the time say it all: the student revolt in Paris receives no more than five seconds (as a trade union inspired strike), while hours of footage are spent to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was a fatal event that ended the socialist Sixties in all their ambivalence as a brief but intensive period of cultural and political liberalization and de-Stalinization from above. Soon afterward, stagnation would set in, so the story goes. For decades, the contributions of Soviet intellectuals and artists would be considered backward, or worse yet, all too eager to catch up to modernity. It was only after the fall of the Soviet Union that their importance to a global history of contemporary culture would come to be recognized.

This is one of the reasons why the Soviet aesthetic philosopher and Marx scholar Mikhail A. Lifshitz (1905-83) has remained largely unknown in the English-speaking world, aside from his early work *The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx*, first published in 19381 and still used today to teach courses on Marxist aesthetics. It is only over the last ten years that scholars of philosophy and cultural history have begun to retrieve his singularity as a 'Marxist conservative,' a 'creative' or 'Western Marxist' trapped in the Soviet Union, an ultra-Hegelian at odds with the more heterodox and opportunistic totalitarian regime, or as one of the founding figures of a secret socialist humanism whose potentiality has yet to be unlocked. Recently, an entire issue of a scholarly journal was published devoted to different interpretations of his work.

The Crisis of Ugliness has not yet been part of this new international reception, however. Published in 1968 only months before the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, it is by far Lifshitz's most controversial book. As a philippic aimed against the canonization of Cubism and Pop, it would finalize Lifshitz's reputation as a hardliner. Yet at the same time, it was one of the few sources on classical modernist and neo-avant-garde art widely available in the Soviet Union in the years to come. It was richly illustrated and served as a valuable source of information even if few agreed with its author's orthodox Marxist views.

The appearance of *The Crisis of Ugliness* was part of an ongoing scandal that first erupted in 1966

when the nationwide weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta published Lifshitz's manifesto-like essay 'Why Am I Not a Modernist,' the last text in the present volume. During the tentative 'Thaw' after Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin's personality cult at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, modernism had stood for de-Stalinization and democracy. It is exactly this link that Lifshitz called into question in his pamphlet. The idea that early twentieth-century modernism was inherently democratic was simply a myth, he argued. In fact, the campaign against reason waged by the thinkers and artists of the avant-garde opened the doors for the epoch's later barbarism. Lifshitz does not condemn this as complicity, but reads it in terms of tragic guilt and historical irony, central themes in his overall work. He admits that there might be 'good modernists', but there is 'no such thing as good modernism. Instead, he votes for even the most mediocre academic art, though he winks and says that his faithful readers will know that this is not where he places his ideals.

In the essay's last sentences, Lifshitz dreams of raising Kafka from the grave to write a short story about the worshippers of modernist darkness, including his own. This mention of Kafka is a local reference for the benefit of the Czechoslovak readerships of the Prague-based journal *Estetika*, for which this text was first commissioned in 1964. But beyond a sympathy for one of the 'good modernists' it also suggests that there might be another, more subversive way of reading Lifshitz's polemic, though very few saw it at the time. Lifshitz's rejection of modernism was broadly interpreted as a demand for an unwanted return to Stalinist orthodoxy. That this demand seemed to come from an otherwise respected intellectual made it look like an act of betrayal.

Some still remembered Lifshitz as a prominent aesthetic theoretician of the 1930s who had fallen silent in the last decade of Stalin's reign. Right after Stalin's death, he had returned to the public eye with one of the first substantial criticisms of the vacuity, sycophancy, and superficiality of Stalinist prose with *The Diary of Marietta Shaginian*. This article was one of the first signs of the 'Thaw', published in *Novy Mir*, a monthly literary journal edited by Lifshitz's wartime friend and former

student, the poet Alexander Tvardovsky. 1954 proved too soon for such and similar critiques. Tvardovsky was dismissed for this and other contributions, though he was later reinstated in 1958, after which *Novy Mir* became the mainstay of institutional revisionism in cultural criticism. Perhaps the journal's most significant publication was that of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag novella [A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich](#) (1962). (Lifshitz wrote an internal review saying that it would be a crime not to publish it.)

Given these affiliations, no one was expecting Lifshitz to offer up any fundamental critique of modernism, and when he did, the negative response was overwhelming. Letters flooded in from all over the country. A group of prominent academics wrote a public statement, former Stalinist hawks like Alexander Dymshits published rejoinders against Lifshitz's outburst of aesthetic conservatism, future dissident Lev Kopelev wrote to him imploring him to recant and give up his unflattering role at the 'Protopope Avakum' of a new sect of aesthetic Old Believers. Only the literary critic Efim Etkind came to Lifshitz's defence. Speaking at a public discussion of *The Crisis of Ugliness in Leningrad*, he pointed out that it was impossible to conflate Lifshitz with standard government issue anti-modernism. Instead, he was a 'tragic figure' who had made immeasurable contributions and upheld something like culture at the darkest hour. But now, he was out of step with his time.

Etkind was right to emphasize the importance of Lifshitz's earlier contributions. In the early 1930s, he had been the first to gather and systematise all references to art and literature scattered throughout Marx and Engels's writings and correspondence, a project that generated both the *Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx*, already mentioned above, and the anthology *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art*, often published under different editorships. Lifshitz's was the first work to examine in detail the implications of Marx's writings before 1848, showing how Marx the disappointed poet first became a radical humanist philosopher, how he developed an anthropology rejecting private property in its stupidity, one-sidedness, and hostility

to all culture, and how he foresaw its positive sublation in a coming revolutionary humanism.

In the 1950s-60s, a new generation would massively tap into precisely this 'young' Marx. Especially Marx's manuscripts of 1844 and their use of alienation would become the mainstay of Marxism humanism in the 1950s-60s. Thirty years before, Lifshitz had been one of the first to work with precisely these texts, arguing that they clearly showed how Marx was heir to a legacy of aesthetics running from Schiller to Hegel and his ambiguous theory of 'the end of art,' whose traces could be found in the pores of his mature critique of political economy. Lifshitz's Marx is a defender of the classics who understands their impossibility under a capitalism hostile to art; he is a critic of Romanticism and its liberal alibi for maintaining a bourgeois autocratic status quo, a partisan of realism, understood broadly, and the forethinker of an art of truth to come once capitalism has ended. 'Art is dead! Long live art!' is Marx's slogan, according to Lifshitz.

There is clearly a link between this early work and Lifshitz's later antimodernist writings, including *The Crisis of Ugliness*. In his introduction to the GD R-translation of his Marx-book in 1960,¹⁰ he shows how his views took shape in the mid-to-late 1920s when he was a student and later a lecturer at the avant-garde art school Vkhutemas. In the 'classical period' of the 'negation of classical art,' Lifshitz would make the case for a Marxist interpretation of classical aesthetics. On the one hand, he opposed the productionism of the Soviet avant-garde, as in the group of artists and poets around the journal LEF. On the other hand, he would rebel against the sociological interpretation of art according to psychoideologies of class, which saw itself as a continuation of the 'sociology of art' developed by the father of Russian Marxism, Georgy Plekhanov. Such sociological art critics would include Vladimir Pereverzev or Vladimir Fritsche. Lifshitz's alternative was a return to Hegel and his lectures on aesthetics, read through Lenin (whose philosophical notes were only becoming known at the time), and brought to bear on the avant-garde's much fetishized negativity. Lifshitz's answer was 'the negation of negation, the Leninist conception of 'appropriating cultural legacies' that

would later become so central to the entire Soviet aesthetic project under Stalin and beyond. In an interview in the 1970s, he says that he dreamed of a New Renaissance, brought about by the self-activity of the emancipated masses, a dream that, as he admits, was utopian," perhaps even more so than that of his modernist colleagues.

In the late 1920s, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Lifshitz was branded as a right-wing deviant, and he left his teaching position for a researcher's post at the Marx-Engels-Institute. It was here that he shared an office with philosopher György Lukács, who, though twenty years older, would later credit Lifshitz as a lasting influence. Lifshitz and Lukács would become friends for life. Their collaboration was especially intense between 1933 (when Lukács definitively moved to Moscow) and 1940, in ever-darker times overshadowed by the rise of National Socialism in Germany and Stalinism in the USSR. Lifshitz's 1933 introduction to his Marx-book clearly positions his efforts as a comprehensive cultural counterproposal to the supposedly integral but actually wildly eclectic fascist *Weltanschauung* that claims classical aesthetics for itself. This anti-fascist pathos resurfaced in a new form in 'Why Am I Not a Modernist' and subsequent texts, just as in Lukács' work from the 1950s-60s.

What also resurfaced through the discussion of 'Why Am I Not a Modernist' and [The Crisis of Ugliness](#) was Lifshitz's ambivalent role in intellectual life under Stalin. 'Somehow, I am guilty,' he would write in reference to his own participation in the fierce intellectual battles that continued right up to the time of the Great Terror. 'But of what? Of the fact that I made use of the [regime's] struggle against the opposition to effect a victory over an even greater evil, but the victory proved ephemeral'. That greater evil, to Lifshitz, was the class determinism and proletarian identitarianism that had grown rampant after 1928 in the 'class war' waged against bourgeois ideology and specialists during the Cultural Revolution. He himself had been a victim. But by 1930, the climate began to change with a series of campaigns in the intellectual world, first against the academic Marxist philosophers of the 1920s such as Deborin,

Sten, and Luppol, then against the workerist literature of the literary organization RAPP, dissolved in 1932, ending with the readmission of non-Communist 'bourgeois' specialists into the intellectual world in the run-up to the Writers' Congress of 1934. In this time, he would rise to prominence as a critic of 'vulgar sociology', attacking the academic philosophers (many of them former Mensheviks) for not recognizing the significance of Lenin's philosophical insights into Marxism. But at the same time, he would begin to develop ideas fundamentally at odds with Stalinism's radical equalization, its deep-seated anti-intellectualism, and its constant tendency to nationalism and isolation.

Lifshitz would later characterize the period between 1931 and 1935 as a gap between two repressive systems in which he was able to make all of his most important theoretical breakthroughs. As cultural policy shifted, it partially embraced the kind of Marxist humanism he championed, and Lifshitz himself became more visible, even if he never received an academic or permanent institutional post. He taught extensively at the Communist Academy until its closure in 1936 and in the period before World War Two, at the Chernyshchevsky Institute for Philosophy, Literature, and History (IFLI), where his lectures were remembered as especially powerful. Lifshitz was prolific as an editor for the publishing houses Akademia and Molodoya Gvardia, where he worked on the Zhizn' znamenitykh lyudei [Lives of Famous People] series. In 1936, he became involved with what today would be called curating as deputy director for scholarship at the Tretyakov Gallery. Here, he participated in the dismantling of the radical museological experiments of Alexei Fyodorov-Davydov, and provided the theoretical foundations for the rehabilitation of early 20th century Russian art and icon painting, which he read as a form of realism.

But most importantly, Lifshitz became known from the mid-1930s onward as one of the key intellectuals around Literaturny Kritik, a journal founded in 1933 in the run-up to the First Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934 to consolidate the literary community. Eventually, the monthly journal became a platform for the critique of 'vulgar

sociology,' and for the articulation of a Marxist aesthetic opposed to the widespread officiousness and sycophancy of the era's culture. 'Under Stalin's shadow, the journal acquired the paradoxical status of a fronde,' writes Stanley Mitchell, and the place where Lifshitz and Lukács would develop their alternative to the normative notions of Socialist Realism. '[Combining] Hegel's aesthetic theory, Marx's early ontology and anthropology, Engels's definition of realism and Lenin's concept of reflection ... the two thinkers developed a model of aesthetics and realism that could be applied to the entirety of history, starting with cave paintings'.

This realism would be far more than a heroic reappropriation of nineteenth-century naturalism, reassembled around a quasi-religious messianic expectation; rather it would tap into the artwork's capacity for reflecting the profounder, more uncomfortable truth of outer reality in all its developing contradictions. This truth will not be the subjectivity of one particular class or nation, but the experience of society as a whole, Lifshitz proclaims in his key article 'Leninism and Art Criticism' (1936), also published in English in 1938. Class consciousness is not the egotism of one class; it is the consciousness of the totality of social relations, attained by overcoming the narrowness of class origin. In practice, this meant that the writers of Literaturny Kritik defended writers previously branded as class enemies. They endorsed the works of international writers like Thomas Mann, and gave very real support to the writer Andrei Platonov, whose dystopian novellas and stories of the ravages of the Civil War and rapid industrialization Stalin personally disliked, and whose frequent presence on the journal's pages eventually led to its closure.

Platonov's presence in the inner circle of Literaturny Kritik is a little like Lifshitz's mention of Kafka in his late 'Why Am I Not a Modernist'. It disrupts any facile critique of Lukács and Lifshitz's turn to classicism and realism as mere antiquarianism or even more to an idealistic form of art production suited to covering up the crimes of the regime, a 'personal Weimar — a cultural island among power relations unambiguously hostile toward any democratic culture,' as Ferenc Feher once put it in reference to Lukács. Stanley Mitchell more

generously speaks of a 'strategic withdrawal' of genuine Marxism to the aesthetic field in response to 'Stalin's suppression of revolutionary politics,' adding that this withdrawal's prototype was the 'reconciliation to reality' that Hegel had reached in the sobering aftermath of the French Revolution. Hegel did not give up on the critical insights or revolutionary ideals of his youth. Instead, he had realized that reason would not prevail on the strength of subjective ideas pitted against reality with willpower alone; if there was such a thing as reason, it was immanent to reality as a whole, even if that whole seemed 'wrong or unreasonable.

Hegel's 'reconciliation' with reality and his recognition of the ideal immanent to the real set his philosophy apart from other German idealism. His realism allowed later readers to radicalize his philosophy, Lifshitz affirmed. In that sense, Hegel's seeming acquiescence to the state or bourgeois society was actually full of subversive elements, to be reclaimed by generations to come. Such subversive elements can also be found in Lifshitz's own texts. He characterises them as a form of ultra-sound, audible only to the trained ear of the thirties, and imperceptible to the repressive machine. A brilliant stylist, he adopted the bombastic, lethal tone of the time's vicious literary polemics. 'But my task consisted in accepting [this tone as an] inevitable precondition, and in overcoming this element of crude directness with a highly developed literary form. I must admit that this was hellish work,' he later wrote in his notes. The resulting style is very much like his characterization of one of his favourite writers, Nikolai Chernyshchevsky, usually known for the bluntness and even woodenness of his all-too-direct prose: 'It is time to finally recognize that Chernyshchevsky wrote intelligently, with a fine, sometimes nearly imperceptible irony, playing the fool while searching for the truth like Socrates, or goading his contemporaries with crass judgements to wake them from their protracted slumber.

Lifshitz's characterization of Chernyshchevsky's bluntness — today one would call it political incorrectness — applies most of all to his anti-modernist texts. Most of his contemporaries and even his faithful readers proved impervious to their

irony, especially vis-à-vis a preexisting and continuing anti-modernist discourse, and not only a pro-modernist one. One can already see this unusual combination in the title of the present book, *The Crisis of Ugliness*. Lifshitz did not invent it but rather lifted it from Georgy Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, who had written about Cubism after a visit to the Salon d'automne of 1912. Plekhanov, in turn, was quoting the late nineteenth—early twentieth-century art critic Camille Mauclair. 'La crise de la laideur' appears in his *Trois crises de l'art actuel* (1906) in reference to the Fauves, whom he accuses of having gone too far afield from the last viable modern painterly practice, impressionism. Plekhanov translated this turn of phrase into Russian as *krizis bezobrazie*. *Bezobrazie*, in Russian, has nuances that the English *ugliness* does not, connoting infantile, even carnivalesque foolishness, leading far beyond the disfigured, the unattractive or the unsightly of the French *laideur*.

Lifshitz picks up Plekhanov's turn of phrase in his critical study of Cubism, the first and longest essay in the book, where he elaborates the attack on Picasso. By the early 1960s, Picasso had been fully rehabilitated as a friend of the Soviet Union, a communist party member, and the author of the dove of peace and *Guernica*, symbols of pacifism and resistance to fascist aggression. His status as a normative classic was beyond question, his early radical work domesticated and considered 'beautiful' or 'expressive'. Lifshitz's study of Cubism rails against this consensus. 'Our yellow-pink drooling over Picasso deserves only a good Russian curse,' he would write in private correspondence. '18 Picasso, Braque, and the others were radicals whose work breathed burning kerosene to scandalize the last generation of aesthetes. To canonize them as a new aesthetic norm would completely miss their anti-aesthetic point. Lifshitz deconstructs the Western canonization of Cubism as a 'Copernican turn', showing how the same hackneyed, unquestionable stereotypes migrated from text to text, eventually making their way into the all-too-uncritical writing of Western neo-Marxists.

Lifshitz opposes such admixtures of modernism and Marxism, and, in his blunt manner, declares the two

utterly incompatible. But on a more subtle level, he also takes issue with the flat-out rejection of modernism in 'Eastern' Marxism, making it clear that censorship or worse are not on his agenda. These are not criminal proceedings against individuals or attacks on personal integrity, he emphasizes, echoing Marx's disclaimer that worker and capitalist are not concrete individuals but character masks. He seeks to complicate the widespread view of modernism as a mere symptom of bourgeois decadence through a critical reading of Plekhanov's 'Art and Social Life'. Plekhanov derides Leger's *Woman in Blue* as 'nonsense cubed' — Lifshitz clearly loves this blunt phrase — and sees it as an expression of decadent bourgeois idealism. But at the same time, Plekhanov ignores the Cubists' larger intent, their attraction to a new order of a wholly constructed, geometricized life, which politically corresponds to their drift to the right. Plekhanov thus bypasses what Lifshitz terms as the social or ontological utopia of all modernism, namely that of a hyper-personal, collectively organized life. Limiting himself to purely formal and logical aspects, Plekhanov infuses most later Marxist writing on Cubism with a heavy dose of 'vulgar sociology'.

Lifshitz proposes to think beyond Plekhanov and to apply Lenin's 'theory of reflection' to Cubism and modernism: to look at the total objective social relations as reflected in the truth-relations of the actual work. Cubism rejects Enlightenment values both in theory and practice; its grammar of primary volumes, passages, and prisms is a decomposition of the rationalist artistic tradition, where optics would strain to see truthfully past illusion. For Cubism, vision offers no such path to truth; its multiple, simultaneous perspectives are hieroglyphs for the dream of attaining a true objecthood beyond vision — via the worship of materiality itself.

This activates another subtext in the Russian etymology of *bezobrazie*, literally 'imagelessness', as in the lack of vision, images, or ideals. Lifshitz was probably not aware that the only equivalent to this etymological construct appeared in theological debates after the Second World War in Germany as *Bildlosigkeit*. But there is a counter-theological subtext in all of his writing that reaches

one of its highpoints in *The Crisis of Ugliness*. In their iconoclasm and their search for a realm beyond images, the modernists resemble gnostic sectarians and mystics. They are true believers in hopeless times whose honest despair reflects 'the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heartbeat of the heartless world'. But their esoteric cults are adopted by the mainstream as opiates and ciphers for the dream of a world where the tortured spirit-mind has finally overcome itself, returning to matter in the form of a fast-moving mass commodity.

This is a new version of Hegel's legendary return of the spirit to matter from [The Phenomenology of the Spirit](#) (1807) that Lifshitz describes in his 'Phenomenology of the Soup Can' (1967), the shorter essay on Pop in this volume. Lifshitz, on the one hand, is making light of the deadly seriousness with which critics and philosophers considered Pop. But deeper down, the irony of his argument targets the conservative soft-modernist attitudes in the Soviet Union: he is mocking those proponents of classical modernism who support the decomposition of painting, but stop short of 'contemporary,' anti-formalist, conceptual practices, scandalized by their vapidness and emptiness.

In a situation generally starved for information, Lifshitz offers Soviet readers a brief history of Pop in an intricate digest-collage of French, German and English-language press clippings, up-to-date with happenings and performances that Moscow neo-modernist artists of the time did not know. He almost gleefully narrates Pop's ascendancy over Abstract Expressionism from the price crisis of abstract painting in 1962 to the Venice Biennial of 1964, and its sprawl into the grey zone between high art and mass culture. Lifshitz's is a view at a remove; he never travelled to the West, compounding an already grandfatherly amazement at the antics — the *bezobrazie* — of the youth in distant lands. Lifshitz is not as scandalized by Pop as his modernist opponents: in fact, he at times even revels in drawing up an evocative narrative where 'the lovely Ingrid,' Batman, and Warhol's factory of superstars all beckon from across the sea. Yet at the same time, he is ruthless in his depiction of Pop's total, self-conscious commodification, its support by the state, but also its role in a society of 'bread and circuses',

a massively expanding retail culture of increasingly atomized, alienated individuals. Lifshitz quotes contemporary American authors like David Riesman or Vance Packard, and there is also an overlap with Guy Debord's 'society of the spectacle', especially in a common sensitivity for what Debord calls the 'philanthropy of the commodity; which Lifshitz describes as the new social demagoguery of a leisure society that pretends it has a new form of 'popular' art. Here, again, Lifshitz takes up the anti-fascist theme of his book, prefiguring the softer, post-modern authoritarianisms whose emergence we are currently witnessing.

The anti-fascist pathos of *The Crisis of Ugliness* is not the only link to Lifshitz's Marx-book of 1933. Another common motif is the role of unhappy or disintegrated consciousness (*zerissenes Bewusstsein*) in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and the importance of this idea to Marx. In a disintegrating modernity, disintegrated, unhappy consciousness has an advantage. 'Since ignoble consciousness understands the "universally human" character of its own way of life,' he writes, 'it can rise to an understanding Of how social relationships generally "disintegrate". Thus, it becomes immeasurably better than official society, which only pursues self-serving motives under the hypocritical guise of honesty and noblesse'. For Marx, disintegrated consciousness had the chance to rise up in indignation, but in the case of Pop (and its predecessors), the indignation targets consciousness itself. This is why Pop is paradoxically flat, consciously dumbed down and intentionally vapid. It imitates the 'philanthropy of the commodity' — its conversion of leisure into a 'down-time' of non-binding, mindless pleasures — but it is made from a complex, fractured 'meta-position of the spirit' that dwells in the upper floors of consciousness and longs for self-oblivion. Today, such figures are still recognizable as the endless longing for the power of plain human stupidity in the age of technocratically accelerated artificial intelligence.

[The Crisis of Ugliness](#) was at odds with the standard government-issue anti-modernist propaganda of its time, as we have seen. Taking up arguments and polemics from three decades before, it placed itself beyond both the outright

rejection of modern art through Stalinist conservatives — on the grounds of its Western or non-proletarian nature — and its partial rehabilitation through the liberal Soviet intelligentsia. An attentive reader will see that this is only possible because Lifshitz's is not an external but an immanent critique of modernism. He is more than familiar with the logic of negation that far more benevolent critics in the West would fetishize. Its performative rejection of the modernist paradigm is at the same time a pastiche of avant-gardist criticism, belying firsthand experience of what it could mean to be a modernist or a contemporary artist.

Part of the historical significance of *Crisis* is that its publication coincided chronologically with a number of decisive cleavages in the art scene. After 1968, the bifurcation between 'official' and 'unofficial' cultures solidified. Both classical modernism and the local neo-avantgardes were increasingly pushed out of the public sphere into a domestic underground. Lifshitz now clearly belonged to the 'official' world, even if his writing and his positions were somehow alien to it. He had vehemently opposed the denial of publicity to modernist (counter)culture, demanding that Soviet audiences make up their own minds on Cubism or Pop. But now, that denial was almost complete. Just as modernism and contemporary art were excluded from the public, Lifshitz's theoretical position — that of Marxism-Leninism — was excluded from any serious debate about what it could mean to be contemporary, modern, or modernist until roughly two decades ago, even though his book was still there as a source.

After 1968, there was another split in the underground itself. Artists like Ilya Kabakov, Erik Bulatov, Viktor Pivovarov, or Komar and Melamid would articulate conceptualist practices, breaking with the 'expressionist' pathos of their neighbours, and rejecting their individual underground quests of metaphysical self-expression as false freedom. This rejection runs parallel to Lifshitz's argumentation against a reconciliatory, aestheticist modernism, but also resonates with his unmasking of its homemade theologies. There is not much evidence of Lifshitz's direct reception among the first generation of Moscow Conceptualists, however. One rare

exception is a short enigmatic blank verse by conceptual poet Vsevolod Nekrassov, another is a recent interview of Alexander Melamid by art critic Andrei Kovalev, in which it turns out that Melamid was always familiar with Lifshitz in detail and even met him, because his parents knew him personally.

It is unclear how far thinkers like Boris Groys or artists like Ilya Kabakov were explicitly influenced by Mikhail Lifshitz's *Crisis of Ugliness*. It is highly suggestive, however, that the first generation of Moscow Conceptualists would be haunted by Socialist Realism and its central contradiction, the universal scope of its aesthetic ambition and its parochial lack of aesthetic means, its cosmic desires to reach the level of species-being — *Gattungswesen* — and its complete vulgarization and flattening of both classical and modernist means at its disposal. (Ilya Kabakov mentions this as the central drama of his artistic socialization, and one modernist practice could never fully overcome.) One could see this as the aesthetic version of the contradiction that Lifshitz — with Engels — sees at the heart of the revolutionary tragedy: 'the tragic clash between the historically necessary postulate and the impossibility of its execution in practice,' or as Lenin would put it in a marginal note, 'the gulf (chasm) between the immensity of the task and the poverty of our material and cultural means'. In Lifshitz's notes and essays, this 'gulf' resurfaces: 'Choleric revolt on the one side, fake communists on the other. How many bodies must we throw to bridge the chasm between them?'

As one can see, there is a huge difference between the Moscow Conceptualists and Lifshitz's positions. For the Moscow Conceptualists, the contradiction at the heart of Soviet aesthetics reflected little more than exhaustion and failure; Soviet aesthetics were interesting to them because they revolved around an 'empty centre'. Lifshitz's view of the revolutionary tragedy — and its possible reflection in aesthetic problems — is full of historical content, of an awareness of the fact that the Soviet experience was far more than just some semiotic construct of a propaganda machine. He would have dismissed the Moscow Conceptualists' obsession with linguistic conventions and hollow language as yet another post-modern version of

the nothing that nothings. (Heidegger, not Lifshitz, Marx, or Hegel, was the philosopher the Conceptualists quoted and admired.)

In that sense, Lifshitz is a contemporary of the contemporary in the moment of its emergence in the Soviet Union, commenting on developments more and more limited in their relevance to the off world of unofficial culture from the increasingly isolated vantage of his own, increasingly conceptual Marxist-Leninist aesthetic philosophy. His untimeliness in the Soviet Sixties, still lingering today, places him in proximity to the figure of the contemporary as described by philosopher Giorgio Agamben through Osip Mandelstam's poetic subject, who mends the broken backbone of the century with his own blood: one foot out of step with the present, yet able to see its darkness, and to understand it as a light from the future that has not reached us. It is this 'darkness' that Lifshitz wants to show when he dreams of reviving Kafka, a darkness that extends far beyond the classics of modernist art or those of the Western or Eastern European neo-avant-gardes into our own present.

That is not to say that Lifshitz should be read as an anticipation of or contribution to contemporary theory, to be inserted seamlessly into a row of other neo-Marxist and post-communist thinkers retroactively. Even if many of his insights prefigure those of post-modern art criticism, he opposed the very idea of post-modernism vehemently in his lifetime. Instead, Lifshitz remains untimely. He stands out like a sore thumb in the world of contemporary theory, whose anti-essentialism and post-universalism cannot tolerate his insistence upon an art of apprehensible truth after the 'end of art'. In a post-colonial setting, his communist apology for Russian and Western European culture in its orientation toward Greco-Roman antiquity and Christianity as an alternative to the 'artificial barbarism' of modernity seems Eurocentric to say the least. Worse yet, his theories of the popularity of art as a criterion for its truth-value and his polemic against modernist elitism could be perceived as the historical version of today's attacks upon contemporary art and its infrastructure by the resurgent radical right.

In that sense, there may be a danger of reading Lifshitz naively as an argument against a 'globalist'

contemporary art that encroaches upon national traditions and popular taste, and claiming that this is where his contemporary relevance lies. Such readings are deaf to the 'ultra-sound' of Lifshitz's writing, whose intention is more to overcome or to sublate modernism than to simply reject it, just as his intention was certainly not to embrace ordinary conservatism with all its variants of chauvinism. As for his purported Eurocentrism, it needs to be seen in the context of Russia as a 'subaltern Empire' on the margins of Europe, where the October Revolution offered a chance to take over and invert self-colonizing relations. One might read Lifshitz's appropriation of Hegel, Marx, Vico, or Winckelmann against the backdrop of Timothy Brennan's *Borrowed Light*, which points toward the reworking of Viconian/Hegelian thinking as an emancipative tool in the former colonies. Moreover, Lifshitz's very definition of realism has non-Eurocentric elements. He recognizes the realism of African or Asian art in its own setting, then de-realized, one might add, in its appropriation by Western modernists. Lifshitz envisions a new Renaissance in the underdeveloped East, but without the imperialist-national chauvinist elements he would oppose quite explicitly at the most dangerous of times. That is ultimately the source of his counter-proposal to the global spread of modernist and contemporary culture as we know it today.

In that sense, it seems crucial to read and translate Lifshitz in his tension as a communist contemporary of the contemporary, to place him into the context of the capitalist contemporary art he rejected, in all his untimeliness. Lifshitz acknowledges the ontological radicalism of an anti-aesthetic art and grasps the vector of its conceptual outcome. But he also continues to insist upon an aesthetic alternative to contemporary culture and its proposition-oriented conceptualism. To imagine that alternative today from the situation of a permanent legitimacy crisis — reflecting a very real epistemic uncertainty vis-à-vis an increasingly instable present — is more than intriguing.

At the same time, this alternative is like Agamben's light of some cosmic event in another galaxy that has yet to reach our planet. In Lifshitz's view of history, art will only shift from its ultra-modernizing

mode of the eternal 'bad' present into true contemporaneity when the self-activity of the masses cleans the legacies of an oppressed humanity's cultural history, putting them to new use in the emancipation of consciousness from the narrow-mindedness of the past. For as long as this self-activity is absent, the crisis of ugliness persists, and Lifshitz's work stands out as an indictment of the art system and the subjectivity that keeps it intact. <>

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