



**Analysing the Migration of People and Images:  
Perspectives and Methods in the Field of  
Visual Culture**

**Silke Wenk with Rebecca Krebs  
Carl von Ossietzky Universitaet  
Oldenburg, Germany**

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## A 1 INTRODUCTION

Images have not only been the privileged subject of art history for some time now, but several other disciplines have also been striving for a “pictorial” or “iconic turn”. In the study of history, especially the history of the natural sciences, it has become an increasingly accepted idea that images, just like any other form of media, whether they are paintings, drawings or photographs, cannot be used as mere documents or sources to illustrate history, but need to be analysed in terms of their own power and effect. The idea that visualisations have the power to create “evidence” is the subject of much critical reflection. In the life sciences, modern methods for generating images are currently prompting questions about earlier techniques.<sup>1</sup> Finally, social sciences are tapping into the heuristic potential of visual methods, and a “visual social science” has been established as an independent line of research calling for an increased application of “visual methods”.<sup>2</sup>

It is widely agreed in discussions concerning the all-encompassing “power of images” that the methods being used are in need of improvement. However, this article is not about tools that can be simply ‘applied’, but about concepts and research perspectives, from which images or other phenomena of visual culture can be investigated.<sup>3</sup>

Over 15 years ago, the literary scholar and theorist W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) claimed to observe “shifts in intellectual and academic discourse” (Mitchell ‘The Pictorial Turn’ [in *Picture Theory*] 1994: 11) which were indications of an increasing turn towards a focus on the problem of visual representation and away from explaining the world through linguistic models (Mitchell ‘The Pictorial Turn’ (engl.) 1994: 11f.<sup>4</sup>) Following the “linguistic turn” announced by the philosopher Richard Rorty, Mitchell coined the concept of the “pictorial turn”, which was intended to mean no more than “a way of stating the question”<sup>5</sup> (1994: 24). With this in mind, the issue at hand is not only how we might conceive of the relationship between image/visuality and language/textuality,<sup>6</sup> but how it is tied up with power and desire. The “need for a global critique of visual culture seems inescapable” (Mitchell 1994: 16<sup>7</sup>).

The power and meaning of images and the visual in general becomes an increasingly difficult and complex question in the context of migration because of a constantly growing number of people and

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<sup>1</sup> See for material and case studies on the question of techniques of visualization Bredekamp&Werner *Bildwelten des Wissens* (2003 f.), Gugerli&Orland 2002, Nikolow&Blumer (2002), Stafford (1994).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ralf Bohnsack 2003, Steven J. Gold 2004 and Leonard M. Henny 1986. See also section 7.3.

<sup>3</sup> For more on this connection, see Mieke Bal *Travelling Concepts* 2002:36f.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell ‘The Pictorial Turn’ (germ.), 1997: 15f.

<sup>5</sup> Mitchell (germ.) 1997: 26.

<sup>6</sup> For an argument against the dualism between image and text often associated with the “pictorial turn”, see Schade 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Mitchell (germ.) 1997: 19.

images in circulation – the latter being a result of the highly developed state of information technology. Television and the worldwide web mean that images are being circulated more and more quickly, disseminating views of other cultures while facilitating their control and surveillance, and also, not least, changing the shape of wars. “In today’s global civil war”, as Nicholas Mirzoeff describes the current situation, “(...) the networks of electronic media have deterritorialized the image, loosening the Western sense of visual mastery and making an image war all but inevitable” (Mirzoeff ‘On Visuality and Image Wars’ 2007).<sup>8</sup>

The tendency for “de-territorialization” is not new, for it is closely tied to the history of media. This can be seen, for example, in Walter Benjamin’s: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1976) [orig. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* 1936] in which Benjamin analyses how technical reproduction has moved the artwork away from its original context. Methods have diversified and thus interpretation has become more complex. Art history has therefore become affected by the development of media since it was institutionalised as an academic discipline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Schade 1993).

Finally, in the context of decolonisation during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not only have the voices of the Other, positioned outside the Western world, become audible, but the views held by the dominant Western culture have also been reflected back on it. For example, images of the (hereby unveiled) women “of the Orient” were purloined by Western photographers and sent into the culture of the colonisers “for a long travel of no return” (Silverman 1996: 149). However, their “return journey” did begin at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at the latest, and they are now confronting us with new questions on their way back.<sup>9</sup>

The discussion of the power of images must therefore also be located in the context of the changes taking place in global relations, which gives rise to the concrete question of the disposition of images. This question involves far more than just art – the crossing of the boundary between “high and low” has also been on the agenda for some time now.

At the centre of the discussion below is a reflection on visual culture as a field in which there is a struggle for power and hegemony. The discussion also focuses on what is made visible to whom, what should remain invisible and from whose perspective.

In short, the question of the analysis of visual culture can be formulated as follows: What is made visible? How and where is it made visible? And how is it “given to be seen”? This perspective holds

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<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff is a professor of Art and Comparative Literature at New York State University and is author of several works on the theory of visual culture. For example Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. (2005) *The Visual Culture Reader*. London: Routledge.

We would like to thank Prof. Mirzoeff for graciously lending us the English manuscript “On visuality and image wars”, quoted here, of his forthcoming German publication. (Nicholas Mirzoeff April 2007)

<sup>9</sup> We are alluding here to the debate surrounding the book by Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (1986.) (orig. *Le Harem colonial: images d'un sous erotisme*. Geneva; Paris: Editions Slatkine, 1981); for further references, see Förschler 2005.

an implicit critique of power and combines the analysis of visual culture with gender and postcolonial studies.

## **B POSITIONINGS**

### **2 “Will they interpret it correctly?” An extraterrestrial encounter**

“In our country, we send pictures of our sign language into outer space. They are speaking our sign language in these pictures.” (Owens 1983: 60). This comment made by Laurie Anderson in her multimedia performance *Americans on the Move* (first performed in 1979) is referring to the image displayed on a plaque fixed to the hull of the space probe Pioneer 10, which was sent on an investigative flight into outer space (more precisely to Jupiter) in 1972. The plaque was intended to be seen by those whom Pioneer 10 might encounter in space: “information about us for other inhabitants of the universe” (Rathjen 1981: 527). The plaque shows an upright man, his right arm raised, with a somewhat smaller shape next to him, suggesting a classic counterpost position (handed down from sculptures of classical antiquity), its arms close to its body. The outline of the secondary sex characteristic identifies the smaller figure as female. (Fig. 1)

In her performance, Laurie Anderson adds the question: “Will they interpret it correctly?” – “Do you think they will think his hand is permanently attached in that way? Or do you think they will read our signs? In our country, good-bye looks just like hello” (cited in Owens 1983: 60). To this Craig Owens adds: “They might logically conclude that male inhabitants of Earth walk around with their right arm permanently raised” (ibid.: 60). One could also wonder if extraterrestrial life forms might think that all people from the earth were always light-skinned, had blond hair and always walked around naked.

The question posed by Anderson, who also studied art history, recalls a methodological model for the “correct” interpretation of images developed by the art historian Erwin Panofsky. In his well-known work “Iconography and Iconology” (1974), Panofsky explores the difficulty and impossibility of merely describing visible forms while disregarding their content. In fact they cannot be merely described but must always be (re) interpreted. To illustrate this problem, Panofsky begins his didactic essay on the description of images with an example from everyday life: He writes about lifting, or tipping, one’s hat in greeting.

Panofsky tells us that this way of greeting is “peculiar to the Western world and is a residue of medieval chivalry” and goes on to say that “neither an Australian bushman nor an ancient Greek could be expected to realize that the lifting of the hat is not only a practical event [...], but also a sign of politeness” (Panofsky 1974: 27). A prerequisite for recognition would be a familiarity “with the more-than-practical world of customs and cultural traditions peculiar to a certain civilization” (ibid.). Therefore, the analysis of historical art must go beyond the “pseudo-formal” and “pre-iconographical

description” (ibid.: 40). For Panofsky, “secondary or conventional” meaning (as opposed to purely formal “primary or natural” meaning) is “intelligible instead of being sensible” (ibid.: 27). It is on this level that he proposes “iconographical analysis” because it requires not only literary knowledge, but also knowledge of the “history of types”, meaning ways of representation that are possible and/or common in different cultures. He also refers to another level, which we will discuss further later, which holds an “*intrinsic meaning or content*, constituting the world of ‘*symbolical*’ values” that may be analysed through an “iconological interpretation” (cf. Panofsky 1974: 40-41).

In summary, Panofsky’s message is that nothing can be interpreted outside a socially communicated or mediated code. Universal readability is an illusion, if not a form of arrogance, if we take the example of Pioneer 10. An essential prerequisite for understanding is a knowledge of the particular cultural context of the past, meaning the historical Other (this is the problem of historical analysis that Panofsky addresses in his model), and of the cultural Other.

This also forms the basis for semiotic theory and analysis. It is possible to detect similarities between Panofsky’s triadic model of “description and interpretation” and the semiological concepts of denotation and connotation.<sup>10</sup> Denotation would here refer to the conveying of what is represented according to codes which have become historical and conventional, while connotation would refer to the tracing of signification beyond this object, or referent (as seen in the second and third levels of Panofsky’s model).

Michael Ann Holly states in her study “Panofsky and the Foundation of Art History” that there are “striking parallels” (1984: 42) between Panofsky’s reflections on semiology and those of Panofsky’s contemporaries, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce:

It was [...] Saussure’s conviction that the structural principles of analysis could be extended to other non-linguistic sign systems. He envisioned an ultimate ‘science’ of semiology that would study the life of all ‘signs within society’ and the ‘laws that govern them,’ even those as seemingly insignificant as the rules of etiquette. The parallels with Panofsky’s tipping are obvious. But also obvious is the possibility of treating works of art, which overtly signify one thing and covertly embody a host of others, in a similar semiological way. The American linguist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, with whose work Panofsky was familiar, corroborated a fundamental tenet of much of the iconological program when he said, ‘Every material image is largely conventional in its mode of representation.’ (ibid.: 43)<sup>11</sup>

Panofsky’s approach has been repeatedly criticised in recent decades, especially in the field of art history because of his fixation on the tradition of the written word and his fascination with the philosophical culture of Neo-Platonism (see for example Otto Pächt and Ernst Gombrich; for further

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<sup>10</sup> See Umberto Eco 2002, Kaja Silverman 1983; problems of denotation and connotation, etc., see also van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Panofsky refers explicitly to Peirce in the following: “Content, as opposed to subject matter, may be described in the words of Peirce as that which a work betrays but does not parade. It is the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – all this unconsciously qualified by one personality, and condensed into one work” (Panofsky 1974: 14).

references, see Holly 1984). His lack of critical reflection on (written) sources and their range of effect has also been problematised because this not only lends itself to misinterpretations (Ginzburg (engl.) 1989), but also to naturalisations, especially in regards to gender (Schade 1994).

Nevertheless, Panofsky appears to be experiencing a renaissance in other disciplines.<sup>12</sup> As Mitchell states in the work quoted above, “the current revival of interest in Panofsky is surely a symptom of the pictorial turn” (Mitchell (engl.) 1994: 16<sup>13</sup>). Panofsky’s insights “make him an inevitable model and starting point for any general explanation of what is now called ‘visual culture’” (ibid.).<sup>14</sup>

As indicated by Laurie Anderson above, the critical approach developed by Panofsky and other cultural studies oriented art historians can be useful not only for the analysis of works of fine art, but also for the interpretation of images found outside art institutions, of day-to-day cultures, and for anything included under the term “visual culture”. However, analysis should profit from the extended use of semiological approaches and from a reflection on the concept of culture.

### **3 The concept of visual culture between the history of art and social sciences**

The concept of visual culture can be traced back to various academic sources. One of its most immediate links is with cultural studies. James Elkins has already pointed out this link with reference to the ground-breaking studies by the British scholars Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and especially Stuart Hall (cf. Elkins 2003: 1-4). Elkins remarks that the term “visual culture” first appears in the book by the art historian, Michael Baxandall, “Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy” (1972). Elkins also refers to Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes and states that the concept of visual culture shares a similarity “to sociology in the European sense – that is, unquantified and culturally-oriented sociology” (Elkins 2003: 2f; in reference to Janet Wolff 1998).<sup>15</sup>

In many respects, the concept of visual culture can also be traced back to cultural-historically oriented art history in Germany before 1933, and therefore to Erwin Panofsky, who was forced to emigrate to the United States in 1933. Both Panofsky’s historical studies on the Gothic and the Renaissance periods and his model for the interpretation and description of fine art are of relevance to the critique of an art history based merely on the history of artists, forms and styles, and are also critical of regarding the ideas or intentions of the artist as decisive for interpretation (a critique of “intuitionism”,

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<sup>12</sup> Bohnsack 2003, Kappas&Müller 2006: 11 ff., Michel 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell (germ.) 1997: 19.

<sup>14</sup> This is why we will return to Erwin Panofsky as an interdisciplinary “bridging figure” several times in the following.

<sup>15</sup> An annotation on the genesis of the term “visual studies” appeared for the first time in the early nineties (University of Rochester Program). According to Elkins, in 1995, Mitchell “used visual studies as a name for the confluence of art history, cultural studies, and literary theory, each of them in the sway of what Mitchell calls the ‘pictorial turn’” (Elkins 2003: 4f.). Elkins includes a list of publications from the nineties relating to the concept of visual culture.

as Bourdieu later calls it).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, particularly in the German-speaking world, a rediscovery of the works of Aby Warburg is also of significance here. His research on the Renaissance, the “afterlife of antiquity” and the snake ritual of the Pueblo Indians<sup>17</sup> ventures beyond the institutional borders of art history in many ways. Due to his interest in the effect and migration of images, or rather image formulas, his analyses are not just investigations of works that are acknowledged as “high art”, but also for example postage stamps. His analysis of art as a “social vessel of memory” and of image formulas (“Bildformeln”)<sup>18</sup> as a kind of “afterlife” of the past is a far cry from simple descriptions of mere forms, motifs or artists’ biographies.<sup>19</sup>

In calling for art history research to be more like cultural-historical research, with the hope of decoding artistic and cultural artefacts from the past as evidence of ways of thinking and forms of representation that have become history, Panofsky and other art historians prior to the Second World War converged with leading sociologists.<sup>20</sup> Max Weber, Georg Simmel and Karl Mannheim were all involved in the development of the paradigm of “structural understanding” (cf. Abels 1992: 215; cf. his reference to Ulrich Oevermann’s so-called “structural hermeneutics” 1983 224f; 226f).

Agreement between the above-mentioned “giants of sociology” (Abels 1992: 215) and art historians is also evident in the move away from the idea of the artist as an autonomous subject: “A clear convergence of thinking is evident in the discourse of the time in the assumption of a driving force operating behind the subjects’ backs.”<sup>21</sup> (ibid.: 218). There was a broad spectrum of ideas and disagreements regarding how this force, which operated behind one’s back (e.g. the unconscious), could be formulated in theory, especially in the time after 1945. Objections were made, for example, to the theoretical propositions arguing that collective structures are “expressed” in the works of individuals. The British art historian Ernst H. Gombrich sees in such propositions a relic of the romantic philosophy of history (Gombrich ‘Achievement in Medieval Art’ *Meditations* 1963, cf.

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<sup>16</sup>See also Michael Ann Holly (1984). Holly points to the broader tradition of contextualist projects elaborated by cultural historians like Jacob Burckhardt and also Wilhelm Dilthey.

<sup>17</sup>Warburg’s lecture on the serpent ritual, held in German in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, in 1923 for the first time, was first published in English: Aby Warburg (1938-39) “A Lecture on Serpent Ritual”, *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II, 222-292.

<sup>18</sup> Panofsky has coined the term of the “pathos formula”, which has become famous in the academic debates: “The *Pathosformeln* are meant to be considered as visible expressions of *psychic* states that had become fossilized, so to speak, in the images.” (Gertrud Bing, acc. to Michaud 2004: 15 f.)

<sup>19</sup>It should be noted that it is Warburg’s perpetuating investigations that have been inspiring for subsequent art historians, while many of Warburg’s ideas must be debated, especially his understanding of a “racial memory” (cf. Gombrich 1970).

<sup>20</sup>See Burkard Michel 2006: 109 ff. for the relation between Mannheim and Panofsky and for Panofsky’s relevance to Bourdieu.

<sup>21</sup>Translated by Judith Ingg (in the following JI). It is likely that a basis for this assumption can be found in Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819) in which he describes the unconscious as a driving force. Mannheim states: “The part of a work of art that contrasts with the documented level of meaning flows into the work ‘instinctively’ from the artist, and is therefore in no way ‘intended’ or ‘meant.’” (Mannheim (1921/22) 1964: 119) The driving force is thus unconscious. Mannheim also identified such notions in Panofsky, who saw art theory not as providing a correct interpretation of what the artist intended, but understood it as a document “for that otherworldly consciousness, the artistic need driving the artist” (Abels 1992: 218, transl. by JI).

Ginzburg 1989: 45). Accordingly, Gombrich argues against the drawing of parallels between individual artistic expressions and cultural or social structures because this could lead to a problematic “physiognomic” form of interpretation which could take the place of genetic studies (see Ginzburg 1989: 44).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Gombrich also argues against the interdisciplinary study of social phenomena and associations, and he is also in favour of a more exact (specialised) look at the history of art and images. According to Gombrich, images should be explained through their relation to other images.<sup>23</sup> He therefore reserves the pursuit of a cooperation between social history and the history of art for a later date.<sup>24</sup>

Panofsky himself also revisits the concept he previously introduced after 1945. In the last ten years of his life, he made a significant correction to his work, for even he, as Carlo Ginzburg notes, sensed a “certain diffidence” concerning the iconological method. According to Ginzburg, an indication of this is a correction made by Panofsky in a reprinting (in 1955) of his introductory essay to *Studies in Iconology*:

The object of iconology, he had originally written, is represented by those ‘underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work’. In the reprinting, the word ‘unconsciously’ is omitted (Ginzburg 1989: 41<sup>25</sup>)

This omission can be read as a tendency on Panofsky’s part towards an art history which sees artists as autonomous subjects and which dominated well into the sixties. It can also be read as an omission of all those processes which Sigmund Freud had made the subject of his research.<sup>26</sup> Here, it is not the unconscious, but the art historians who pretend to be *Herr im eigenen Haus* (masters in their own house).

Not only have subsequent art historians (especially feminist art historians) argued in favour of contextualising art, but this also holds true for the founders of cultural studies. One important step in this direction has been redefining the idea of culture. Cultural studies not only strive to dismantle the

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<sup>22</sup>Gombrich problematises the idea that an artistic style prevailing in a particular historical period could be interpreted as an expression of an “hypostasised collective personality” (Gombrich ‘Achievement in Medieval Art’ *Meditations* 1963: 75). He argues against the concept of style as “a whole expressive system” (ibid.) through which one should be able to detect the spirit of an epoch, and against the idea of styles as “imaginary super-artists” (as Gombrich writes in another article in the same series of papers, in this case citing André Malraux) which “provide[...] the shortest route to the mentality of civilizations otherwise inaccessible to us” (Gombrich ‘André Malraux ...’ *Meditations* 1963: 79).

<sup>23</sup> “All paintings, as Wölfflin said, owe more to other paintings than they owe to direct observation” (Gombrich *Art and Illusion* 1972: 315).

<sup>24</sup> “In posing new questions over the ties between form and function in art, one should perhaps make new contacts with sociology and anthropology. But this in large part, remains to the future.” (Gombrich, preface to the Italian edition of *Art and Illusion* Turin 1965 p. XXXIV cit. in Ginzburg 1989: 59).

<sup>25</sup> Ginzburg (germ.) 2002: 116. Article first published in Italian under the title “Da A. Warburg and E.H. Gombrich (Note su un problema del metodo)” in *Studi Medievali*, 3.R., VII, 1966, 1015-1065)

<sup>26</sup> Gombrich also argues that there is a distance between art history and the psychoanalytic approaches to interpreting art (provided that they refer to “the private unconscious meaning of work”) (see the Ernest Jones lecture “Psycho-Analysis and the History of Art” 1953, in: Gombrich *Meditations...* 1963: 30 ff).

equation of culture as a concept with a single “high culture”<sup>27</sup>, but also aim at analysing culture as a field shot through with differences and conflicts and as a field of articulations where “(...) meaning is always the result of an act of ‘articulation’ (an active process of production in use within specific social relations)” (Storey 1994: ix, with reference here to Hall).

The cultural field is defined by this struggle to articulate, disarticulate and rearticulate cultural texts and practises for particular ideologies, particular politics. Hall contends that ‘meaning’ is always a social production, a practise. The world has to be *made to mean*’ (Storey 1994: ix).

This also means that the idea of artistic expression being a ‘reflection’ or ‘expression’ of collective structure is thrown overboard. To this, Storey adds, “(...) cultural studies argues that culture’s importance derives from the fact that it helps to constitute the structure and shape the history” (viii f.). On the other hand, disagreements often flare up in the field of cultural studies in regard to the question of how to see the relation between personal activity and predetermined structures (such as ideology), especially when analysing popular culture, film and television (cf. Maier 2007).

#### **4 “Habitus” and memory, or dismantling the dualism of structure and activity**

Arguments against the dualism of subject and structure are also made by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose work lends itself both to cultural and social sciences. It is interesting that in his development of the concept of “habitus”, Bourdieu refers to Panofsky:

In the centre of the individual we may analyse the collective in the form of culture – in the subjective sense of the word ‘cultivation’ or ‘education’ [...] or, in Erwin Panofsky’s terms, in the sense of ‘*habitus*’, which links the artist to the collective and to the period, and without him noticing, reveals the objective and direction of his seemingly unique work (Bourdieu ‘Der Habitus als Vermittler zwischen Struktur und Praxis’ 1974: 132, emphasis Pierre Bourdieu).<sup>28</sup>

However, Bourdieu also goes a step further than Panofsky, looking for concrete links rather than mere analogies of thought, and finally for a “unifying, generative principle of all *practices*” (Bourdieu *Distinction* 1996<sup>5</sup>: 173; emphasis SW). He defines “habitus” here as a “structuring structure which organizes practices and the perception of practices” (ibid.: 170). “Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents” (Bourdieu & Wacquant *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* 1992: 127).

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Matthew Arnold *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), who formulated culture as the contact with “the best which has been thought and said in the world”.

<sup>28</sup> Translated by JI. Bourdieu first published this text as a postscript to his French translation of Panofsky’s “Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism” (1952) ( French: Erwin Panofsky *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique* 1967). See for the scholastic tradition discussed there (for example, Thomas Aquinas) Kraus & Gebauer 2002: 26f.). Bourdieu refers to Panofsky also in his article “A Sociological Theory of Art Perception” arguing against what Bourdieu calls “the ideology of the fresh eye” (Bourdieu 1993: 220).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus should not only be understood as an argument in favour of dismantling the opposition between action and predetermine structures, but it also contains elements of a theory of memory that lend themselves well to the analysis of visual culture.

For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus focuses on how history becomes accumulated or stored in every individual by means of that individual's actions, defining the "habitus as the social made body" (Bourdieu & Waquant *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* 1992: 127). Thus he insists on the historicity of the individual, because historicity not only determines the individual, but, at the same time, it is activated through the individual's actions. Bourdieu views memory as being anchored in the body. Not only are arms and legs "full of hidden imperative" (*Sozialer Sinn* 1987: 128, cited in Kraus & Gebauer: 34), but the eye is also a "product of history reproduced by education", the "'pure' gaze a historical invention" (Bourdieu *Distinction* 1996<sup>5</sup>: 3).<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, he describes "primary recognition" as "misrecognition, recognition of an order which is also established in the mind" (ibid.: 172). Although Bourdieu's critique of the "pure gaze" is similar to Panofsky's, Bourdieu's argument is also much more concrete and is rooted in the social origin of the individual – and thereby also in the position of the intellectual.

In the face of the critique of the notion of habitus, Kraus and Gebauer conclude the following from their readings of Bourdieu:

The stability of the habitus, that which is positively termed 'identity', has often been criticised as a problematic aspect of the concept of habitus: it has been made structurally immune to alteration and social change. Stability and coherence however do not imply a closed system of dispositions, principles of order, and classification schemata free of contradiction, nor do they imply an immunity to change (Kraus & Gebauer 2002: 71).<sup>30</sup>

To this they add, "Bourdieu himself gave an example of the strife, conflict and contradictions in the habitus of the modern individual" (72). In his last lecture, in a "sketch for self-analysis" he finally spoke of a "*habitus clivé*", a "cleft habitus", by stating "that the contradictory coincidence of election into the educational aristocracy with lower-class and provincial [...] origins underlay the constitution of a *cleft habitus*, generating all kinds of contradictions and tensions" (Bourdieu *Science of Science and Reflexivity* 2004: 111, emphasis Bourdieu).<sup>31</sup> Finally, Kraus and Gebauer conclude: "In the complexity of its structures and its criteria of social differentiation, modern society provides an explosive charge in the habitus of the subject, conflicts between different ideas of order and ways of behaving, which repeatedly question what is taken for granted in practice" (Kraus & Gebauer 2002: 2002: 72f.).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Michel proposes to use Bourdieu's concept of the habitus to introduce an innovative form of analysis of reception, which reconciles perspectives from the humanities and the social sciences. Still Michel does not take into account the important aspect of memory, which Bourdieu's concept comprises.

<sup>30</sup> Translated by JI.

<sup>31</sup> Orig. *Science de la science et réflexivité*. Cours du Collège de France 2000-2001, Paris: Raison d'agir

<sup>32</sup> Translated by JI.

To analyse and reflect is after all a part of scientific practice. Bourdieu calls for the “socio-analysis” and “anamnesis” of academics (*Schwierige Interdisziplinarität*<sup>33</sup> 2004: 185; cf. also Hark 2005: 393 f.) He points out that each of us carries a past that shares resemblance to the one ascertained by psychoanalysis. Each step into the past taken by the researcher must undergo a “rigorous, critical examination”. Not only must the reactivated past be questioned, but “every reference to it that can lead to a systematic distortion of memory and thereby a memory being reawakened through the unconscious” (Bourdieu *Schwierige Interdisziplinarität* 2004: 185). A similar argument can also be made for the practice of iconology.

## **5 Another encounter: recognition as “re-knowing” and acknowledging**

We would like to return for a moment once again to Panofsky’s didactic example mentioned above. Up to now we have omitted the fact that Panofsky continues with the example of a man lifting his hat to lay the foundation for a hierarchy of analytical levels of description. He thereby attempts to clarify the ascending order from iconography to iconology (Panofsky compares this to the ascending order of ethnography to ethnology; Panofsky 1974: 32) and to “science” – and thereby towards the meaning of “the intrinsic content of a work of art” (ibid). If iconography means the investigation of historical sources for comparison and classification which include texts as well as visual representations (history of style and representation), then the art historian is nudged towards a further stage of interpretation that enters the iconological level: “(...) iconology, then, is a method of interpretation, which arises from synthesis rather than from analysis” (ibid.). At this point, however, Panofsky’s descriptions of the necessary “equipment for interpretation” become rather vague: He only mentions “intuition”, which is characterised by “personal psychology and *Weltanschauung*”, and “familiarity with the *essential tendencies of the human mind*” (1974: 41, emphasis Panofsky).<sup>34</sup>

Looking again at Panofsky’s example of the interpretation of a man lifting his hat in greeting, it becomes clear that the historian is referring to a cultural context which he leaves unquestioned and which can be interpreted according to the categories of education, expertise, masculinity and an authority these categories inspire. The art historian implicitly revokes, to a certain extent, the cultural perspective emphasised above and thereby argues that one must not only understand cultural conventions, but also that what constitutes the “personality” of the man lifting his hat on the street is

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<sup>33</sup> The text “Teilnehmende Objektivierung” we are referring to was originally held as a speech “Participant Objectivation. Breaching the Boundary Between Anthropology and Sociology: How?” on occasion of the conferment of the Huxley Memorial Medal 2000, Royal Anthropological Institute on 6 December 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Panofsky also discusses, as a corrective principle for this level of analysis, a knowledge concerning the “history of cultural symptoms or ‘symbols’ in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts)” (1974: 41).

“revealed” to an “experienced observer” (Panofsky 1974: 27). Herein lies the “intrinsic meaning or content”, and it is the task of the iconologist to identify it (Panofsky 1974: 28).

Recognition (in the double sense of the word) seems to take place in a space where there is no danger that someone might interpret “incorrectly”: “a homogenizing discourse that effaces conflict and difference with figures of ‘organic unity’ and ‘synthetic intuition’” (Mitchell 1994: 30).

In his article *The Pictorial Turn* Mitchell confronts this “primal scene” of iconology with another “primal scene”, that of Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology (cf. Mitchell 1994: 29 ff), and thereby defines it as a historical-cultural formation which disguises itself as natural and universal. In contrasting both “primal scenes”, Mitchell points to Panofsky’s analysis of perspective as a concept that is in no way natural or universal, but is historically informed (cf. Mitchell 1994: 29f.). Thus, Mitchell argues in favour of a critical iconology which includes a reflection on the positioning of the researcher,<sup>35</sup> his or her “situatedness” in relation to social status, his or her gendered and (non)racialised position and his or her place in the world.

Self-reflexivity, as advocated by Bourdieu, therefore also involves the analysis of the (unspoken) codes which make communication possible by connecting signs with meaning and by making objects and bodily gestures seem natural. Thus, signification is an infinite process: “(...) semiotics is not only a theory, but a continual practice. And this is also because semiotic analysis itself changes the system it investigates”<sup>36</sup> (Eco *Zeichen* 1977: 189).

## **C IMAGES AND GLANCES/THE LOOKS OF OTHERS**

### **6 An encounter under the camera’s glance**

At this point, we would like to change to a quite different greeting scene altogether. The context is that of migrant workers in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1964.

On 10 September 1964, after a 48-hour train journey, Armando Rodrigues de Sá, a 38 year-old carpenter from Portugal, arrived at Köln Deutz (Deutz, district of Cologne), the central interchange station for migrant workers at the time.

He had been chosen by representatives of the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA) as the “one millionth” guest worker and was subsequently celebrated and presented with a bouquet of carnations and a moped (cf. Didczuneit 2004, [www.angekommen.com](http://www.angekommen.com); acc. 4 Dec. 2006). His arrival was a media sensation that was broadcasted on television and radio, and his picture was all over the German press. Forty years later, it was in the news again, and the moped stands now in the

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<sup>35</sup>See also Holly: “(...) Panofsky provided the model for his own intellectual biography with his refusal to confine his thought within disciplinary boundaries. We are but being faithful to his principles of investigation when we bring his methodology to a historical understanding of his own work and its underlying principles” (1984: 45).

<sup>36</sup> Transl. Michelle Miles.

Haus der Geschichte (Museum for German History) in Bonn. (Fig. 2) A number of years earlier, in 1993, the organisers of the Zündapp-Jubilee Exhibition at the Berlin Museum for Transport and Technology also expressed interest and borrowed it temporarily from the de Sá family.<sup>37</sup>

Written accounts indicate that the meeting was not a positive one for Rodrigues de Sá. Rather it seems that there was a misunderstanding. When his name was announced over the loudspeaker, his first thought was of the police and that they wanted to send him back to Portugal (then still a dictatorship), and so he tried to hide. A priest acted as an interpreter and explained the situation to him. A photograph that was first published much later shows him with a distrustful look on his face, confronted with a wall of photographers and dazzled by the camera flashes. (Fig. 3) Most likely, in view of his experience of living under the surveillance of a dictatorship, being photographed in this way may well have been “*un-heimlich*” (uncanny) to him. This reminds us that the camera is not just a device used for the “portrayal” of people and objects, but is also closely linked to the (colonial) history of record-keeping and control (see chapter 10).

The cultural context in which people see, are seen, and “give themselves to be seen” is affected by the media and by power relations. Perception is therefore not only influenced by the images available, but also by whom ever is controlling the medial apparatuses which produce and circulate the images.

## **7. Migrants and (visual) myths in archives**

### **7.1 The image of greeting**

Through the above mentioned photos depicting the image of the Portuguese migrant worker and how he was welcomed with carnations and a moped, the guest worker (“Gastarbeiter”) was constituted as a subject. The photograph suggests the “friendliness” of a “host country” which had long been a destination for immigrants. With reference to Roland Barthes, this case could be analysed as an example of existing “mythologies”, as a “myth of today”: The easily determined “meaning” here (Barthes *Mythologies* 1993: 114), or the photograph’s message, is that of a man coming from abroad to look for work who is welcomed and given a gift. However, the meaning, or message, goes beyond this. The photograph is made up of two signs (the guest worker and the moped), which in turn each consist of that which gives meaning (signifier) and that which is meant (signified).<sup>38</sup> The photograph’s two signs create a new sign, which in turn generates yet another meaning. Barthes calls this a “greater” or “*second-order semiological system*” because “it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it” (Barthes *Mythologies* 1993: 114). On the one hand, we have the man from abroad,

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<sup>37</sup>For the story in detail, especially pictures of the welcome, see Didczuneit 2004.

<sup>38</sup> See Barthes’ triadic graph in *Mythologies* 2001: 115; *Mythen des Alltags* 1964: 93. Barthes explains how a sign consisting of a signifier and signified itself becomes a signifier and thereby signifies something new. This is where he explains the “second-order semiological system” of “myth”. He also illustrates this in several examples which move from certain story or historical figure towards an abstract meaning.

looking for work (and who will find it), and on the other, we have the moped as a symbol of mobility, progress and economic recovery. One resulting meaning which is created is that Germany is a generous and welcoming country.

In his work *Mythologies*, Barthes describes the function of myth as transforming history into something natural, in other words myth “naturalises”. Historicity becomes disguised, leaving behind a supposedly generalised meaning, a visual “presence”.

The images of Rodrigues de Sá and his moped have been widely circulated. It is seldom mentioned, however, that he died in 1979 in his home country of a stomach cancer that was diagnosed too late. In 2004 his story was told again - this time with the intention of critically examining the changes in immigration policy.

It is also striking that the way in which the foreign worker was explicitly coded as male appears never to have been a subject of discussion (women were not featured initially, even though they numbered almost a quarter of all foreign workers, Oulios 2004 [www.wdr5.de/...](http://www.wdr5.de/), acc. 4 Dec. 2006). However, there is comparable documentation of a female migrant worker’s welcome, Malike Fakim, which appeared a few years later in 1971: “the thousandth female migrant worker from Morocco” (see *Projekt Migration* 2005: 30 and 31). The photographs show Fakim receiving a bouquet of flowers and wearing an expectant expression. (Fig. 4) They clearly represent an (image) portrayal that is gendered: while Rodrigues de Sá is given a moped, with which he is photographed, as a male connoted sign of (technical) potency and mobility, Malike Fakim is given the lovely ‘accessoire’ of a bouquet of flowers as the one thousandth guest worker. She also received a small parcel, which she holds in her hand. Its contents remain undisclosed, and one can only guess that it might hold jewellery or sweets. It is symptomatic that the photograph of the one millionth *male* guest worker with the moped became a myth of hospitality. In collective (cultural) memory, which is also shaped by the ‘musealisation’ of history exemplified by the Haus der Geschichte museum in Bonn, *the* guest worker in Germany is male and is associated with the technical and potent Germany of the ‘Wirtschaftswunderjahre’ (years of economic boom in the fifties and early sixties). The female guest worker, on the other hand, is someone to be decorated with flowers, and who is also decorative. While the two different types of portrayal and visual positioning of ‘the guest worker’ appear obvious to us today, it cannot be assumed that they were strategically and deliberately staged at the time. Instead, they appear spontaneous and self-evident, affected by the sway of naturalised gender.

Collective and cultural memory is not only dictated by intention; things happen that memory did not intend. Although many things occur “in passing”, they still have a decisive effect on the structure of memory in a certain cultural context.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The concept of cultural memory was introduced by Jan Assmann & Tonio Hölscher (1988, see also in English Assmann 1995) as an expansion of Maurice Halbwachs’ theory of “collective memory” (germ. Halbwachs 1967, engl. Halbwachs 1980). Harald Welzer (2001) argued against an understanding of a primarily intentional cultural memory, focussing on how social memory becomes unconsciously engrained and how the past is conveyed and

## 7.2 Migrants in the archive, or the archive as a place of selective collective memory

The images of the world that are made accessible to us through various forms of archiving influence our mental pictures, our imagination and our perception. Conversely it is these conceptions (structured collectively and culturally) that determine which material images will actually be produced and stored and how migration or migrants are made visible.<sup>40</sup>

Photographs, internet databases, books, the press, and museums or archives of cultural and commercial images are forms of selective and materialised memory storage. The different types of storage, which rely on categories, systems and accounts, exercise inclusion and exclusion.<sup>41</sup>

Inspired by an earlier research project that identified stereotype patterns in the Swiss daily press, the ethnologist and film researcher Flavia Caviezel, the artist and publicist Ulrich Binder and the art researcher Ulrich Vogel investigated whether similar patterns could also be found in Swiss image archives, which the press rely on to a large extent (Vogel, Binder and Caviezel 2006). Their main focus was whether it was the press itself that was instrumental in forming stereotypes or whether these were determined by the availability of archive material. The authors' primary argument was that the image archive, as "visual memory", depicts "cultural-medial perception" and its "historical development" and is therefore a constituent part of "regional and national identity politics" (ibid: 8).

Caviezel (ibid.) investigated the archived representation of migrant workers and migration and established that there is little to be found under this term, although the Swiss population includes a large proportion of immigrants (Caviezel comments that 33% of the Swiss population consists of immigrants or their descendants). However, searching the content of archives as a way of "receiving images, is practically impossible without textual comment and involves the receivers' own stereotypes" (Vogel, Binder and Caviezel 2006: 72).

Caviezel divides the analysis of the archival representation of migration into the following categories: work, community life, education, leisure time, arrival and departure, religion, and political activity. In doing so, she notes that the archival content is characterised in particular by culturally formed images of the Other ("kulturelle Fremdbilder"), politics and everyday topics. It reflects fewer statistical facts than is suggested by the traditional ideal of the archive as the most comprehensive reservoir of knowledge possible and therefore as portraying the "world". Thus, for example, there is no "real proportional representation of specific ethnic groups" (Caviezel 2006: 58). Instead, the frequency or

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given meaning "en passant" (in passing) (Welzer 2001, 12 ff.). For more on gender studies, see Eschebach & Wenk 2002.

<sup>40</sup> See also Vogel, Binder and Caviezel 2006:8; for more on inner images, see Mitchell *Iconology* 1986.

<sup>41</sup> See for this also the section on archives written by Isabel Carrera Suárez and Laura Viñuela Suárez.

deficiency of archival representations reflects the relationship of the receiving community with the particular minority group.<sup>42</sup>

By focusing on specific areas in the archives, one begins to notice certain patterns acting as collective accounts, for example the account of the (predominantly) male immigrant, who uses his body for manual labour on building sites or in factories. There are very few or no images of migrants in academic or well paid professions. It is perhaps not by chance that alongside the image of the male migrant engaged in manual work there can be found connotations of the “stereotype of southern (exotic) eroticism” (“Stereotyp südländischer Erotik“) invoked by pin-ups or depictions of the worker’s body in the archived photos (Caviezel 2006: 60).

According to Caviezel, demonstrations are another recurrent motif in the archives. Compared with photographs from the 60s and 70s, recent pictures depicting immigrants in contact with the police are far more numerous.

The temporary status of migrants in workers’ housing (often in dorms) is documented in detail. Rarely however does the camera’s gaze stray into immigrants’ private homes. The motif of arrival and departure is also central and is an “important theme” for migrants as well as the population as a whole (Caviezel 2006: 67). The airport has replaced the railway station in more recent archive stocks as a central location of “transition” and borders. In more recent photographs, Caviezel perceives a “more emphatic” look. What is striking here is the focus of the camera on women with children or on older people who are juxtaposed in the image with representatives of state authority.

A redundancy of motifs, such as construction or factory workers, community life in “foreign workers’ lodgings” in the 50s and 60s, demonstrations, pictures of arrivals and departures (as seen by the emblematic picture of Rodrigues de Sá at the station), and even “southern eroticism” resurfaces in the 80s and 90s in German publications (e.g. Weber 1993) which may be classified as social photography reflecting the theme of migration after the Second World War. These images portray country-specific stereotypes, such as the pizza baker from Italy or large numbers of migrants in an urban context, while the Swiss pictures show migrants in mainly rural settings.

The Swiss and German stereotyping of images of migration (applicable to many other corresponding visual memories in other national contexts) is disguised by the medium of photography, which acquires a documentary characteristic. The photographs appear to reflect an “observational position” (Caviezel 2006: 59).

The (national and/or regional) documentation of migration can perhaps be primarily understood in terms of the way in which it sets apart one’s ‘own’ identity from that of the ‘other’, or the ‘foreign’. The use of stereotypes is what makes the immigrant visible as the “other” in the first place. Photography’s characteristic of selecting the “unusual” and “out of the ordinary” (Vogel, Binder and

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<sup>42</sup> Similar discrepancies between statistics and archived items were also recorded for the representation of female migrant workers in the service sector. Even if according to statistics every second employee in the Swiss service sector has a migrant background, female migrant workers make up only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of all employees in this field.

Caviezel 2006: 76) further contributes to a distortion which creates its “own medial reality” (Schiffer 2004: 29) and which can deviate markedly from statistical facts. In its “indicative function” (Schiffer 2004: 28-29 referring to Bühler 1965: 36f) the (image) sign is the part that stands for the whole; the headscarf wearer becomes the representative for “*the* Muslim woman” (or Rodrigo de Sá the incarnation of the ‘happy foreign worker’). Another common way of stereotyping is to designate a distinctive physiognomic feature or other external attribute, such as the moustache, as a symbol representing the Turkish “guest worker” in Germany or the Italian foreign worker in Switzerland (Caviezel 2006: 72). In his video production “Arrangement” in 2005 (see catalogue “This Land is my Land”, NGBK Berlin, 2006: 36-39), the artist Harun Farocki shows how this kind of stereotyping signifying the quintessential “guest worker” or migrant developed into an unambiguous symbol in pictograms, in statistics and illustrations, in official brochures as well as in school and language-learning textbooks.

Similarities to and differences from the archival patterns mentioned above can be found in photographs produced in part by migrants in the context of book publications (Kurt & Meyer 1991 and Schulte et al. 1985) and in those submitted to photography competitions devoted to the theme of migration (Museum für Fotografie Braunschweig (Museum for Photography in Braunschweig) 1999 and Kutz et al. 2003).

The former (Kurt&Meyer 1991, Schulte et. al. 1985) bear a similarity to the photographic representation of the Swiss archive images. Here the camera is usually at eye-level and the image is most often a medium long shot that captures the person in a certain environment. The photographs rely on common techniques of photojournalism, documentary or portrait photography (cf. Caviezel :72). However, compared to the Swiss images, the interaction between people is emphasized in these book publications, and the camera brings the person being photographed more into the foreground. People talking, sitting together or playing are often seen in the pictures. Background features such as shots of factory workers and images documenting poor housing conditions are also present however, similarly to the Swiss images. The motif of children playing is particularly striking, communicating an ambivalent message of idyllic poverty when seen in the context of dilapidated courtyards. Such photographs lend themselves well to an exclusion of migrants, despite photographers’ intentions. They can be easily read in the context of the well-known images of exoticism and colonialism, which construct the ‘Other’ as underdeveloped, or even childlike and in need of paternalistic care.

By contrast, photographs taken recently in the context of ‘art’ tend to deviate from the formal and thematic characteristics associated with the examples mentioned above. Posing and staging as a part of the photographic process is exaggerated and is therefore turned into an act of reflection. Furthermore, individuals and their stories may become visible. Compared with the Swiss archive photographs, in which migrants seem to have no private space, private interiors are a prominent feature in such relatively recent photographs. However, it must be noted that this is most often the case for the

portrayal of German speaking migrants coming from Eastern Europe to Germany, perhaps as a sign for ‘arriving home’. It is significant that this image is not commonly associated with other migrants.<sup>43</sup> An attempt to produce “more subtle portraits of what is normal and not spectacular about migrants”, as Caviezel demands through her analysis of the Swiss archive, may be found in the work “Face Migration - Sichtvermerke” (*Luzia Simons*. 2002) by Luzia Simons. Simons’ work is diametrically opposed to the archive’s medium long shots characterising people according to their clothing, bodily gestures and environment because all of her photographs are close-ups. Her portraits are of 100 male and female migrants with widely varying occupations (most do not fit the stereotypes) in Baden-Württemberg. Her intention was to show people “who are living well [in Germany]” and who do not fit the usual clichés (*Luzia Simons* 2002: 17). This artwork plays with the identifying function of photography, for example of passport photos, by placing the large-scale black and white photographs on blown up fragments of passports, thereby encouraging a reflection on the genre of passport photography. Simons composes the images in a way that refers back to the bourgeois genre of portraits and emphasises the impression of the singularity of the individual. One could refer here to the “ennobling” effect of photography (Sekula 2003: 273), while the “repressive” effect of photography remains literally “in the background”.

In sum, the traditional ideal of the archive as a place which objectivises knowledge of the world thus conceals the displacement, ordering, classifying, evaluation and selection taking place in the archiving itself. When analysing (image) archives we need to take into account not only selection and systematisation, but also historical stratification. In this case, commercial archives must be distinguished from cultural archives (Vogel, Binder and Caviezel 2006: 76). News agencies are primarily interested in their image stores being topical and therefore generally do not preserve the “old” historical items.<sup>44</sup>

*Archived* photographs have a kind of “dual document feature”, which makes one forget the photograph’s context of production and the selective and ordering nature of the archive. Certain photographic strategies can enhance this feature which is substantiated by the indexical nature of

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<sup>43</sup> Motifs from the repertoire of the above-mentioned pictures in the archive, such as “the hostel” or “the headscarf”, are also often found in a more defamiliarised form.

Two different cases, both focus on the central theme of the hegemony of majority communities over minority groups in image discourses, are particularly interesting: Ralf Meyer’s work (in Kutz et. al. *Lebensarten* 2003: 37-39) combines three different photos. One depicts not Rodrigues de Sá, but only his motorcycle. Meyer places the photo of the motorcycle on display in the Haus der Geschichte next to two photos, one a portrait of the Bavarian governor Edmund Stoiber in the portrait gallery of the Bavarian State Chancellery combined with a racist comment made by Stoiber, the other a photo of the interior of the Immigration Office (Amt für Ausländerangelegenheiten). Furthermore, the photographer Anna Voswinckel (Kutz et. al. *Lebensarten* 2003: 60-63) let immigrants choose what she should photograph for them to hang in their home – thus inverting the hegemonic production of images of migrants into the production by and for migrants.

<sup>44</sup> “Cultural archives [in contrast] include – to put it briefly – any image in which either producers and their associates, agencies or collectors are interested. [...] This demonstrates one function of the official archive: to concern itself with material which is too old to survive on the primary market, but at the same time too recent to be accepted as a historical document” (Vogel, Binder and Caviezel 2006:77).

photography. A photograph shows “what was there” (cf. Barthes *Camera Lucida*: 1981).<sup>45</sup> The ‘invisible’ aspects of the context of production and selection should be taken into account in the analysis of archived photographs. It is not only in the archive’s selection process that photographs are excluded and remain ‘unseen’. “Ethical, legal and practical grounds” (Vogel et al. 2006: 76) can enable or prevent the production of images even during the photographing process. Through selection, cutting and perspective, the photographer determines the subject of the image and the line of vision. Not only does the photographer select the motif and form, but we also have to take into account when analysing photography that the person photographed is “playing a part” and is reacting to being photographed through a pose in front of the camera. Every pose for the camera is a form of constructing the self.<sup>46</sup>

### 7.3 A brief look at “visual sociological methods”

The reflection on the relationship between the photographer and the object or person being photographed has also become a task of a relatively new vein of sociological research called visual sociology.<sup>47</sup>

Visual sociology not only utilises images as a means for harvesting research results, but also for collecting data. Henny (1986) defines this approach as “equipment-oriented” versus “image oriented”. The former means that visual sociology regards film and photography as archival media that can be used to supplement field notes, for example. However, it is debatable as to what degree conventional concepts of the researcher as a neutral observer are upheld in this research, and whether “blind spots” exist. The sociologist Eric Margolis (2004),<sup>48</sup> refers to this problem as a “realist mode of Cartesian perspectivalism” (Margolis 2004: 12).<sup>49</sup> The (visual) sociologist’s gaze is also never unbiased, but is, was and will always be a culturally tainted practice and must therefore be analysed as one that is entrenched in the conventional western regime of the gaze, a regime that both presupposes and fixes power relations. This is where the feminist criticism of images and representation as practiced by Teresa de Lauretis (1987), Laura Mulvey (1988) and Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1997), who challenge the link between power and gender, ties in. The gaze practiced in visual sociology research cannot be

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<sup>45</sup> Barthes (engl. 1981) emphasises the chemical processes of (analogue) photography. The concept of indexicality was introduced by Peirce. In opposition to iconic art (such as painting), (analogue) photography is linked closely with the referent, is premised on it and contains a trace (Charles Sanders Peirce (1979<sup>3</sup>) vol. 2, paragraphs 285-289.).

<sup>46</sup> See Barthes *Helle Kammer* 1989: 18 f./ Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* 1981: 10): “Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of ‘posing’, I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image”.

<sup>47</sup> The International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA) [www.visualsociology.org](http://www.visualsociology.org) holds annual conferences and publishes the journal *Visual Studies* concerning questions of visual sociology.

<sup>48</sup> <http://courses.ed.asu.edu/margolis/review.html>, accessed 22 January 2007.

<sup>49</sup> “As visual sociologists we thus engage in a distinctly Cartesian project; treating the visually observed world (including photographs and other representations facilitated by instrumentation) as empirical evidence from which we deduce such mental constructs as social relationships and speculate on their meaning” (Margolis 2004: 2 with reference to Jay 1994: 69-70 and Descartes’ *La Dioptrique* (1637)).

said to be “raceless, genderless, classless” any more than any other gaze (Margolis 2004: 7). Margolis also stresses that “identity, position and stance of the observer [are] central to understanding the work of visual sociologists” (Margolis 2004: 7). The gaze of the visual sociologist creates an imbalance of power in two ways. First of all, the sociological camera focuses on *other* people for its research. It turns these other people into the object of a photographer’s gaze, while the visual sociologist remains outside the image’s frame as an autonomous, gazing but not gazed at, subject, perhaps one with the aspiration of becoming a “pure subject” (Margolis 2004: 11), claiming “the right to see without being seen” (ibid. in reference to Jay 1994: 290). The question of *who* is being photographed also plays a role in signification. Second, according to Margolis, the unusual, the foreign and the Other is the main subject of (sociological) photography. For example, people from the working class, or “exotic Others” are reproduced within “the dominant scopic regime, that so clearly differentiates subject from object” (Margolis 2004: 5). In this respect, visual sociology is not only “naively realistic” because it regards photographs as “documents” or as something similar to a view from a window, but also because it is entrenched in the conventions of images and their practices encouraging an “anthropological gaze at the ‘other’” (Margolis 2004: 12) no different than a colonial gaze (we will return to this question in subsection 9).

“We need to consider how visual sociology contributes to spectacle, simulacrum, or whatchamacallit in our imag(in)ing of society,” says Margolis (2004: 13). To this, we would like to add that visual sociology, according to Margolis and Martin Jay, should be a discipline “that is ‘multiple, aware of its context, inclusionary, horizontal and caring’” (Jay 1994: 275 quoted in Margolis 2004: 14).

## **8 “Das Boot ist voll” (“The boat is full”), or what happens between images and texts**

In 2006, there was a high frequency of photographs in the European press of (mostly male) refugees who succeeded in crossing the sea in boats from the African continent to the Canary Islands. In the following, we will discuss selected pictures that were circulated by the German press. Our main focus will be on two aspects.

First, we will reveal how it is imperative that one avoids a confusion of to “signify with communicate”, as Roland Barthes says in his essay “Semantic of the Objects” (1994: 180).<sup>50</sup> The photos here do not merely communicate the message “African refugees arriving in boats”, instead, they have connotations which are constituted between the images and the metaphors of language. As Barthes notes, “(...) language always intervenes, as a relay, notably in image systems, as titles, captions, articles, which is why it is not fair to say that we live exclusively in a civilization of the image” (Barthes 1994: 180). This “relay function” can be found in photojournalism’s commentary (which we exclude in the following analysis), and in the use of conventional forms of expression in

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<sup>50</sup> “... to *signify* means that objects carry not only information, in which case they would communicate, but also constitute structured systems of signs, i.e. essentially systems of differences, of oppositions and of contrasts.”

language (which will be our main focus in the following, where they will be seen in relation to medially created gaze perspectives).

Second, it will be shown here that these pictures have certain effects on the position(ing) of the reading subjects. These effects are caused by how the photographer uses the camera and by the camera itself.

Many photographs show African refugees tightly squeezed together in boats on the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco, Italy or, the Canary Islands. The camera mostly gives us a view from above.

Our gaze is directed at the faces of black African men whose gazes sometimes meet ours. A black and white photo with the caption “The end of a journey: seven Africans discovered by coastguards in a rubber dinghy off Ceuta in Morocco”(Süddeutsche Zeitung 10 July 06; Fig. 5)<sup>51</sup> shows six black males who appear to be ducking away from the light and are drifting on the open, black sea. The position of the viewer above those caught in the light but not wanting to be seen appears to be a secure one in comparison to theirs. These images can inspire sympathy, but this is not imperative. We could also (simultaneously) identify with the controlling gaze of the coastguard searching for the refugees who try to extricate themselves from the ‘hold’ of the searchlight. The complicity of the searchlight and the photography shoot is not obvious at first because the way the image is cut has made it invisible.

In contrast, one photograph from the serie *GoNoGo* by the Dutch photographer Ad van Denderen 2003 makes the spotlight of the Italian coastguard’s pursuit of an Albanian boat visible (Fig. 6). In this case, photography reveals the spotlight as a ‘visible-making’ instrument of power. Thus, it is explicitly made visible that we are looking from the standpoint of the surveyors. The ambivalence of such pictures as those mentioned above, taken from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and others which we will discuss below are made obvious by van Denderen’s work.

Other pictures that were in circulation in the summer of 2006 offer more insight into the boats and are often taken from close up and by daylight. The boats are overcrowded, the black men seem crammed together. Although the contrast in the colour pictures is sharp, the connotation of danger is not as strong as in the pictures mentioned above which can be associated with the stereotype of the ‘black man’ through their even sharper contrast of black and white.

Each of these image cuts “given to be seen” are interesting and significant. While one picture with the caption “Escape from Africa” (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 17 August 06, Fig. 7) puts into focus the space of the boat from which the men look up at us expectantly and anxiously, other pictures show the men in a boat with the sides of the boat cut off, lapped by small waves as it moves (*Der Spiegel*, No. 26/ 2006, caption “Flüchtlinge auf dem Atlantik: Ein fundamentales Recht des freien Menschen” (refugees on the Atlantic: a basic right of free peoples), Fig. 8). Our gaze is directed upward in these pictures, a cut of the same image in the Internet directs our gaze towards and even into the faces of the men (Fig. 9, picture-alliance/dpa [www.dw-world.de/popups/popup\\_lupe/0,,1941393.00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/popups/popup_lupe/0,,1941393.00.html), acc. 1 December).

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<sup>51</sup> Photograph by Marcelo del Pozo/Reuters, SZ 10 July 06. The title of the accompanying text is “The bulwark of Europe is a recipe for decline” – an interview with the US urbanist Mike Davis “We need more migration, not less”.

We see only a few faces which are brought into closer focus. This allows us to see their distinctive features and to see them as individuals, as if they were standing in front of us (see section 7.2 for more on the effects of different image cuts). Not only are different perspectives and viewer positions that are predetermined by the camera of importance in the portrayal of refugees coming from Africa, but also the motif of the boat (compare this with the gaze ‘recommended’ by van Denderen’s *GoNoGo*, which shows what variety the situations migrants are faced with can have).

The pictures of migrants in boats may be clearly associated with the expression currently circulating in the German-speaking world of “Das Boot ist voll”, meaning “the boat is full”, illustrated by one photograph of African refugees in a boat in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. (12/13 August 2006) (Fig. 10) Namely the caption runs “Das Boot ist voll”. This expression fixed in cultural memory affects how these images are read and also which images are selected by newspaper editors for publication. The expression was most likely introduced to political discourse in the context of the (im)migration in Switzerland in 1942 when efforts were made to further restrict the influx of mainly Jewish asylum seekers.<sup>52</sup> In a speech at a Christian brass band festival in Hürlikon in 1942 a conservative politician tried to legitimise this controversial policy by saying, “To anyone who has commanded a fully occupied, small lifeboat, while thousands of victims of a shipping disaster are screaming for help, it must seem hard if he cannot take all of them on board” (from: Claude Torracinta & Bernard Romy: *Fluchtziel Schweiz ---*, 2002, according to [www.tourism-watch.de/dt/29dt/29.boot/index.Html](http://www.tourism-watch.de/dt/29dt/29.boot/index.Html); acc. 1 Dec.06).

Traditional metaphors of the ship for politics, government and state, and the captain for a “gubernator” or a steersman are implied here (see also Blumenberg 1979). Similar expressions associating the boat with the state can also be found in various other European languages: It was common in the periods from antiquity to humanism, it was used by Roger Bacon (“You are in the same boat”), it can be found in French usage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (“être dans le même bateau”) and after the Second World War it was frequently used by the press in Germany.<sup>53</sup>

In the early 1990s, the full boat was occasionally used in caricatures in Germany as a metaphor for migration. A caricature from 1995, for example, points the blame at those who are filling the boat or the ark with material goods and are therefore leaving no space for the others, “the poor” (caricature in “Ein interkulturelles Projekt... [www.geographiedidaktik.de/untermat/interk/artikhhtml.html](http://www.geographiedidaktik.de/untermat/interk/artikhhtml.html), acc. 1 Dec. 06), while another caricature from 1991 with the caption “Ansturm der Armen” (Stampede of the poor) on the cover of *Der Spiegel* (9 September 1991; Fig. 11) shows an overfull ship decorated with slogans such as “Brot für die Welt” (bread for the world) and “Mein Wohlstand gehört mir” (My

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<sup>52</sup>For more on the controversial Swiss asylum policy during the period of National Socialism, see [www.sozialarchiv.ch/Webthema/2003/geschichte.html](http://www.sozialarchiv.ch/Webthema/2003/geschichte.html) (acc. 1.12.06)

<sup>53</sup> See Lutz Röhrich, *Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten*. Freiburg 2003, vol.1, 240f.. There you can also see some caricatures, for example the German Michel alone in a boat, pulling the life vest with the inscription “right to asylum” out of the water, while countless hands all around are reaching for the boat (date and origin of this caricature unfortunately not given). See also Gerhard 1993.

prosperity belongs to me) towards which “Asylanten” (asylum seekers), “Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge” (economic refugees) and “Schlepper” (people who smuggle people) are pushing against each other. These images can also be turned around to mean the refugees and migrants are already in the boat. In this case, the boat therefore no longer serves as a metaphor for a protective territory or for a nation that must be defended. Instead, it is a metonymic reference to Noah’s Ark as a point of rescue from the rising waters and which must be won back from “the others”.

This can be seen all too clearly in a poster of the extreme right-wing German Party “Die Republikaner (REP)” from 1991: We look up at the ship, from a perspective similar to traditional portrayals of Noah’s Ark, in which the chosen ‘inhabitants’ were saved from the flood. At first glance the full boat functions as an image of rescue but on closer look is occupied by stereotypical, racist portrayals of Others, Blacks, Jews and Arabs.

“The boat is full” means that only the chosen are let in, inspiring associations to such disaster movies as *Independence Day*, where the bunker under the mountain serves as a kind of ark. The boat can be seen as a metaphor for terminating the solidarity with all who are not pronounced as belonging. The full boat moving on the *water* towards the coast, an image thus connected to the sea, might indirectly imply connotations of ‘threat’. It can also be associated with another important, and highly problematic, metaphor often found in the discursive context of migration: “the flood” or “the stream”/“current”<sup>54</sup> (cf. Gerhard 1993). Migratory movements are compared to natural catastrophes against which dams must be built. Such natural metaphors legitimise the erection of walls and the laying of borders which are then defended with highly developed military technology.

Visual and language metaphors can be linked together to form a net of meanings in which other kinds of visualisations, like diagrams, promising “neutral” data about migratory movements, become entangled. This is the case, for example, when ‘migratory streams’ are illustrated with red triangular arrows penetrating a certain territory (Fig. 12 *Der Spiegel* 37 1991), showing modes of representation that draw on traditional military graphs of soldiers’ movements (cf. Warnke 2003 for the latter). In this broader context, the images of black migrants are transformed from pieces of information to far-reaching political messages in a process that complies with its conventional semantic relation to the metaphors of ship and boat, which always evoke associations of government and ‘governability’.

## **9 The desire for maximum visibility, or the veil in the age of photography**

The history of visual technologies has been intertwined with the production of knowledge, the establishing of a general view and the expansion of the possibilities of control. In the early years of the modern age, artists played an important role in the growing assessibility of space through applying

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<sup>54</sup> Here one may draw analogies with metaphors used in the English-speaking world, cf. “Britain as container” Charteris-Black 2006. Cf. section on discourse analysis.

geometry to perspectives and mathematics to proportions.<sup>55</sup> They also created artworks in which anatomic knowledge was conveyed. As illustrators,<sup>56</sup> they often made visible and ‘evident’ the “nature” of bodies and their two sexes, often relying on sculptural forms passed down from antiquity. Gender studies-oriented art researchers have especially focused on the portrayal of the female body since the modern age/the Renaissance by comparing various disciplines such as art, medicine and later psychiatry and have analysed in what way the female body became a scene for ‘nature’ in its unveiled state (cf. Jordonova 1989; Schade 1993, Schade and Wenk 2005 (1995)) (Fig. 13 A reproduction of the sculpture by E. Barrias “La Nature se dévoilant à la Science”).

The establishment of new technologies of visibility in the last two centuries should be seen in the context of the emergence of the biopolitics of modernity.<sup>57</sup> In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photography became a medium that not only conveyed knowledge but also affected how it was organised. The new phenomenon of the ‘archive’ built around photography served to record information about and taxonomically classify people (cf. Sekula (engl.) 1986; Sekula (germ.) 2003, Edwards 2003). Together with anthropology, photography played a central role in the attempt to record information about one’s ‘own’ population and about the rest of the world, and it therefore played an important role in the politics of colonialisation.

With an increasing dominance of ideas that valued technological and scientific achievement, photography represented the use of technological expertise to control the physical world; by photographing it, the world became knowable. By documenting and classifying populations of colonised lands, anthropology and photography together transformed the power of knowing into a rationalised, observable truth (Al-Ani 2003: 90). “The European faced with an Algerian woman wants to see. He reacts in an aggressive way before this limitation of his perception”, says Franz Fanon (Fanon 2003: 77). To this, Fanon adds ((engl.) 2003: 74; (germ.) 1963: 28) that the war in Algeria was a context in which the veil as “one of the elements of the traditional Algerian garb was to become the bone of contention in a grandiose battle (...) on account of which the occupation forces were to mobilize their most powerful and most varied resources, and in the course of which the colonized were to display a surprising force of inertia” (ibid.). To Western European Culture, which associates visibility with knowledge, (re)cognition and control, the veil represents a particular form of provocation.<sup>58</sup>

Traditionally, the veil was (also) a visual sign of spatial separation, between sacred and profane, private and public (“Hijab” connotes threshold, border and protection; cf. Mernissi 1992: 113-135 (2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Leonardo da Vinci was commissioned to complete military projects and was responsible for architectural infrastructure as a court artist, cf. Warnke 1985: 227-231; for more on the history of the artist and his power of “giving to see”, see Schade and Wenk 2005: 154ff.

<sup>56</sup> For example, the famous work “De humani corporis fabrica” by Vesalius, 1543.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Foucault’s books *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, in which he analyses the architecture of Bentham’s Panopticon as a technique of visibility.

<sup>58</sup> Kanneh (1995) points out that “in many West African countries, the colonist offensive against the veil is replaced by the missionary offensive against the breast. Here, it is the very exposure of the female body, its unabashed exhibition, which likewise stands for an unacceptable misuse of women and characterises, for the Western mind, the African man’s primitive promiscuity and possessiveness.” (347)

part, chapt. 1. “Der Hijab, der Schleier” (Hijab, the veil)).<sup>59</sup> However, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially, this vestimentary sign became a signifier for the Islamic world, a (supposed) backwardness associated with it, or simply the Other who refuses to ‘fit in’. Especially since 11 September 2001 and the subsequent war in Afghanistan, the veil appears to have become a “highly visible sign of a despised difference” (Donnell 2003: 123). This is also true for the headscarf, which may be seen as a metonym for the veil. At first, the headscarf found in representations of female migrants like those in pictograms seemed to be no more than a signifier of the other, backward culture and was therefore comparable to the stereotypical metonyms for male foreigners, such as the moustache mentioned above (part 7.2). However, in recent debates, this ‘backwardness’ of the exotic Other has transformed into the hostile exterior of a Western culture associated with democracy, progress and women’s liberation.

Edward Said says in his famous study *Orientalism* that “(...) the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said 1995: 87). The Orient as “a stage on which the whole East is confined” (Said) is a place of the Occident’s projection, desires and fears, a “theatre of violence and sexuality in which all is as it should not be, reversed or inverted into imposture” (Mirzoeff 2007<sup>60</sup>). In this context, the veil is not only associated with (hidden) femininity (one is reminded of the motif of the Odalisque or the harem),<sup>61</sup> but also with an apparent obstruction to discovering what is behind the theatre’s stage. “For Western men in particular, the veil presented a challenge, not only to the imagination, but to the right to scrutinise their subjects” (Al-Ani 2003: 100). The veil not only refuses the male invasive gaze, but also the camera and the photographer’s gaze: “These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack upon him. It must be believed that the feminine gaze is a little like the eye of a camera [...] like the photographic lens that takes aim at everything. The photographer makes no mistake about it: he knows this gaze well; it resembles his own when it is extended by the dark chamber or the viewfinder. Thrust in the presence of a veiled woman; the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object-to-be-seen, he loses initiative: *he is dispossessed of his own gaze*” (Alloula 1986: 14, emphasis Alloula).<sup>62</sup> This observation reveals to what degree colonialism implies an investigation of who is in possession of the gaze in the age of photography.

The recording of the ‘identity’ of Algerian women forcibly unveiled was both a goal of and a possibility created by photography in the time of the civil war in Algeria. Exemplary for how medial and colonial use of violence actually intersects are the photographs taken by the military photographer

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<sup>59</sup> For more on the veil in Christian culture, see Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2000.

<sup>60</sup> For further details see footnote 4.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Al-Ani 2003: 94; Lewis 1996.

<sup>62</sup> “They (the veil) also recall the existence of the well-known pseudoreligious taboo of the Muslims: the figural depiction by Islam” (Alloula 1986: 213) This aspect should not be forgotten when analysing the Western regime of visibility.

Marc Garanger for the French colonial powers during the Algerian civil war (1954-1962). After the French army in Algeria decided that all native citizens were to be registered and given a (French) identity card, Garanger was ordered to photograph Algerian women. Without their veils, they were obliged to give their identities to be seen. It was Garanger himself who associated this photographic act with an act of violation and male aggression (cf. Al-Ani 2003: 105).

The image of the veiled Arabian woman as the representation of a conquered colony lends these photographs additional significance, as Alloula for example states in his analysis of postcards of unveiled Algerian women. Their pictures no longer only represent Algerian women and their real differences (a selection of reproductions may be found in *Veil* 2003: 68f.f; 104f.)<sup>63</sup>, but also the country to be conquered. This signification, which goes beyond the portraits, is generated through their positioning in the picture archive of Western modern age in which images of the female had long functioned as representations of the nation, its culture, sciences and arts (cf. Wenk 1996; Wenk 2006). Al-Ani<sup>64</sup> and Frantz Fanon also highlight the allegorical significance of pictures of Arabian women that goes beyond the immediate and “literal” message.

Similar cases of allegories for female Algerians veiled and unveiled being photographed can be found in the much more recent media discourse, for example in the context of news reports covering the war in Afghanistan. Images of veiled and unveiled Muslim women are utilised as tools in the context of Western wars as part of the Western logic of striving towards “women’s liberation”, thereby alluding to a shift away from but also a correspondence with images from the colonial period. The veiled (Muslim) woman as an allegory for the country and population being colonised has become the unveiled woman embodying “Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Krieg” (freedom, justice and war) (Maier and Stegmann 2003: 52) in the current politics of images: “The image of the Muslim woman unveiling herself transforms the traditional, allegorical ways of representation” (ibid. 52<sup>65</sup>). It is interesting that, on the one hand, the veiled woman from the Arab world has represented the conquered and conquerable colonial territories in Western discourse for more than a century, while on the other hand, however, this image has become associated with legitimising colonialisation’s or post-colonial military intervention’s goal of liberation. The image of the woman who has removed her veil, Burka or headscarf thus becomes a signifier for both emancipation and integration/subordination in the regime of visibility associated with Western culture (cf. Wenk 2006).

“For the French, to rule is to render visible and ‘legible’. (...) the word ‘*Aufklärung*’ comes into play (...) in the sense of ‘clearing up the case’”, says Kaja Silverman (Silverman 1996: 150) in a reflection on Garanger’s photographs, the “photographic act”<sup>66</sup> and the logic of the camera. Roland Barthes

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<sup>63</sup> See also [www.backlight.fi/uk/garang1.htm](http://www.backlight.fi/uk/garang1.htm) acc. 25 March 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Ani adds, “It is common throughout colonialist discourse for the figure of the woman to symbolise territory to be conquered, subdued and controlled. European images of Middle Eastern women express the relationship between West and East” (Al-Ani 2003: 100)

<sup>65</sup> All further translations from the German are done by Michelle Miles.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Dubois 1998; (orig. French *L’Acte Photographique*)

theoretises that the camera's gaze makes its subject pose and become another ("I transform myself in advance into an image" Barthes 1982: 10-12). Silverman says that it is possible to observe how individuals become subjects through their relation to the camera. They become subjects through specularly, by being seen in the field of visibility.<sup>67</sup> The "screen", which according to Jacques Lacan can be found between the individual and the gaze and mediates between the world and our gaze at it, structures our perception. Silverman defines it "as that culturally generated image or repertoire of images through which subjects are not only constituted, but differentiated in relation to class, race, sexuality, age, and nationality ..." (Silverman, *Male Subjectivity* 1992:150).

According to Silverman, "Like the camera, the gaze confers identity only through an irreducibly exterior image which intervenes between it and the subject (...) the photograph resembles the screen, which confers identity upon the subject only at the expense of his or her 'being'" (Silverman 1996: 150).

"Photography is a cut inside the referent, it cuts off a piece of it, a fragment, a part object, for a long immobile travel of no return", says film theorist Christian Metz (Metz 1990, 158), thereby emphasizing how the person being photographed becomes alienated from the picture. Silverman adds to this that "not only the photographing can be regarded in this respect as a violent act against women (exposed to the look of the camera), but also making the "Algerian screen" disappear – "replaced by one connoting 'exotism', 'primitivism', 'subordinate race', and a European notion of femininity ('woman as spectacle'). The one image, emblemized by the veil, must 'die' in order for the other to prevail" (Silverman 1996: 151).

Both examples of photographs depicting unveiled Algerian women in the colonial context (the postcards Alloula analyses and Garanger's photographs) make clear the explosive political nature of photography's fixation of the colonial gaze, respectively the dispute and conflict related to this fixation. This is especially important in the context of the colonial discourse which made the veil a central object of colonial policy's assimilation (Ahmed 2003: 42). Furthermore, these historical dynamics have continued to be significant for the shift in what the veil or headscarf as a vestimentary sign has signified since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In reaction to the violence of colonial (gaze), especially in the context of cultures which ascribe almost magical powers to the gaze (Alloula 1986: 5), the veil became a vestimentary sign of opposition to Western assimilation. "It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates the negritude. To the colonialist offensive against the veil, the colonized offensive against the veil, the colonized opposes the cult of the veil" (Fanon 2003: 79). Fanon refers here to the Algerian civil war, but by doing so he also alludes to the "historic dynamism of the veil" in the struggle against colonial power: "In the beginning the veil was a mechanism of resistance, but its value for the social group remained strong. The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but

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<sup>67</sup> Silverman (1996) is referring to Lacan's mirror stage.

also because the occupier *was bent on unveiling Algeria*. In a second phase, the mutation occurred in connection with the Revolution and under special circumstances. The veil was abandoned in the course of revolutionary action. What had been used to block the psychological or political offensives of the occupier became a means, an instrument. The veil helped the Algerian woman to meet the new problems created by the struggle” (Fanon 2003: 85).

This historical contextualisation leads to the question to what extent signs become unquestioned symbols, or, to use Sigmund Freud’s words, to “feststehenden Übersetzungen” (established translations) (Wenk 1996, 67 f.). In this sense, conflicts are left unresolved, inaccessible to conscious action, living out their ambivalence in visual memory. Fascination with the Other can also become images of fear. Cultural memory is always characterised by a drawing of borders, by censorship and by collective forever reassuring itself.<sup>68</sup> The theory of memory also tells us that “to forget” does not mean that what is forgotten is deleted from memory. Although signs may become “de-semiotised” from their conventional meanings for a while, they remain in a reserve, in latency, ready to be “re-semiotised”: “Vacant ‘signs’ remain a kind of reserve in culture, like a negative storage space” (Lachmann 1993: XVIII).

As a result of changes in society’s models of self-description, forgotten elements of signs and their conventional meanings can be taken out of “latency” and become manifest again (cf. *ibid.*). A montage published in 1998 (3 years before the terrorist attacks in New York) in the *Spiegel Spezial* titled “Antlitz und Fratze” (countenance and ugly grimace) (Fig. 14) can be seen as an example of this. It also becomes clear how the connotation of danger and potential fear are made visually “manifest” here. At the same time, however, this montage is an alarming example for a desire to penetrate everything and make it as visible as possible. What is hiding behind the obvious is brought into the spotlight and medially made “evident” and unambiguous in a problematic way.

However, one may speak also of another kind of returning images.<sup>69</sup> As to the Algerian women without veils in the photographs, Philippe Dubois stresses that they are “literally exposed to the policing voyeurism of the occupying forces”, and that there is yet another dimension “in view of the total and fixed frontality of their gaze – in the centre of the axis, in the centre of *our* eye”. Regarding this other dimension, Dubois says, “There is not the slightest sign of shame, wanting to escape, or defeat here (...) The amazing thing about these photographs lies fundamentally in their *reversal* (...) Because these women direct their gaze at the lens, which is violating them and trying to take their identity, focus it (...) they all not only maintain their gaze (...) but also *turn it around* and *send it back*

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Halbwachs germ. 1967/engl. 1980 and Burke engl./germ. 1989

<sup>69</sup> Alloula commented on his reading of the colonial photography of Algerian women in the following way: “A reading of the sort that I propose to undertake would be entirely superfluous if there existed photographic traces of the gaze of the colonized upon the colonizer. In their absence, that is, in the absence of a confrontation of opposed gazes, I attempt here, lagging far behind History to return this immense postcard to its sender.” (Alloula 1986: 5)

(to us). By positioning the operator in his act, and by revealing the dispositive in which he is only an acting agent, these women appear to tell us: *You have me looking, trying to impose your gaze upon me, you have forced me to unveil my face. Then look, look me right in the eye and somehow you will see yourself and discover what your gaze is made of*" (Dubois 1998: 181 f.; emphasis Dubois)<sup>70</sup>. One could argue that the photographs Bourdieu took in Algeria (Bourdieu 2003), which he archived without ever intending to exhibit, were kept with the intention of turning this irritation of the "Western gaze" through the returned gaze of the Other into something productive for his research. According to Bourdieu, these photographs were significant for such cases where "dissonant realities blend into each other" (Bourdieu 2003: 28)

## D 13. CONCLUSION

The migration of images is not only closely tied to the migratory movement of human beings, it also frequently precedes it. Material "outer" pictures and their conjoined "inner" images always intervene in our perception of the Other. These pictures and images are kept in our visual memory and together with other pictures, images, words and texts, they structure how we read what we see. Meanings are therefore always predetermined by the pre-seen or the collective repertoire of images. Iconological approaches can be fruitful for this perspective and should also be expanded to integrate semiological concepts. These not only shift the focus of analysis to the pre-existence of semiotic systems and the conventional meanings defined by them, but also to the practice of generating meaning, which is a process that can never be completed because those researching also becomes part of the process.

Visual forms, whether they are classified as high or low art, are never just "expressions" of one culture, but are instead always part of a process of constructing meaning in a field characterised by differences and conflict.

This insight of cultural studies is an undeniable truth, especially in light of current developments, in which the increasing advances and expansion of information technology allows images to become more mobile and therefore more global. This leads to new conflicts

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<sup>70</sup>Transl. Michelle Miles. „Weil diese Frauen ihren Blick auf das Objektiv richten, das sie vergewaltigt und ihnen ihre Identität nehmen will, fokussieren (...) halten sie alle (...) nicht nur dem Blick stand,(...) sondern *wenden* ihn überdies um und schicken ihn (an uns)*zurück*. Indem sie den Operator in seinem Akt positionieren und indem sie über ihn hinweg das Dispositiv aufzeigen, in dem er nur ein Akteur ist, scheint uns jede dieser Frauen zuzagen: *Ihr habt mich sehen, mir euren Blick aufzwingen wollen, ihr habt mich gezwungen, mein Gesicht zu entschleiern. Dann schaut nur, schaut mir gerade in die Augen, und in gewisser Weise werdet ihr euch selbst sehen und entdecken, woraus euer eigener Blick besteht.*“ (Dubois 1998: 181 f.; Hervorh. Im Original)

and interferences between different frames of memory and shows a continued blurring of the border between self and Other. The meeting of cultures never occurs in spaces void of power, and the mere acknowledgement of difference in others as a unified/homogenised Other can show an arrogance just as much as a deliberate ignorance of the difference of and in the Other.

The discourse of the “power of images” should therefore be replaced by questioning how images are involved in the (re)production of power relations.

Visual culture is a field not only of contested meaning but also of power of the “given to be seen”. It is interwoven with medial developments which provide new possibilities and a power of the disposition over visible-making media and technologies. Who makes what or whom visible and how is always a question of power. There is no neutral “documentation”. All research dealing with “visual methods” must face this insight.

Medial devices, such as those seen in the examples above from the history of photography, have an effect on both sides – on the one using the medium and the one being apprehended in the photograph. The forced unveiling of the Algerian women in front of the camera represents an aggressive gesture made by a regime of visibility that relies on technology and also reveals the control and surveillance implied in the camera. The gaze of those being monitored and “identified” is fixed by the camera and can be turned around to become a gaze back, a “countergaze”. The photographs of these unveiled women have become increasingly mobile, documenting the colonial gaze of the West and confronting us with a reflection of our own visual culture. Meeting the Other becomes a (re)encounter with a self which has also become ingrained in the history of disciplines.

Self-reflexivity, or the reflexive self-analysis Bourdieu (2004) calls for in his argument in favour of a “participant objectivation”, must include a reflection on the relative medial nature of one’s own actions and thoughts. In other words, exploring the “academic unconscious” (Bourdieu 2004: 177) necessarily means focusing on the role of images and their mediality.

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