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Visions in the Crowd: Gendering the Masses in Interwar German Art

Since the rise of mass psychology and mass sociology in the nineteenth century, the metropolitan crowd has been portrayed as an allegedly feminine entity: voluble, emotional, prone to spectacle, and susceptible to being controlled by a virile leader. This article explores the gendered visualization of the masses in the context of interwar Germany, focusing on artworks by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, George Grosz, Walter Ruttman, and László Moholy-Nagy. Through selected case studies that encompass a broad range of media over the lifespan of the Weimar Republic, I address the consistent incorporation of female figures and gendered attributes in depictions of crowds, arguing that artists employed such imagery to portray the masses as alternatively uncontrollable and manipulable.

"A New Theatrical Zone": Performing Time in Futurist Photographic Arts

The problem of photography for Italian Futurists working in the decades after the medium's invention and proliferation was essentially one of movement: the body frozen in time could not represent the dynamism, speed, and creative will that the Futurists sought, despite the medium's position at the forefront of contemporary technological advancement. However, what might seem the perfect solution to this predicament—the nascent medium of cinema—found no easy home in Futurist thought. This essay traces the conceptualization and practice of photography and cinema in Italian Futurist literature and art, focusing specifically on the formal, narrative, and technological means by which Futurists attempted to address issues of time, movement, and the human body. An analysis of the 1916 manifesto, "The Futurist Cinema," in conversation with Anton Bragaglia's Bergsonian notion of dynamism in photography, and a new look at the only extant Futurist film, *Thaïs* (1917), inform an alternate framework for the roles of motion and the body in Futurist thought.

Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*: On Photography, Archives, and the Afterlife of Images

Begun in 1923, the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* [Mnemosyne Atlas] was German

art historian Aby Warburg's (1866–1929) attempt to crystallize his most important theories about the migration and transformation of powerful images and symbols. Left unfinished and unpublished at the time of his death, the *Atlas* comprised a series of cloth-covered panels on which Warburg arranged groupings of photographs of artworks and contemporary newspaper clippings. The extant version consists only of photographs of these individual panels, and an archive of working materials.

Despite its idiosyncratic methodology and eternal incompletion, contemporary scholars have come to regard the *Atlas* as a provocative touchstone for an array of disciplines. While some have lamented that this explosion of interest has resulted in the dilution of Warburg's project, this article argues that the so-called "afterlife" of the *Atlas* is consistent not only with Warburg's own conception of his work, but also with its very impossibility as a finishable undertaking.

This article begins with a selective historiography of the structural and material qualities of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, before considering the *Atlas*'s peculiar relationship to photography and examining it in dialogue with recent scholarship about digital images and archives. What ultimately becomes clear is that, having left the *Atlas* in contradictory iterations and fragments, having turned it into a set of images *of itself*, Warburg left open the opportunity for his project to enact its own thesis and anticipate technological developments and cultural discourses that are only now coming into focus.

Therefore, I am: Subjectivity, the Body, and Ideological Subversion from Beyond the Iron Curtain in Milan Knížák's *Lying Ceremony* and *Difficult Ceremony*

In 1966, Czech performance artist Milan Knížák was invited by members of Fluxus to undertake a year-long residency in New York City. When he arrived two years later, Knížák facilitated two meditative participatory actions in New Jersey and New York, entitled *Ležící Obřad* [Lying Ceremony] and *Obtížný Obřad* [Difficult Ceremony], respectively. The former directed participants to "[lay] on the floor with a kerchief over [their] eyes. For a long time." The latter tasked participants with existing in a room for 24 hours without eating, drinking, sleeping, communicating, or moving. Through increasingly austere methods that eventually breached the ascetic, both actions used a performative dialect of bodily denial by encouraging participants to obscure their senses and abstain from sustenance. Back in Prague, Soviet-sanctioned values defined public protocol. While domestic settings afforded citizens some haven of private, personal freedom, the stark division between public and private meant leading a dual existence, splintered

into public compliance and personal subjectivity. Cleaving one's personhood suppressed and destabilized the body as a social and political entity. In the wake of the Prague Spring and a violent period of "normalization" spearheaded by the state, Knížák's ceremonies were not only statements of protest, but also statements of radical corporeal autonomy. I propose that Knížák's *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad* produced a polemically emancipated state of corporeal being and knowing.

Realism and Funerary Processions in Mahmoud Sabri's Work

Of Iraq's modernist artists, Mahmoud Sabri was perhaps the most attuned to human suffering. Political martyrdom, social injustice, and the plight of the dispossessed permeate his work throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The period of Iraq's rapid modernization and chaotic political transition from a monarchical regime to a republic in 1958, followed by a Ba'ath military coup in 1963, left the artist with no shortage of tragic events to reflect upon and respond to in his work. His Communist beliefs and sensitivity to social and economic inequality guided his artistic vision, presenting the world through a lens of human pain caused by political repression.

This paper argues that Sabri's practice in the 1950s and early 1960s—particularly his *Funeral of the Martyr* series—combined an abhorrence of discrimination with a constant desire to reach the people, especially the working class, through his art. In light of these aims, his engagement with Iraqi heritage was not conceived around a formalist or a historicized line of inquiry, but around an exploration of national identity through popular practices and vernacular customs. As an active contributor to modernist experiments in Baghdad's artistic milieu, Sabri drew from local traditions associated with the notion of martyrdom to create images that condemned injustices exercised by the country's ruling elite, and embraced Realism as a method of representation to communicate with Iraq's masses.

Visions in the Crowd: Gendering the Masses in Interwar German Art

by Francesca Ferrari

In Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 1914 painting *Friedrichstrasse* [Friedrich Street], two slender women walk across the street towards the viewer (Fig. 1). A dog howls to the sky, while a car speeds past it and the night refracts the electric lights of Berlin, a city that never sleeps. A third woman appears behind the two main figures, and a shadow on the far left-hand side suggests the presence of a fourth woman. The two women in the foreground meet the viewer's gaze, and their self-confident, almost provocative poses imply that they are sex workers. Cold blue and black hues make them look like shadows, and the fragmented lines and angular forms that shape their figures convey a sense of aggressiveness. Like Kirchner's other street scenes painted between 1913 and 1915, *Friedrichstrasse* encapsulates the themes of the *femme fatale* and the dazzling metropolis.[1]

Indeed, the prostitutes' haunting looks, monumental size, and centrality to the composition have made them the protagonists of this work in many art historical accounts.[2] The figures behind them are dwarfed in comparison. They highlight the prostitutes' towering presence, emphasize their domination of the street, and imitate their forward movement. Through the pictorial duplication of the streetwalkers' limbs, the artist imbues them with a sense of dynamism that recalls Marcel Duchamp's 1912 *Nude Descending a Staircase* or the works of the Italian Futurists. This repetition emphasizes the menace posed by the two main women, who walk erectly and confrontationally with ineluctable momentum.

However, upon closer inspection the figures in the background are not so much formal echoes of the women's movement as evocations of male passersby. Their top hats, black suits, and rigid white collars identify them as urban men, who are either intentionally following the women or simply reveling in Berlin's nightlife. This visual effect of reverberation serves to situate Kirchner's representation of a dangerous female sexuality within the realm of the urban masses. Both the density and homogeneity of the background figures evoke a metropolitan crowd.

Kirchner's jagged and loose brushstrokes, which he uses to depict both the foreground and the background figures, reduce all of their forms to an undifferentiated mass. Their formal affinity echoes German non-fiction writer Elias Canetti's notion of the disintegrating crowd, in which "the individual feels that he is transcending the limits of his own person."[3] Consistent

Fig. 1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Friedrichstrasse* [Friedrich Street], 1914, oil on canvas, 49 1/5 x 35 4/5 in. (125 x 91 cm), Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Photo credit: bpk Bildagentur / Staatsgalerie / Art Resource, NY.

with Canetti's description of the urban crowd as a realm that suppresses individuality, the two women in the foreground of Kirchner's painting not only have the same facial features and fashionable garments, but also appear to share a body, such that their welded figures form a dicephalous monster. Similarly, the people behind them fuse into a dark cluster devoid of any personalized traits. The further they recede into the background, the more their faces become ghostly dashes and their clothes lose any gender-specific character: the distinction between feathered bonnets and top hats, or between furry coats and masculine suits, gradually blurs. The passersby's long legs and pointed heads are almost identical, suggesting that Kirchner's anxiety about the metropolis stemmed from its potential to subsume individuals into a leveling multitude.

Kirchner's evocation of an overwhelming urban crowd alongside the gendered bodies of the prostitutes goes well beyond the artist's troubled relation with both women and urban modernity.[4] Indeed, *Friedrichstrasse* exemplifies a trend that recurs with disturbing frequency in paintings, drawings, films, and photomontages produced by German artists during the Weimar Republic. Many of these images explore the relationship between women and crowds, often characterizing them as mutually dependent social groups with equally negative connotations. In this essay, I argue that visual representations of the masses produced in Germany between the two World Wars consistently incorporated female figures and gendered attributes in order to underscore the instability and irrationality of crowds. By analyzing four works in different media, I demonstrate that Weimar-era depictions of the crowd utilized gendered imagery to portray the masses as alternately uncontrollable and manipulable—connotations that clashed with Weimar women's newly gained right to vote.

Alongside Kirchner's *Friedrichstrasse*, I will explore works by George Grosz, Walter Ruttmann, and László Moholy-Nagy, all of which point to a broader phenomenon that pervades the cultural politics of the Weimar Republic, namely the feminization of the urban masses. That all four artists depicted the urban masses is noteworthy, both visually and ideologically, and much has been written about Kirchner's and Grosz's numerous crowded street scenes and Ruttmann's and Moholy-Nagy's use of technology to introduce new modes of seeing to the masses.[5] What has not been thoroughly explored in art historical scholarship is the gendered character with which Kirchner, Grosz, Ruttmann, and Moholy-Nagy invested the masses. In what follows, I analyze these artists' compositional, stylistic, and technical strategies for depicting two fluid notions: femininity and crowds. Femininity encompasses a variety of stereotypes, from the fallen woman with her insatiable sexual appetite to the demure wife who defers to male authority. Crowds are conceptually unstable, because they are composed of single subjects whose individuality is subsumed by the multitude.

My case studies show the pervasiveness of similar gender stereotypes across drastically different media and throughout the Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933), a period characterized by urban expansion, social turmoil, and increasingly fluid gender roles. By analyzing works that vary not only in their materiality and technique, but also in their aesthetics and politics, I demonstrate the prevalence of the feminized masses as a trope in Weimar imagery. This thematic lens allows me to expose the multifaceted ways in which the artists under consideration each sought to revendicate modern experience as a masculine prerogative threatened by allegedly feminine forces, despite their different media and viewpoints.[6] Far from providing a comprehensive survey of the gendered crowd in interwar German art, this essay provides a framework for assessing other artworks that exhibit gender bias in their depictions of the social texture of Weimar modernity.

Studies like Patrice Petro's *Joyless Streets* (1989), Janet Ward's *Weimar Surfaces* (2001), and Bern Widdig's *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (2001), among others, investigate the representational devices through which the female body became the predominant site for structuring, negotiating, and visualizing the tensions and anxieties related to the phenomenon of the masses.[7] Weimar modernity was articulated through gendered terms in various aspects of culture, ranging from shop windows and advertising to literature and philosophy, which rendered the issues of urban migration, mass consumption, and women's economic emancipation conceptually and visually inextricable from one another. The ways in which interwar German artists adopted avant-garde techniques and innovative media to produce feminized images of the masses deserve close analysis.

As Petro, Ward, and Widdig recognize, the relation between femininity and urban crowds is particularly relevant given the centrality of the masses to German aesthetics, politics, and economics between the two World Wars. The rapid industrialization of Berlin and other German cities resulted in the vertiginous growth of metropolitan populations, forcing Germans to renegotiate their ideas about the role and importance of the individual vis-à-vis public space.[8] Indeed, the question of whose bodies constituted the body politic acquired exceptional urgency after the successful campaign for women's suffrage in 1918 and the socialist uprisings of 1919. This renegotiation pervaded the works of German artists from the inception of the First World War to the consolidation of Nazi power, and it persistently drew on the distinctions between mass and individual, femininity and masculinity. These distinctions produced a discourse through which modernity was imaged.

It is this dimension of modernity that Kirchner pictures in *Friedrichstrasse*. The painting appears to combine two important German thinkers' conceptualizations of the masses: Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of a Dionysian dissolution of subjective boundaries and Georg Simmel's discussion of

the metropolis as the site of excessive sensorial bombardment. The uniform mass of streetwalkers recalls the primordial ecstasy that Nietzsche describes in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* [The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music]. According to the philosopher, this ecstasy leads to a unity of being that inevitably erases the individual's identity by fusing it with that of the multitude.[9] In turn, the explicitly urban environment that Kirchner depicts echoes Simmel's essay "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben" ["The Metropolis and Mental Life"], according to which "the resistance of the individual to being leveled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism" causes people to build psychic barriers to shield their minds from a world saturated with sensorial stimuli.[10] Encompassing both Nietzsche and Simmel's understandings of the masses, *Friedrichstrasse* communicates a deep anxiety about the relationship between the individual and the crowd. On the one hand, the crowd appears to move toward the viewer, its dynamism emphasizing its potential for engulfment. On the other hand, Kirchner's emotionally charged colors and rough brushwork impose his individual vision upon the crowd, as if to resist the crowd's onslaught.

It is important to remark that Kirchner does not depict a completely generic mass. Rather, he gives the threatening urban crowd a face by placing prostitutes in its front line. While Kirchner represents the streetwalkers as generalized types rather than distinct individuals, he interposes them between the viewer and the anonymous mob in the background. The prostitutes' bodies are gendered, and the connotations attached to their gender cast the surrounding crowd as a pluralized *femme fatale*: a mass that is both destructive and sexually alluring. The streetwalkers' promise of sexual gratification mirrors the orgiastic feeling that, according to Nietzsche and Canetti, one experiences in the crowd. Through the symbolic presence of both the prostitutes and the dog, which thrusts its flesh-colored hindquarters in the air at the center of the painting, the leveling mass acquires an erotic quality alongside its potential for destruction. Eros and Thanatos intertwine in Kirchner's representation of the urban crowd, so that the painting's violent primary colors, abundance of black, and jagged lines add a sense of unrestrained desire to the general impression of aggression.[11]

In *Friedrichstrasse*, the mass appears simultaneously as a sexually menacing monster and a victim of the hallucinatory powers of female sexuality. The ghostly masculine shadows that follow the prostitutes seem to participate in a deadly procession in which the viewer, too, is implicated. At the same time, this seemingly infinite procession hints at the ubiquity of prostitutes and the dangers that they pose to society, dangers that Kirchner inscribes in their very bodies. The skinny prostitutes look sickly, recalling the emaciating consequences of venereal diseases, and their narrow hips and small breasts reflect a sterile sexuality that contrasts with the supposed fecundity of respectable German matrons. As art historian Sherwin Simmons

has suggested, Kirchner was terrified of syphilis and may have contracted the pathology himself.[12] Given this likelihood, sociologist Klaus Theweleit's argument that syphilis functions as an operative metaphor for the annihilating effects of the masses on individual bodies and psyches is relevant:

> The…human mass gathering in the street is both an incarnation of all contagious diseases spawned by life-producing desire, and an incarnation of all the…masses into which the man sinks and is lost: the embodiment both of pleasures that tempt and pleasures that are dead.[13]

A disease that not only corrupts the body but also the mind, syphilis functions as a subtext in *Friedrichstrasse*, one that the prostitutes embody and that Kirchner exposes through his distinctive style. Compellingly, Kirchner's visual idiom evokes the disfiguration and psychic delirium that could occur in extreme syphilis cases, emphasizing a metaphorical link between the contagious female body and the potential of the crowd to annihilate an individual's subjectivity.[14] *Friedrichstrasse* suggests that the artist, like Nietzsche and Canetti, was both fascinated with and terrified by the possibility of the disintegration of the self.

In this work, Kirchner establishes a tension between subject and multitude, conveying an existential anxiety with respect to the metropolis and its inhabitants. The artist makes this tension manifest in his representation of demonized prostitutes, whose sinister sex-appeal threatens the physical and mental integrity of German men. I argue that the multiplicity of similar figures evokes a homogeneous urban crowd in which individuals disappear, and that this crowd acquires negative connotations precisely through Kirchner's reference to female sexuality. The prostitute is interposed between the viewer and the faceless crowd, bridging the monstrous ecstasy of a de-individualizing mass with the self-preserving anxiety of an individual clinging to his subjectivity.

In the German-speaking world, Kirchner was not alone in articulating an opposition between a singular subject and a de-individualized mass within a gendered framework. Early twentieth-century social critics often summoned the female body in their appraisals of living conditions in German cities, especially in the context of urban degeneration. A 1909 newspaper article by Protestant clergyman Christian Rogge, for instance, recounts how the metropolis "becomes the dwelling place for masses of criminals" as "an army of prostitutes and pimps eats away at its foundations."[15] Further, in his 1921 essay *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse: Die Zukunft einer Illusion* [Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego: The Future of an Illusion], Sigmund Freud presents the behavior of the masses as inherently "impulsive, changeable, and irritable"—three terms strikingly similar to those that

he and Josef Breuer employed to describe the symptoms of hysteria, an allegedly feminine disorder.[16] Similarly, as literary critic Stefan Jonsson has demonstrated, important dramas such as Ernst Toller's 1919 *Masse-Mensch* [Masses Man], Berthold Brecht's 1927 *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* [Saint Joan of the Stockyards], and Fritz Lang's 1927 *Metropolis* built upon this premise, associating crowds with unruly and even malevolent female figures.[17]

These intellectuals drew upon a common gendered trope established in French and Italian discourses on the crowd a few decades earlier. Since the rise of mass sociology in the late nineteenth century, theorists had described the supposed irrationality and uncontrollability of the crowd as inherently feminine attributes. The writings of some early commentators of the crowd, particularly French sociologists Gustave LeBon and Gabriel Tarde, as well as Italian criminologist Scipio Sighele, provide evidence for this claim. In *La Psychologie des Foules* [The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind] (1895), LeBon directly compared the crowd's behavior to that of a woman:

> Among the special characteristics of crowds there are many, such as impulsiveness, irritability, inability to reason, the absence of judgment and of critical spirit, the exaggeration of sentiments, and others, that we observe in those beings who belong to inferior forms of evolution, such as the woman….[18]

Sighele, in *L'Intelligenza della Folla* [The Intelligence of the Crowd] (1903), reinforced this notion:

> The crowd—like the woman—possesses an extreme psychology, capable of all excess, perhaps capable only of excess, sometimes admirable for its abnegation, often terrifying for its ferocity, never or hardly ever measured in its feelings.[19]

Similarly, in *L'Opinion et la Foule* [Opinion and the Crowd] (1901), Tarde gendered the crowd in relation to its alleged propensity for spectacle and lack of imagination:

> The crowd attracts and admires the crowd….We can notice in [it] two characteristics that have something feminine: a remarkably expressive symbolism, together with a great poverty of imagination for inventing symbols that are always the same and are repeated over and over.[20]

In different ways, these three early theorists associated the crowd with a particular psychology, both feared as destructive and dismissed as superficial,

which they also ascribed to femininity.

In doing so, LeBon, Sighele, and Tarde not only minimized the political potential of the masses by casting them as a feminine phenomenon, they also linked the supposed dangers of crowds to the psychology of women. Similar claims were made about consumer behavior: not only the physical masses, but also the cultural products that they consumed were feminized by period commentators. As literary critic Andreas Huyssen has argued in his essay "Mass Culture as Woman," in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "mass culture [was] somehow associated with woman while real, authentic culture remain[ed] the prerogative of men.[21] Huyssen's analysis suggests that the rhetoric gendering the masses is multilayered and far-reaching, such that it encompasses the cultural behaviors of particular social groups.

Kirchner may have been familiar with LeBon, Sighele, and Tarde's writings, as they had been translated into German and immediately triggered discussions among German-speaking sociologists. For example, Simmel had already reviewed Tarde's *Les Lois de l'Imitation* [The Laws of Imitation] in 1890, Sighele's *La Folla Delinquente* [The Criminal Crowd] in 1891, and LeBon's *La Psychologie des Foules* in 1895, right after the texts were published.[22] The language that these writers use to gender the masses resonates with Kirchner's misogynist rendition of the crowd in *Friedrichstrasse*, and is consistent with his patronizing depictions of female subjects throughout his oeuvre.[23]

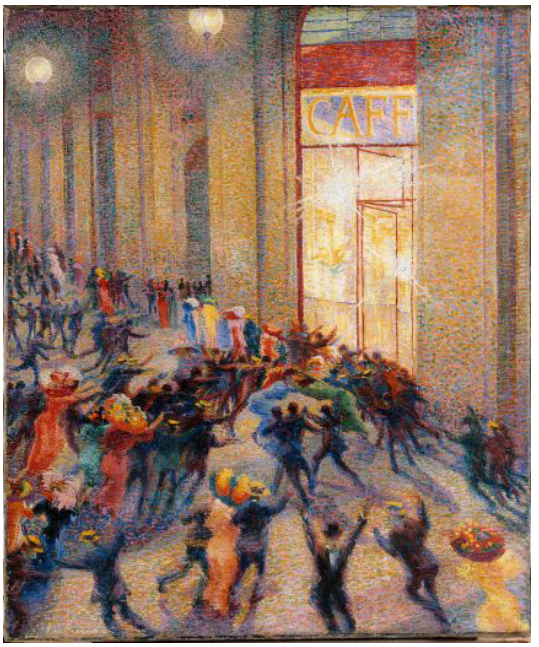

Fig. 2. Umberto Boccioni, *Rissa in Galleria* [Riot in the Galleria], 1910, oil on canvas, 29 9/10 x 25 1/5 in. (76 x 64 cm), Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Image open access, courtesy of Pinacoteca di Brera.

As art historian Christine Poggi's analysis of the Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni's 1910 painting *Rissa in Galleria* [Riot in the Galleria] shows, the inclusion of gendered visions in the crowd—in this case, two women fighting in Milan's shopping arcade Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II—often suffices to construct an image of the masses along the axis of sexual difference (Fig. 2).[24] These dynamics equally apply to Boccioni's representation of a hysterical fight between prostitutes in the center

of the crowd and to Kirchner's placement of streetwalkers between the viewer and a procession of men in *Friedrichstrasse*. Like Boccioni and Kirchner, albeit in very different ways, the three visual artists to whom I now turn projected the shadow of femininity over their representations of the masses through oblique evocations, allegories, and juxtapositions.

Significantly, George Grosz, Walter Ruttmann, and László Moholy-Nagy embraced the formal possibilities of their media to characterize the crowd as gendered. If Kirchner and Boccioni exploited the fluid materiality of paint to represent their female figures as blending into the rest of the crowd, then Grosz, Ruttmann, and Moholy-Nagy similarly capitalized on the properties of drawing, film, and photomontage, respectively, to present the crowd as more than the sum of its parts. As I will show, these artists' manipulation of their media reflects the engulfing, hysterical, and ornamental connotations that they attributed to the crowd.

Fig. 3. George Grosz, *Panorama (Nieder mit Liebknecht)* [Panorama (Down with Liebknecht)], 1919, 19 3/16 x 13 5/8 in. (48.9 x 34.6 cm), pen, ink, and watercolor on paper, private collection, courtesy of Neue Galerie New York © 2019 Estate of George Grosz / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

Like Kirchner's *Friedrichstrasse*, George Grosz's 1919 watercolor *Panorama (Nieder mit Liebknecht)* [Panorama (Down with Liebknecht)] depicts a crowded urban environment at night (Fig. 3). In the background, Grosz shows a confused aerial view of a city street, while in the foreground he displays the metropolitan masses floating in colorful intersecting planes. The distant

street view, reminiscent of the boulevard scenes that the Impressionists painted from the vantage point of elevated balconies, seems to spill forth before the viewer's eyes, regurgitating its pedestrians. At the same time, the aerial perspective establishes a visual hierarchy between the crowd and the viewer that reiterates the fundamental contrast between the irrationality and unruliness of the crowd and the self-control of the viewer.[25] Overall, the watercolor conveys a sense of collective hysteria consistent with LeBon's description of urban crowds, emphasized by Grosz's use of contrasting primary colors and sharp lines.

At the bottom of the image, four bust-length male figures wearing suits and glasses evoke different versions of the bourgeois type. Above them, a man rises up and yells to the sky. Written words and the symbols of a dissonant melody flow from his mouth, as if he were singing and crying out of drunkenness or madness. Another male figure, situated behind the legs of the man with upraised arms, wears a military uniform. The fat, naked buttocks of a woman recede on the left-hand side of the image, as a disembodied hand creeps under her skirt. On top of this detail, another man in a suit, whose body is simplified to the point of resembling a silhouette or a cut-out paper figure, is helplessly suspended in the air. He might have fallen from the open window at the top-left corner of the image, from which nightmarish figures observe the chaotic spectacle of the street. The vulgar behaviors of the people in the city, who seem to have lost any self-control, communicate social degeneration.

Several scholars have noted that Grosz's representations of urban crowds visually enact the loss of individuality that one allegedly experiences when subsumed by a mob.[26] Jonsson's description of Grosz's street scenes is here particularly apt: "This society is no longer a society of individuals, but of partial selves—swinging legs, heads, and arms without bodies, a mass of passions and interests."[27] Not only does the artist tend to depict types rather than individualized figures, evoking a lack of subjectivity and humanity, he also graphically merges his figures through a system of overlapping lines and watercolor planes. Exploiting the transparency of watercolor, Grosz superimposes different figures, irrespective of their position in society, so that they are recognizable as distinct social types, yet visually inextricable. These disorienting layers intermingle bodies, architectural elements, text, and geometric lines to form an eerie picture in which space appears simultaneously flat and three-dimensional, and in which time is both frozen and accelerated by the presence of three moons spread over the upper register of the image. The vacuous eyes of some of the figures, as well as the skeleton behind the man in yellow, warn the viewer that people become dehumanized in the crowd and lose themselves in a mesh of stimuli.

Only one figure appears triumphantly isolated from this visual orgy: at the center of the composition, elevated above the crowd, a woman on a

crimson pillow remains detached from the intersecting lines that connect all the other bodies. Her calmness contrasts with the sense of anguish and drama of the scene. The woman's naked body looks oddly mutilated: Grosz crops her legs in a way that highlights her sexual attributes and severs her right arm below the shoulder. These anatomical interventions on the female body recall Grosz's recurrent representations of dismembered and disfigured women, which he began in 1912–1913 and fully embraced after the end of the First World War.[28]

But although the woman's pink flesh is stained by liquid red paint, her figure differs from the brutalized corpses typical of Grosz's *Lustmord* [sex-murder] works, a genre articulated around the theme of male violence. For example, the 1918 painting *John, der Frauenmörder* [John, the Woman Killer] presents a decapitated female body lying lifeless on a sidewalk, an image that both evokes and contrasts with the woman in *Panorama* (Fig. 4). Unlike the former's gruesome wounds, the latter's blood-like blotches recall Theweleit's description of the masses as "the belly of the menstruating woman or ruptured in childbirth," an analogy that centers on the idea that the crowd destroys the boundaries of the singular body and homogenizes individuality into an abject conglomeration.[29] Far from a passive victim, the woman dominates the scene, standing above the crowd in a position of authority even if she is deprived of legs. Her eyes are directed down towards the masses, and her large mouth curves into a smile. Her nakedness, sensual pose, and supporting pillow evoke a prostitute about to perform her trade, but she looks nothing like the misshapen women whom Grosz usually identifies with this social type. This distinction becomes clear when we compare the woman's voluptuous limbs with the repulsive buttocks floating at the bottom left-hand side of the image. While the latter figure is explicitly violated by the hand groping its cheeks, the

Fig. 4. George Grosz, *John, der Frauenmörder* [John, the Woman Killer], 1918, oil on canvas, 34 x 31 9/10 in. (86.5 x 81 cm), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg © 2019 Estate of George Grosz / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Photo credit: bpk Bildagentur / Hamburger Kusthalle / Elke Walford / Art Resource, NY.ety (ARS), NY.

former calls to mind a deity or sphynx who, from the secure height of her velvety pedestal, delights in the degeneration of the crowd.

Indeed, *Panorama* starkly contrasts with the harmony promised by the socialist ideals that guided the Spartacist uprising of 1919. Grosz directly references this failed revolt in his title by mentioning the murdered activist Karl Liebknecht, who was killed in its aftermath.[30] The fact that a provocative, naked woman in *Panorama* embodies Grosz's dissatisfaction with the world is hardly coincidental. An allegory of the Weimar Republic, the central female figure emblematizes a degenerate underworld that inevitably compromises the political potential of the masses.

In this respect, Grosz's attitude towards women, both as socio-political actors and in visual representations, is illuminating. Art historian Beth Irwin Lewis convincingly argues in her analysis of Grosz's writings that "Grosz not only was unsympathetic to the women's movement but…even while he was fascinated by woman, he saw her as a creature of the city who demonstrated various degrees of sexually degenerate behavior."[31] In other words, Grosz identified the elements of modernity that he found disturbing with prostitutes and other women who did not conform to bourgeois morality and social roles. His decision to reference Liebknecht rather than Rosa Luxemburg, the other leader and co-founder of the *Spartakusbund* [Spartacus League] who was executed alongside Liebknecht on January 15, 1919, reveals his bias. Grosz's images of prostitutes allegorized society's degeneracy and allowed the artist to concentrate his disgust and angst into single figures whom he felt entitled to visually control and dismember.

Despite the differences between the woman in *Panorama* and the *Lustmord* victims, Grosz's attitude towards women conceptually links *Panorama* to other, more violent paintings and drawings from the same period. In works like *John, der Frauenmörder*, Grosz stages a violent devastation of the female body, as if, on the level of representation, he could crush the fatal personifications of modern German society that were so prevalent in Weimar cultural discourse. Grosz portrayed one such personification quite explicitly in his 1916 painting *Selbstmörder* [Suicide], today in the Tate's collection, in which a naked prostitute looks triumphantly at the corpse of a suicidal man who appears to have killed himself while under her spell. Three years later, in *Panorama*, he reaffirmed the prostitute's domination of society in spite of all his attempts to brutalize, behead, and destroy her malicious presence.

Exceptionally, in *Panorama* Grosz seems to acknowledge the pointlessness of the recurring violence in his representations of femicides, as if resigning himself to the idea that the corrupting character of urban society, personified as a woman, can never be defeated. Along these lines, the flattened male figure floating under the window in *Panorama* corresponds to the victim of *Suicide*, confirming Grosz's nihilistic view of modern society. A potentiated version of the *Lustmord* works, *Panorama* shows the fragmented

female body as a monument to the corruption of urban crowds, an allegory for the degradation of the metropolis. Indeed, *Panorama* provides evidence that, after the failure of the 1919 communist revolution, Grosz lost all faith in postwar Germany and projected his contempt for the Weimar Republic onto both the crowd and the female body. By turning a naked woman into an emblem of the morally degenerate crowd, Grosz echoed the gendered descriptions of the masses in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies. Further, by condensing the anarchic chaos of the crowd into a disintegrating yet interconnected image of a feminized "other," Grosz extricated himself from the cobweb of a dissolute society that he despised.

If Grosz communicated the frenzy and enmeshing nature of the crowd through a system of overlapping lines and planes, Walter Ruttmann conveyed his view of the urban masses through moving images. His 1927 film *Berlin: die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [Berlin: Symphony of a Big City] is a dynamic monument to the metropolis for which the crowd provides an organizing principle. Following the temporal structure of a day, *Berlin* juxtaposes discrete shots of objects, architecture, and crowds to establish a sense of order that offsets a tendency to represent the metropolis as chaotic in early twentieth-century films.[32] Specifically, Ruttmann's careful montage follows the urban crowds to their places of work and leisure, without ever hinting at their potential for political agency. Lacking a straightforward storyline and filmed largely without the subjects' knowledge, *Berlin* stages only one narrative scene—a disturbed woman's suicide that, as I will argue, importantly inflects Ruttmann's image of the masses.

This film portrays the metropolitan masses in a way that recalls philosopher Siegfried Kracauer's essay "Ornament der Masse" ["The Mass Ornament"], according to which crowds resemble abstract formal spectacles.[33] Kracauer warns his readers that, by being ordered and aestheticized, the masses are subjected to political and economic control: "Even though the masses bring it about, they do not participate in conceiving the ornament."[34] Ruttmann concretized the ornamental potential of crowds in *Berlin* through a montage of people, machines, animals, and inanimate objects. The people's lives are structured around a repetitive cycle of labor, rest, and leisure, as though they are simply pieces in a monotonous decorative pattern. It is no surprise that, in another text, Kracauer directly criticizes Ruttmann's *Berlin* for turning the masses into a subjugated abstraction: "Human beings are forced in [to] the sphere of the inanimate. They seem molecules in a stream of matter…People in *Berlin* assume the character of material not even polished. Used-up material is thrown away."[35] This idea is central to the suicide scene halfway through the film, which constitutes a dramatic excursus in a work that otherwise celebrates ideal harmony.

In Ruttmann's film, the ornamental character of the masses and the fact that they are controlled by an overarching authority go hand in hand. For

Fig. 5. Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt* [Berlin: Symphony of a Big City], (1927), film still 0:11:31 and film still 0:11:17.

example, through the technique of parallel editing, Ruttmann equates the legs of a herd of cattle with those of working-class men heading to a factory (Fig. 5). In this way, he stresses the camera's potential to reduce different living organisms to homogeneous formal patterns and portrays the crowd as a dumb, animal mass that needs directions from a rational leader. The implicit leader could be a cattleman or factory supervisor in this scenario, but he remains outside of the frame. He is replaced by the ordering intelligence of the filmmaker. Ruttmann also visually associates the dynamism and repetitiveness of machines with the organic needs of human beings, whose biological rhythms require them to eat, sleep, and move in cyclical patterns. This equation consolidates the sense that the masses, although chaotic, are controlled and controllable—a vision quite different from the overpowering crowds of Kirchner and Grosz.

Ruttmann's rapid succession of images does not allow the viewer to focus on single characters, even when people's faces are clearly visible. Rather, they are perceived as different instantiations of the crowd, some of whom represent particular types. The bourgeois, the bum, the policeman, and the prostitute are all recognizable on the streets of *Berlin*, but Ruttmann never shows them for more than an instant and locks them into superficial roles. For Ruttmann, the loss of one's identity in the crowd offers a thrilling opportunity to explore the formal qualities of the metropolitan masses. The detached vision of the camera (or so it was perceived by *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists) emphasizes the contrast between the objectivity of the filmed crowds and the subjectivity of the viewer.

There is, however, one instance in which Ruttmann explicitly references the traumatic encounter between an individual with a strong subjectivity and the de-individualizing crowd. In what looks like an expressionistic flash in a film otherwise linked to the movement of New Objectivity, a woman, apparently driven mad by the abundance and variety of stimuli in the metropolis, commits suicide by jumping off a bridge into the river Spree. This sequence in the third act is the only moment featuring an indi-

Fig. 6. Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt* [Berlin: Symphony of a Big City], (1927), film still 0:46:17 and film still 0:45:46.

vidual rather than the crowd. The camera focuses on the woman's eyes, dilated with anguish, and emphasizes her feelings through the abstract image of a swirling spiral, a symbol of dizziness and inner confusion (Fig. 6). By connoting both mental chaos and the frenzied urban environment, the spiral suggests that the woman's psychic defenses broke down under the inhuman pressure of a world that serves the masses, rather than individuals. The accelerated sequence of images centered on rotational movement culminates in the woman's plunge and transmits a sense of vertigo to the spectator. This vertigo triggers a perceptual overload that corresponds to the pressure exerted by the metropolis and the crowd on the woman's psyche. Quickly mapping the motion of revolving doors, windy vortexes, and a frightening rollercoaster, Ruttmann renders the scenes immediately preceding the suicide almost impossible to watch without feeling queasy. In a way that recalls Kirchner's dramatic rendition of the modern city in *Friedrichstrasse*, the suicide scene in *Berlin* conveys the anxiety that city-dwellers experience when crowds threaten to engulf them.

The fact that Ruttmann centers his narrative about the loss of subjectivity on a woman suggests that she had some inner complexity. Yet, Ruttmann does not film the woman long enough to allow the spectator to identify with her or to mourn her death. In the film, the woman mainly appears as a weak victim of the metropolis, whose mental barriers are too frail to cope with the pressures of her environment—an environment that Ruttmann undoubtedly celebrates. Unlike the erotic female figures depicted by Kirchner and Grosz, the suicidal woman in *Berlin* interrupts the film's unfolding. If we consider her through the lens of Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life," she symbolizes those who cannot cope with the sensorial bombardment of the metropolis, who become "completely atomized internally" and fall "into an unthinkable mental condition."[36] Urban modernity exercises a pressure on the human psyche that requires individuals to become numb to

stimuli, or, in Simmel's words, to demonstrate "an indifference toward the distinction between things."[37] Similarly, Ruttmann encourages the spectator to perceive the disparate elements of the metropolis as formally equivalent. The only individual whom he portrays with some psychological depth represents an obsolete model of subjectivity and succumbs to pressure from the masses. Overall, *Berlin* upholds LeBon's claim that the individual who enters the crowd "is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will."[38] When he attempts to cling to his willpower and resist the crowd, it crushes him, or in this case, her.

According to scholar Katharina Von Ankum, "the suicidal woman may have allowed the contemporary male spectator to project his fears and anxieties onto a female figure of identification as a way of coming to grips with the de-familiarized urban environment."[39] While some viewers of *Berlin* may have experienced the film in this manner, catharsis was not Ruttmann's main goal. The scene of the suicide is certainly melodramatic, but *Berlin* does not condemn the metropolis as a sterile environment hostile to human life. Rather, Ruttmann celebrates the potential for order inherent in a quasi-automated city, the inhabitants of which follow rationalized lifestyles. For this reason, we should read the woman's madness not as a death sentence pronounced against the individual who stands out from the crowd, but rather as an invitation to embrace a psychology adequate to the rhythms of the metropolis, one that approximates Simmel's formulation of a "blasé attitude."[40] There is a sense that one cannot resist the urban crowd and should simply adapt to it.

In fact, although the river evokes a natural environment, it can also function as a metaphor for the urban masses. Canetti describes the river as an appropriate symbol for representing an ornamental crowd:

> A river is the crowd in its vanity, the crowd exhibiting itself.… All river-like formations, such as processions and demonstrations, want to be seen. They show as much as possible of their surface, extending as far as they can and offering themselves to the largest possible number of spectators.[41]

Because the woman disappears in a body of water, her suicide could signify immersion in the crowd. Ruttmann visually juxtaposes the swarming crowd and its leisurely activities with peaceful shots of the river, stressing their common domestication. If one accepts this symbolic equivalence, the woman's suicide acquires positive connotations within the ordered "symphony" of *Berlin*. Under the pressure of Ruttmann's aestheticized masses, the woman renounces any control over her own psyche, unleashing it into an abstract vortex and vanishing in the symbolic flow of the crowd. Her suicide marks a return to order and normality; once she perishes, Ruttmann's ornamental

patterns can continue to form, undisturbed by the assertion of individual subjectivity.

Ruttmann, like Sighele in *La Donna Nova* [The New Woman], portrays women as feeble-minded and prone to madness, recalling the negative connotations that turn-of-the-century sociologists attributed to crowds.[42] But it is to express his aesthetic appreciation of the crowd as a mass ornament that Ruttmann stages the death of an uncontrollable woman who so often lends her features to the urban masses. In order to pave the way for the triumph of quasi-mechanized crowds, Ruttmann seeks to quell any residual suspicion about their dangerous instability. In the predictable, repetitive universe of *Berlin*, the masses constitute the only possible form of sociability allowed by urban modernity: a multifaceted but de-individualized mob that is controlled through aesthetic and industrial principles. Ruttmann's camera thus assumes the role of a maestro who orders the potential chaos of the metropolitan crowd into a "symphony," functioning much like Canetti's "orchestral conductor."[43] In the world described by *Berlin*, LeBon and Sighele's irrational masses commit suicide only to be resuscitated as Kracauer's mass ornament. The fireworks display that concludes the film reinforces *Berlin*'s representation of the crowd as a phantasmagoric spectacle.

Ruttmann's attempt to organize the urban masses into a harmonious, passive ornament resonates with László Moholy-Nagy's 1930 photomontage *Verantworte!* [Be Responsible!] (Fig. 7). This composite work juxtaposes a swarm of people with the fragmented image of a woman's jaw line, separating them into horizontal, stripe-like sections. The exhortation expressed in the title crisscrosses the image both horizontally and vertically. The two contrasting photographs do not communicate a clear message: the crowd and the woman occupy different spaces of the photomontage, and their visual appeal is almost conflicting. The crowd is photographed from an aerial point of view that renders it homogeneous, a mass with neither beginning nor end that extends in all directions and, owing to the absence of any spatial reference points, functions as a pictorial ground. By contrast, the woman's mouth is close to the viewer, as if she were near the camera when her photograph was taken, standing alone against an empty background. Moholy-Nagy crops the woman's face over her lips, so that her other features are obscured and her glamorous lipstick becomes the main element that distinguishes her.

Nonetheless, Moholy-Nagy's use of photomontage links the two images literally and conceptually. The large, easily legible title suggests that this connection may carry political connotations. The exhortation to "be responsible" seems to acknowledge the crowd's potential for political agency, alluding to the revolutionary events that led to the formation of the Soviet Union and the Weimar Republic. By combining the image of the crowd with that of a woman, Moholy-Nagy implies that the latter controls the former, and that the imperative "Verantworte!" is her direct address to the masses.

Fig. 7. László Moholy-Nagy, *Verantworte!* [Be Responsible!], ca. 1930, gelatin silver print, 5 3/10 x 7 2/5 in. (13.5 x 18.9 cm), The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles © 2019 Estate of László Moholy-Nagy / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

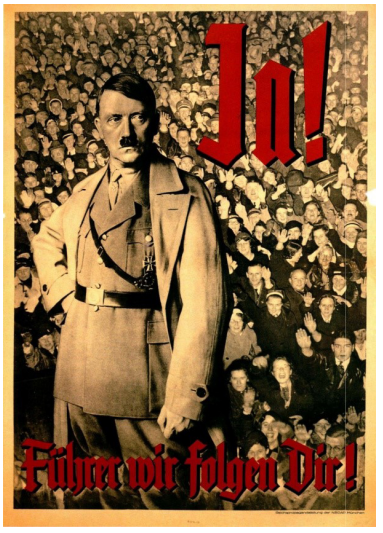

Fig. 8. Artist Unknown, *Ja! Führer, wir folgen Dir!* [Yes! Führer, We Follow You!], 1934, photomontage, 34 x 24 in. (86 x 61 cm), Hoover Institution Archives (GE909).

If the artist had juxtaposed a crowd with a political leader, this photomontage could be construed as the crowd's need for top-down guidance. However, unlike the 1934 photomontage *Ja! Führer, wir folgen Dir!* [Yes! Führer, We Follow You!], *Verantworte!* contains a female figure who is unlikely to rally the masses (Fig. 8).

Although in many of his photographs and photomontages Moholy-Nagy toys with the figure of the New Woman—celebrating women's access to sports and leisurely activities as typical of their modern, emancipated lifestyles—it is doubtful that he identified this particular female figure as a leader who could instill a sense of responsibility and political awareness in the masses.[44] For the contemporary viewer, Moholy-Nagy's inclusion of this woman would have conferred a degree of irony to

the image. The anonymous woman who purses her lips evokes Weimar-era fashion magazines and advertisements, rather than pompous scenes of political militancy. Her shallow allure starkly clashes with the moralistic utterance "be responsible!" and fails to electrify the crowd, in stark contrast to the demonic automaton Maria in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), a film with which Moholy-Nagy was likely familiar.[45]

Moreover, the aerial view portrays the crowd as a vulnerable herd monitored by the all-encompassing gaze of an (unseen) leader elevated above it. The crowd gazes at something or someone outside the picture space, which coincides with the viewer's position. According to cultural historian Jeffrey T. Schnapp, images like *Verantworte!* construct a superhuman visual field that allows the viewer to assume the imaginary perspective of a leader controlling the masses from atop a hierarchy that is both political and optical.[46] Despite the crowd's monumental size, its passivity discourages the viewer from identifying with its constituents. Far from implicating viewers in the crowd, Moholy-Nagy establishes a hierarchy between the masses and the viewer, a hierarchy that partially depends, as will emerge from the discussion below, on the gender dynamics at play in this image. Hence, the work's title amounts to an authoritative utterance, rather than an exhortation pronounced among equals.

Indeed, the crowd in *Verantworte!* prefigures the controlled rallies organized by the Nazi party in the 1930s, in which vast gatherings of people served aesthetic as well as political purposes, embodying Kracauer's idea of the mass ornament. But unlike Ruttmann's *Berlin*, this photomontage exposes the artificiality of ordered representations of the masses. For one thing, Moholy-Nagy likely appropriated the propagandistic strategy, employed by totalitarian regimes throughout the twentieth century, of creating a composite image in order to artificially exaggerate the crowd's size.[47] For another, the black and white stripes that cover portions of the crowd recall the visual experiments of Russian Constructivism and the Bauhaus, as well as the patterns of a flag or diagram.[48] All of these associations highlight the fact that, in this image, the crowd and the woman function as inert formal devices rather than active political subjects. The repeated admonition to demonstrate accountability and political awareness paradoxically contrasts with the crowd's ornamental appearance.

Of course, by juxtaposing the crowd with a woman, Moholy-Nagy mocks the asymmetrical relationship between the masses and their father-like leaders in the propagandistic photomontages typical of the Weimar Republic. But the woman does not just substitute for a strong, masculine leader. She also associates the crowd with mass culture. Like LeBon and Tarde, Moholy-Nagy implies that the masses are gullible entities who can be controlled through pleasurable images. In this sense, *Verantworte!* warns consumers not to be swayed by the tantalizing publicity fed to them by po-

litical and economic establishments. Moholy-Nagy thus projects the superficiality of the female figure onto the crowd, locking it in the same dangerous state of compliance with a virile ruler.

The connection between mass culture and gendered notions of superficiality and ignorance would have been more direct for Moholy-Nagy's contemporaries than it is for us today. According to Andreas Huyssen, the gendering of crowds that pervaded cultural theories at the end of the nineteenth century became less explicit in the 1920s, yet this bias survived in discussions of mass culture:

> The inscription of the feminine on the notion of mass-culture, which seems to have its primary place in the late 19th century, did not relinquish its hold, even among those critics who did much to overcome the 19th century mystification of mass-culture as woman.[49]

Just as Kracauer discussed the notion of mass ornament by turning to the image of the Tiller Girls (a popular dance troupe formed in the 1890s, known for its synchronized, machine-like movements), Moholy-Nagy communicates the feminized nature of the masses by including a gendered reference to mass culture in this photomontage. *Verantworte!*, then, exhorts the crowd to emancipate itself from feminine approaches to public life, approaches that the artist seemed to associate with credulousness, frivolity, and inactivity.

Moholy-Nagy's attitude toward this image is certainly facetious, but it reveals the gendered misconceptions that, in his time, shaped many representations of the crowd and the perception of women's participation in politics. Recall that, in 1930, German women had recently obtained the right to vote and many proudly fulfilled their duties as Weimar citizens, challenging the desire of male politicians and stakeholders for control over the adult female population. In contrast, *Verantworte!* relegates the female figure to a passive and inconsequential role, obfuscating her political rights with a coquettish attitude that reiterates stereotypes that had historically served to exclude women from the *res publica*. The fact that the woman's head is cropped, so that the image focuses on the sexual attribute of the mouth, reduces the female figure to an object of desire and negates her status as a socio-political agent. Through the photomontage's composition, the same implications extend to the masses—in Schnapp's words, there is a "fundamental equivalency" between the ornamental masses and the commodified body of a woman, as "both are objects of modern masculine desire" in terms of both political and sexual control.[50] The playful images of women's emancipation that appear in other photomontages by Moholy-Nagy have no counterpart in *Verantworte!* Meekly promising a kiss, the woman represents the crowd's susceptibility to domination by a leader.

Kirchner, Grosz, Ruttmann, and Moholy-Nagy all project onto female

bodies the connotations of danger, instability, and irrationality that they attributed to the urban masses. At the same time, these artists devised diverse visual strategies for preserving the crowd's anonymity, as theorized by Nietzsche, Simmel, and Canetti. In *Friedrichstrasse*, the expressionistic anguish of the artist vis-à-vis the leveling power of the crowd "others" the mass as a feminine entity whose sexuality is both enticing and lethal. In *Panorama (Nieder mit Liebknecht)*, Grosz condenses the crowd's degeneracy into a single female figure, who symbolically forces society into self-destruction. In *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, Ruttmann emphasizes the crowd's ornamental character and simulates a woman's suicide in order to convey the dizzying experience of losing oneself in a multitude. Finally, in *Verantworte!* Moholy-Nagy establishes a visual equivalence between the allure of a magazine model and the masses' dependence on popular culture, while presenting both women and crowds as subordinate to an unseen leader outside the picture space.

Of course, my interpretation is grounded in abstract notions of femininity and masculinity, individuality and collectivity. And yet, as unstable as these feminized representations of the crowd may look, their implications are alarmingly concrete. Jonsson has argued that the crowd constitutes a particular instance of the social field, the representations of which inevitably dismiss certain groups of people and privilege the cultural and political elite: "To look at the people as a mass, or to depict it as a mass, is the first step toward transforming it into a mass."[51] Regardless of the actual power held by the crowd, representations that reduce individual figures to anonymous members of a group underscore a process of obliteration via assimilation that undermines the value of certain subjects and questions their right to occupy the public realm. The images analyzed in this essay push one to question the identity of those bodies with whom many *fin-de-siècle* European intellectuals and Weimar avant-garde artists were reluctant to share the spaces of urban modernity. The consequences of such imagery are sadly familiar, as the history of the government that replaced the Weimar Republic tragically exemplifies. In the crowd, aesthetics and politics become one—especially in interwar Germany.

Notes

1. For more on the trope of the *femme fatale* in the cultural discourse of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe and North America, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

2. See, for example, Sherwin Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (2000): 117-48, https://doi.org/10.2307/3051367. For general discussions of the prostitute in Kirchner's street scenes, see Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008); and Pamela Kort, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Berlin Street Scenes* (New York: Neue Galerie, 2008).

3. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (1960), trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 20. Original German text: "Der einzelne Mensch selbst hat das Gefühl, daß er in der Masse die Grenzen seiner Person überschreitet."

4. For a discussion of sexuality and primitivism in the work of Kirchner and other members of Die Brücke, see Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

5. On the sense of alienation that emerges from Kirchner's crowded street scenes, see n3. For an overview of Grosz's bleak representations of urban space, see Frank Whitford, ed., *The Berlin of George Grosz: Drawings, Watercolours, and Prints, 1912-1930*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1997). A good study of Ruttmann's engagement with the masses and mass culture is Sabine Hake's essay "Urban Spectacle in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City*" in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia: Camden House, 1995), 127-42. In Moholy-Nagy's case, the best account of his desire to appeal to the masses via new technologies and media probably remains his own book *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* [Painting, Photography, Film], first published in Germany in 1925. For a recent English translation, see László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film: Bauhausbücher 8*, ed. Lars Müller (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2019).

6. Images of the crowd produced by women artists in the same context often elide or explicitly hijack the visual strategies through which artists like Kirchner, Grosz, Ruttmann, and Moholy-Nagy gender the crowd. The case of *Bauhäuslerin* Marianne Brandt's photomontages provides a brilliant

example of this reaction. In my Master's thesis, I explore Brandt's montages as dialectical counterparts to the images discussed in this essay, and illustrate her playful rejection of stereotypical representations of the masses and mass culture as female. Francesca Ferrari, "Visions in the Crowd: Gendering the Masses in Interwar German Art" (MA thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2017). For a brilliant study of these images, see Elizabeth Otto, *Tempo! Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt* (Berlin: Jovis, 2005).

7. In *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), Patrice Petro compellingly analyzes the relations between mass culture, modernity, and female cultural consumers. Janet Ward's *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) addresses the ubiquitous visual sources through which a metropolitan identity was constructed and mediated in gendered terms. Finally, in *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Bern Widdig discusses the relation between Weimar Germany's cultural production and unstable economy, with special focus on the association of this latter with women's participation in the workforce in the chapter "Witches Dancing: Gender and Inflation," pp. 196-222. Another compelling study of these dynamics is Katharina Von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

8. For a study of demographic growth in German urban centers (including Berlin) in the industrial era, see Jürgen Reuleke, "Population Growth and Urbanization in Germany in the 19th Century," *Urbanism Past and Present*, no. 4 (1977): 21-32.

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy" (1872), in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 2-144, at 37.

10. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life (1903)" in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 324. Original German text: "der Widerstand des Subjekts, in einem gesellschaftlich-technishen Mechanismus nivelliert und verbraucht zu warden."

11. In Greek mythology, Thanatos personifies death while Eros personifies life. These two figures are often used in post-Freudian theory to describe the life and death instincts, respectively, that Freud introduced in 1900 with *Die Traumdeutung* [The Interpretation of Dreams] and later expanded in his 1920 essay "Jenseits des Lustprinzips" ["Beyond the Pleasure Principle"]. Freud did not mention these mythological beings himself, but they appear

in psychoanalytic discourse as early as 1907 in the work of Freud's follower Wilhelm Stekel. See Edward Timms, "Wilhelm Stekel's Dialogue with Sigmund Freud: The Case for Brief Therapy and the Symbolism of Dreams," *Psychoanalysis and History* 2, no. 15 (2013): 217, https://doi.org/10.3366/pah.2013.0133.

12. Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers," 141.

13. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (1978), vol. 2, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 17.

14. According to Kari Nixon and Lorenzo Servitje, syphilis's ability to permanently "mark its victims" and induce dementia (especially in the form of general paresis of the nervous system) helped establish it "as a disease that was particularly malleable, and capable of bolstering a wide range of social prejudices, anxieties, and power structures" in *fin-de-siècle* culture. Although neurological symptoms generally emerge in the tertiary stage of the disease many years after contracting it, in the collective imaginary they were as present and threatening as the facial lesions that occur in the first and secondary stages. For an interesting study on the cultural resonances of syphilis, see Kari Nixon and Lorenzo Servitje, eds., *Syphilis and Subjectivity from the Victorians to the Present* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), especially the introduction. For a current medical overview of the disease's symptoms, see "Syphilis (*Treponema pallidum*): 2018 Case Definition" on the website of the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (https://wwwn.cdc.gov/nndss/conditions/syphilis/case-definition/2018/).

15. Christian Rogge, "Die Bedeutung der Grossstidte fir das Volksleben," *Die Reformation: Deutsche evang. Kirchenzeitung fiir die Gemeinde* 8 (1909): 395. Cited in Andrew Lees, "Critics of Urban Society in Germany, 1854-1914," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40, no. 1 (1979): 61-83, https://doi.org/10.2307/2709260.

16. For the original German text, see Sigmund Freud, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse: Die Zukunft einer Illusion* [Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego: The Future of an Illusion] (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag G.M.B.H, 1921), accessed via http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30843/30843-h/30843-h.htm. The terms that Freud uses on page 16 are "impulsiv, wandelbar und reizbar." Compare them with the language Freud and Breuer use in *Studien über Hysterie* [Studies on Hysteria] (1895). For an English translation of this latter text, see Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria (1893-1895)*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1957).

17. Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy: The Idea and the Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). See especially chapters 2 and 3.

18. Original French text: "Parmi les caractères spéciaux des foules, il en est plusieurs, tels que l'impulsivité, l'irritabilité, l'incapacité de raisonner, l'absence de jugement et d'esprit critique, l'exagération des sentiments, et d'autres encore, que l'on observe également chez les êtres appartenant à des formes inférieures d'évolution, tels que la femme…." Gustave LeBon, *La Psychologie des Foules* (1895; Paris: F. Alcan, 1896), 24.

19. Original Italian text: "… la folla—come la donna—ha una psicologia *estrema*, capace di tutti gli eccessi, forse capace solo di eccessi, mirabile alle volte di abnegazione, spaventosa spesso di ferocia, mai o quasi mai mediocre e misurata nei suoi sentimenti." Scipio Sighele, *L'Intelligenza della Folla* (Torino: Bocca, 1903), 4. Sighele's emphasis.

20. Original French text: "La foule attire et admire la foule…. On peut noter en elles deux caractères qui ont quelque chose de féminin: un symbolisme remarquablement expressif, uni à une grande pauvreté d'imagination dans l'invention de ces symboles toujours les mêmes et répétés à satiété." Gabriel Tarde, *L'Opinion et la Foule* (1901; Paris: F. Alcan, 1910), 42.

21. Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in *After the Great Divide* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 47.

22. For Simmel's reviews of Tarde, Sighele, and LeBon's books, see Klaus Christian Köhnke, ed., *Georg Simmel Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1 (Frankfort: Suhrkamp, 1999), 248-50; 388-400; and 353-61 respectively.

23. See Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity*.

24. Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 42-47. The concept of a "vision in the crowd" serves my argument about the indirect visual strategies through which artists can gender the crowd as female, and at the same time references Susanna Barrows's compelling study of nineteenth-century crowds: *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

25. Bridget Alsdorf also makes this point in her analysis of Félix Vallotton's crowd scenes in "Félix Vallotton's Murderous Life," *The Art Bulletin* 97, no. 2

(2015): 210-28, especially on page 215, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2015.979117. In this article, Alsdorf addresses the ethical imperatives emerging from Vallotton's visual implication of the viewer in his representations of urban crowds, which remind one of the inevitability of one's social role and inescapable belonging to the realm of the masses. Although Alsdorf mentions the power dynamics at work in mass-circulating accounts and images of life in the metropolis, her argument ultimately proclaims the democratic levelling of the people constituting and observing the urban masses. In contrast, my discussion of feminized representations of crowds exposes the intrinsic gender hierarchy that cements the relations between the artist and his subject matter, the individual viewer and the masses.

26. For example, Jonsson in *Crowds and Democracy*, 164-66; and Anne-Sophie Petit-Eptaz in "La foule dans l'iconographie et les écrits de Georges Grosz," in *La Foule: Mythes et Figures*, ed. Jean-Marie Paul (Rennes: Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2004), 223-39.

27. Stefan Jonsson, "Neither Masses nor Individuals: Representations of the Collective in Interwar German Culture," in *Weimar Publics / Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, ed. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 291.

28. For feminist discussions of Grosz's *Lustmord* images, see Maria Tatar's *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Beth Irwin Lewis's "*Lustmord*: Inside the Window of the Metropolis," in Von Ankum, *Women in the Metropolis*, 202-32.

29. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, p. 4.

30. For more on the Spartacist uprising, see Chris Harman, *The Lost Revolution: Germany 1916-1923* (London: Bookmarks, 1982), 73-95.

31. Lewis, "*Lustmord*: Inside the Window of the Metropolis," 212.

32. Consider, for example, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, produced in the same year.

33. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament (1927)," trans. Barbara Correll and Jack Zipes, *New German Critique* 5 (1975): 59-76, https://doi.org/10.2307/487919.

34. Original German text: "Das Ornament wird von den Massen, die es zustandebringen, nicht mitgedach." Ibid., 69.

35. Siegfried Kracauer, "Montage," in *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 186.

36. Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 331. Original German text: "…so würde man sich innerlich völlig atomisieren und in eine ganz unausdenkbare seelische Verfassung greaten."

37. Ibid., 329. Original German text: "Das Wesen der Balsiertheit ist die Abstumpfung gegen die Unterschiede der Dinge…."

38. Original French text: "Il n'est plus lui-même, il est devenu un automate que sa volonté ne guide plus." LeBon qtd. in Jonsson, "The Invention of the Masses," 74.

39. Katharina Von Ankum, "The Cinematic Engendering of Urban Experience: Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, die Symphonie einer Großstadt*," Colloquia Germanica 29, no. 3 (1996): 219.

40. Simmel, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, 329. Original German term: "Blasiertheit."

41 . Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 83. Original German text: "Der Fluß ist die Masse in ihrer Eitelkeit, die Masse, die sich darstellt. Das Element des Gesehenwerdens ist nicht weniger bedeutend als die Richtung. Ohne Ufer kein Fluß, das Spalier der Gewächse ist wie das der Menschen. Er hat—man möchte sagen—eine Haut, die gesehen sein will. Alle flußartigen Gebilde—wie Prozessionen und Demonstrationen—zeigen möglichst viel von ihrer Oberfläche: sie dehnen sich, solange sie nur können, sie bieten sich möglichst vielen Zuschauern dar."

42. Scipio Sighele, *La Donna Nova* (Rome: E. Voghera, 1898).

43. Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 394-96. Original German term: "Der Dirigent."

44. For a compelling analysis of the trope of the "New Woman" in Moholy-Nagy's photomontages, see Elizabeth Otto, "A 'Schooling of the Senses': Post-Dada Visual Experiments in the Bauhaus Photomontages of László Moholy-Nagy and Marianne Brandt," *New German Critique* 107 (2009): 89-131, https://doi.org/10.1215/0094033X-2009-003.

45. For more on Maria, see Janet Lungstrum's essay "*Metropolis* and the

Technosexual Woman of Weimar Modernity" in Von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis*, 128-44; and Andreas Huyssen' chapter "The Vamp and the Machine" in *After the Great Divide*, 65-81.

46. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Mob Porn," in *Crowds*, 17.

47. Schnapp, "Mob Porn," 15-16.

48. See Barry Bergdoll and Leah Dickerman, *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009) and Maria Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) for two excellent general studies on the aesthetics of the Bauhaus and Russian Constructivism, respectively.

49. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 48.

50. Schnapp, "Mob Porn," 41-42.

51. Stefan Jonsson, "The Invention of the Masses: The Crowd in French Culture from the Revolution to the Commune," in *Crowds*, 47-75, at 71.

"A New Theatrical Zone": Performing Time in Futurist Photographic Arts

by Jessica Hough

In the final moments of Italian Futurist Anton Giulio Bragaglia's film *Thaïs* (1917), the frame fills with a static shot of a clock before cutting to the film's eponymous protagonist in apparent agony, falling on a diagonal behind a crisscrossing cage of spiked posts (Fig. 1). Desperate and guilt-ridden over the death of her close friend, whose lover she seduced and claimed for herself, Thaïs has chosen to commit suicide. The nearly seven-minute sequence comprises a series of mostly still shots at varying distances from the subject, who wanders through a maze of diaphanous fumes and geometric abstraction (the work of Italian Futurist painter and scenographer Enrico Prampolini) punctuated by shots of the clock, its hands still but its timestamp changing. An intertitle reads, "Fearfully counting the minutes that seem to her to be centuries, Thaïs agonizes."[1] Employing what might be considered a rather literal interpretation of Umberto Boccioni's "force-lines," the clock reigns in the abstraction of the diegetic, or narrative, space.[2] This curious reassertion of reality, a reminder of the durational experience of the spectator, seems redundant in a nascent medium whose essential element was to record movement and narrative in time. As Thaïs wades through Prampolini's jutting spears, dizzying vortices, and spectral mists, Bragaglia's camera follows, shifting from close-ups, to graphic long shots, to the frame-filling clock. While the minute hand advances alongside the film's vertiginous diegesis, Thaïs's moving body is simultaneously at odds and in conversation with the clock as each shot registers and manifests time differently.

Enamored of speed, mechanization, technology, and dynamism, the Italian Futurists might have been expected to embrace cinema, then just over a decade old, as the apotheosis of modern art-making. In their 1916 manifesto "The Futurist Cinema," authors F.T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, Emilio Settimelli, Arnaldo Ginna, Giacomo Balla, and Remo Chiti proclaim the liberation of film as a new expressive medium, "vaster and nimbler than all existing arts."[3] Prior to the publication of this manifesto, though, the role of film in the Futurist movement was fraught with debate. Whether implicated in the divisive conflict spearheaded by Umberto Boccioni over the creative potential of photography as an artistic medium, or merely an unfortunate byproduct of the relatively sparse cinematic landscape of pre-World War I Italy, Futurist cinema was markedly limited in product and scope. It consisted of a few abstract experiments by Arnaldo Ginna and Bruno Corra, three

Fig. 1. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Still from *Thaïs*, 16mm film, (1917). © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

films by Bragaglia, and *Vita Futurista* [Futurist Life] (1916), the only official film of the movement.[4] Bragaglia's *Thaïs*—despite its aesthetic innovation, a curiously familiar melodrama that smacks of D'Annunzian romance—finds itself the sole extant representative of Futurist forays into this new visual technology, as all of the other films have been lost.[5]

Notwithstanding the scarcity of Futurist filmic artifacts, a theory of time, movement, and performance can be traced through *Thaïs* and "The Futurist Cinema" manifesto. From Boccioni's force-lines and Balla's chronophotographic paintings, to Bragaglia's photodynamism and later cinematic endeavors, the visualization of time and narrative constitutes the aesthetic core of the Futurist cinematic doctrine. In this essay, I examine Futurist responses to the photographic image, both moving and still, focusing specifically on the formal, narrative, and technological means by which Futurists attempted to address representations of time, movement, and the human body. I first consider the role of photography in Futurist thought, particularly as Bragaglia's articulates it in "Futurist Photodynamism." An analysis of the 1916 manifesto on Futurist cinema follows. Finally, I trace the narratological strategies employed by Bragaglia in *Thaïs*, attending to the depiction of time and movement. I suggest that fetishes of speed and action materialized not so much as the paragon of technological advancement (the film camera or the celluloid coursing through the projector), but rather in the human

body itself: the individual as object, made the locus and representative of movement or stasis, and the image of the body in motion as the exalted index of Futurist success.

"Icy Reproduction of Reality": Photography and Absolute Motion in Futurist Thought

Marinetti and his cohort make clear in their 1916 manifesto that the Futurist potential of cinema lay not in its technological primacy, but in its capacity for performance and the visual rendering of narrative. The document's cosigners envisioned cinema to be the ultimate instantiation of their experiments with literature and theater, proclaiming it "a new theatrical zone" that would serve as an antidote to the "pedantic" literary review, the "predictable" theatrical production, and the "tedious and oppressive" novel.[6] Simultaneously, from its onset in Marinetti's race towards and rebirth from the "Maternal ditch," to quote his Futurist manifesto, Futurism was fundamentally concerned with time and its products: history, movement, speed, and the future itself.[7] Intuitively, cinema seems to fulfill the promise of Futurism's ambitions to embrace technology in its creative endeavors to visualize time, speed, and movement. Yet, the Futurists conducted only a few experiments with the medium prior to the publication of their manifesto of Futurist cinema, deeming it too realistic. Bragaglia himself rejected cinema's "icy reproduction of reality" and asserted in his 1911 essay on photodynamism that the medium failed to capture movement's essence, instead dividing it arbitrarily and without rhythm.[8]

An evaluation of the extent to which Futurist cinema and the 1916 manifesto embodied the movement's core values must be contextualized within the proliferation of photographic arts in Italy and the debate amongst prominent Futurists as to the medium's potential for artistic innovation. Bragaglia was not alone in experimenting with still and moving images simultaneously; many Italian writers compared the uses and experiences of photography and cinema during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Looking at photography and cinema magazines from this period, Giorgio Bertellini has noted that Italian authors wrote more extensively about the overlap between the two mediums from as early as 1905 than journalists and critics in other European countries. Periodicals such as *Il Dilettante di Fotografia* [The Amateur Photographer] (Milan, 1891¬–1905), *Bullettino della Società Fotografia Italiana* [Bulletin of the Italian Photography Society] (Florence, 1889–1912), and *La Fotografia Artistica* [Artistic Photography] (Turin, 1904–1917) routinely discussed photography and cinema interchangeably, suggested that photographers should produce films as a means to expand their businesses, and provided advice on coloring, reproduction,

camera technique, and lighting for both mediums.[9] Despite this technological, cultural, and historical imbrication, the Futurists would ultimately come to reject one medium and embrace the other. Unsurprisingly, therefore, both "The Futurist Cinema" manifesto and the films themselves (*Thaïs*, at least) respond, even if obliquely, to concerns Futurists initially raised about photography.

As Giovanni Lista notes in the opening catalogue essay for the 2001 exhibit "Futurism and Photography" at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London, by the time Marinetti wrote the first version of the Futurist manifesto in 1908, photography was a familiar presence in Italy, as was the debate over its status as an art. Pictorialist photographers staged an exhibition of their work in Florence in 1895, and the National Photographic Congress held its inaugural exhibitions in Turin (1898) and Florence (1899), respectively.[10] Pictorialists aimed to align the new medium with painting by using labor-intensive production methods to create unique, non-reproducible works, and often drew on Symbolist traditions for narrative content, thus unwittingly setting the rhetoric surrounding photography-as-art in opposition to the artistic goals of the Futurists. Simultaneously, Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotography was becoming well-known in Italy due to his work in Naples, where he conducted chronophotographic research at the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn after 1870.[11] In 1882, Marey developed a camera resembling a rifle that captured 12 timed exposures on a rotating disc, such that the final product contained each image within a picture that delineated the subject's movement over time.

Mary Ann Doane has suggested that Marey's experiments marked the start of cinema's fixation on instantaneity that would continue throughout its history, noting that Marey's work simultaneously aspired to represent the instant, to dissect it, and to imagine its reconstruction.[12] Given the insistence on "dynamism" in painting and in sculpture by Boccioni, Marey's chronophotographic experiments were of interest to the artist, who strove to reproduce the "force-lines" of an object's movement and to provide an aesthetic interpretation of rhythm and the innate vibrations of the world.[13] Boccioni distinguished between "absolute" and "relative" motion, or as Lista more simply defines them, an object's "energy" and its "kinetics," respectively.[14] Boccioni describes dynamism as the exchange between an object's "specific, characteristic motion (absolute motion) and the transformation which the object undergoes in relation to the environment (relative motion), whether that be mobile or static."[15] Moreover, the "relative" motion that can be scientifically registered by Marey's chronophotography does not suffice to represent an object's dynamism because it records only discontinuous markers of movement and thus lacks the ability to depict "absolute" motion; for Boccioni, only painting and sculpture met this criterion.

Boccioni drew his conception of time from Henri Bergson's notion

of *durée*, and so asserted that even when the camera captured motion, it inevitably froze it—an effect antithetical to the poetics of dynamism and the obsession with speed that permeated Futurist thought. As Bertellini notes, Bergson was widely read in Italy during the pre-war period and his work permeated Futurist thought.[16] The philosopher famously associated cinema not with movement or dynamism, but with immobility. In *Creative Evolution* (1907), Bergson posits a notion of cinema's time as merely an "illusion," suggesting that movement exists not in the image, but "in the apparatus" and is, unlike Boccioni's "absolute motion" of essence and energy, "abstract and simple, *movement in general*, so to speak."[17] In her investigation of time and memory in contemporary time-based art, Homay King complicates Bergson's view of cinema, suggesting that his critique derived not only from the fundamental immobility of the photographic frame, but also from its determinism; once printed and permanently embedded in the celluloid grains, a film's images (barring conservation issues) will remain the same regardless of where or how many times they are run through a projector.[18] Despite Bergson's explicit rejection of cinema in regard to its potential for dynamism, Boccioni applied these ideas most trenchantly to photography. Perhaps he recognized that the medium, inflected by Pictorialist rhetoric by the early twentieth century, posed a threat to the content and meaning of painting, even if a marginal one. Indeed, the manifesto on cinema deals so extensively with diegetic content and narrative structure that it bears to reason its authors felt it best to simply sidestep all attempts to reconcile cinema's mobility-immobility paradox and instead engage with it not as a visual, pictorial medium, but as a performative space.

Meanwhile, other Futurist artists more fully embraced the visual potency and theoretical implications of photography. Giacomo Balla's three paintings from 1912, *Dog on a Leash*, *Girl Running on a Balcony*, and *Rhythms of the Bow*, famously suggest the analytical aesthetic of chronophotography. Despite the formal affinities between Balla's paintings and Marey's work, Marta Braun proposes that Balla's use of photography as a visual resource likely derived from his friendship with brothers Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, whose photodynamic images specifically rejected the scientific analysis that Marey's chronophotography enabled.[19] The Bragaglias instead attempted to reconcile the static image with the Bergsonian concept of *durée*, which had prevented artists like Boccioni from supporting photography as a Futurist art. Between 1911 and 1912, the Bragaglias, with funding from F.T. Marinetti, produced a series of photodynamic pictures that used long exposure times to visualize the movement of bodies performing a variety of simple gestures. The photographs depict a partly blurred and partly distinguishable trajectory of motion, indexical to both direction and speed.

No doubt consciously drawing on Boccioni's rhetoric of plastic dynamism and composer Francesco Balilla Pratella's musical dynamism to situate

photography within this particular constellation of mediums, Anton Giulio Bragaglia writes in "Futurist Photodynamism,"

> The static synthesis of two static states, even when they are the principal states, does not suffice. What is needed is a synthesis, but it must be a dynamic synthesis of complex evolution…. With Photodynamism we have obtained this synthesis of dynamic evolution and have liberated photography from the obscenity of brutal realism.[20]

Here, Bragaglia sets his photodynamism in direct opposition to Marey's chronophotography and simultaneously rejects the misguided mechanical result of the camera's multiple exposures, implying that his own theory and practice of photodynamism restores not only the role of the individual artist as creative agent, but also the photographic product as embodiment of an intangible but visually insistent energy. Later in the same manifesto, Bragaglia declares his intention to abandon photographic and cinematic realism in favor of an artistic practice that emphasizes the "interior essence of things" through movement.[21]

Fig. 2. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, [Photodynamic Portrait of a Woman]. 1924, gelatin silver print, 4 1/2 x 6 3/8 in. (11.4 x 16.2 cm). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © The Estate of Anton Giulio Bragaglia / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Bragaglia does not explicitly reference the human subject in his manifesto, and yet nearly every photodynamic work that he produced makes use of the human body in its demonstration of motion. This exclusive focus on the human body contrasts markedly with the practices of Marey and his contemporary, Eadweard Muybridge, both of whom studied the bodies of sportsmen, gymnasts, dancers, or other human figures performing everyday tasks, but who also demonstrated their methods with prolific images of animal movement. To this day, Muybridge's sequence of a running horse remains firmly established as a key moment in the histories of both photography and cinema. Marey's and Muybridge's studies of human motion tend to show the entire body, whereas the Bragaglias' photodynamic works depict only parts of the body, often sharply dissociated from their whole. One photograph shows a female face moving in a lateral arc across the frame (Fig. 2). Flattened by the photodynamic process, it resembles a mask floating in darkness and unattached to any discernible wearer, ticking like a metronome. The woman's body, in contrast, forms a softly sweeping arch in the lower half of the frame, the hint of a lapel emerging as quickly as it dissipates on either side. This dissociation of body part from human whole later came to define some of Bragaglia's most innovative work in *Thaïs*, where the facial close-up serves a disorienting, paradoxically de-individuating purpose.

Fig. 3. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *The Bow*, 1911, gelatin silver print, 6 11/16 x 4 11/16 in. (17 x 11.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Estate of Anton Giulio Bragaglia/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Bragaglia asserts that photodynamism simultaneously enables a "minute analysis" of motion, as well as the "concept and general idea of motion," indicating an expansion of Marey's project that visually tends toward abstraction.[22] Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia's *The Bow* (1911) depicts a man performing the simple and familiar gesture to which its title alludes, but as his body bends downward across the frame of the photo-

graph, it multiplies and blurs so as to suggest an overall effect of geometric shapes colliding with and blending into one another (Fig. 3). The motion as a whole denotes a triangle whose edges round in the creation of a cone-like shape, punctuated by spheres corresponding to the figure's head, which are repeated staccato-like across the upper register. Like all of Bragaglia's subjects, the figure emerges from a black background, excised from any contextualizing mise-en-scène, such that his body becomes an icon for movement itself and for the Bergsonian *durée* that Bragaglia invoked in order to elevate photography to the status of art within Futurist circles. In other words, if Marey's chronophotography precisely registers Boccioni's "relative motion," Bragaglia's photodynamism attempts to move beyond it, literally blurring its lines. Moreover, in his manifesto on photodynamism, Bragaglia quotes Bergson: "To grasp what happens in the intervals in between is more than human," meaning that the durational time of human experience manifests itself in the discontinuous space left empty by Marey's chronophotography.[23] Curiously, for Bragaglia and for other Futurists concerned with capturing the essence of motion in art, in order to illustrate continuity—to fill in the interval—the human figure must demonstrate and stand in for the more-than-human. The body, not the clock, is the marker of Futurist time.

Notwithstanding what appears to be the formal success of this project, and despite the vehemence of Bragaglia's rhetoric, which echoes Marinetti's own poetics with prolific declarations and the use of the first-person plural, the Futurists fell under the sway of Boccioni and ultimately rejected photodynamism, ousting the Bragaglias from the group. On March 24, 1913, Anton Giulio organized an exhibition of his and his brother's prints at the Galleria Romagna where they displayed 30 photodynamic works. The exhibition initiated a short period in which Anton Giulio (the brother most in the public eye) regularly delivered lectures throughout Italy and published a new manifesto, "La Fotografia del Movimento" [Photography of Movement], and an updated edition of "Futurist Photodynamism." In 1913, Bragaglia published a book with Giuseppe Ugo Nalato in Rome that featured "Futurist Photodynamism" and sixteen photodynamic images. The release of the book was met with strident criticism from Boccioni, whose rebuttal in *Lacerba* effectively signaled the shoring up of a new Futurist group in Rome that included Balla, Dinamo Correnti, Libero Altomare, Luciano Folgore, and Gustavo Bonaventura, with whom the Bragaglias continued to remain close, and the exile of the brothers from Boccioni's and Marinetti's faction.[24] Despite their expulsion, the Bragaglias continued to produce writings and photographs under Futurism's name, while Anton Giulio began to work with the moving image, which would be championed by Marinetti and the old guard just three years later.

A Polyexpressive "School for Children": The New Futurist Cinema

In September 1916, one month prior to Boccioni's death, Marinetti, in conjunction with Corra, Settimelli, Ginna, Balla, and Chiti, published "The Futurist Cinema." This manifesto suggests that Boccioni's more photographically-inclined colleagues were still open to considering at least one of the photographic arts as a Futurist medium. Up to this point, the only mention of cinema in Futurist manifestos was by Bragaglia, who had rejected it for precisely the same reasons that Boccioni denied the viability of photography and photodynamism: "cinematography shatters [movement] in the frames of the film strip" only to produce a reproduction of reality.[25] Italian literary and cultural scholar Millicent Marcus argues that film lent itself best to Futurist ambitions because, as a medium that depended on constant movement (16 to 24 frames per second), it was particularly well suited to depict speed.[26] But, as we have seen, it was precisely the paradox of film's material condition, by which a constantly moving filmstrip is necessarily parsed into distinct frames, that proved an obstacle to Futurist artists. In their manifesto, Marinetti and his cosigners bypass this medium-specific problem and, with it, the mechanical natures of the camera and cinema more generally. The authors initially champion the cinema not for any advance it makes over photography, but rather as the natural endpoint for Futurist experiments in literature and theater. Having established film within this particular narrative paradigm, the manifesto's signers declare cinema an independent art capable of encompassing all other arts through what the Futurists term its essential "polyexpressiveness."[27] Ultimately, they call for a remarkable synthesis of mediums and disciplines: "In short, it will be painting, architecture, sculpture, words-in-freedom, music of colors, lines, and forms, a clash of objects and realities thrown together at random."[28]

On one level, the film camera seems to fulfill the Futurist techno-fantasy of the machine-body of the multiplied man, with the cameraperson's bodily connection to his or her camera and the capacity to ostensibly make visible a subjective experience via that union. In this way, cinema answers Marinetti's call in "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine": "On the day when man will be able to externalize his will and make it into a huge invisible arm, Dream and Desire, which are empty words today, will master and reign over *space and time*."[29] However, the similarities between the medium and Marinetti's vision of a human-machine hybrid do not take primacy in his newfound interest in cinema in 1916. Despite their claims for the polyexpressive nature of the medium, the signers focus on cinema's structural, narrative, and performative capacities. A mechanical body, with its vision determined by a machine, might be at odds with the Futurist mythos of the inspired, autonomous genius whose will is actualized through his art. In that sense, the body of the cameraperson is rendered subordinate to the bod-

ies on screen and in the diegetic space of the film; those actors then embody Futurist fantasies of youth, speed, and loveless romance.

The manifesto is composed of an introduction and fourteen points that call for a variety of Futurist demonstrations ranging from the documentation of political conventions, to narrative depictions of Futurist romance, to experiments in depicting the human body.[30] The manifesto demands that cinema's narrative content strive toward pedagogy and prescription, in line with the more educational concerns of second-wave Futurism that emerged at the end of the war. The signers declare cinema to be "the best school for children: a school of joy, speed, force, courage, and heroism."[31] The Futurists hoped to depict these scenes with "cinematic analogy" and graphic collisions of "words-in-freedom."[32] This method echoes Marinetti's "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912), whose emphasis on the structural similarities between film editing and language prefigures the work of Russian filmmakers and theorists Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein. Marinetti and his cohort called for the use of "cinematic analogy" to describe the subjective experience of the characters within the narrative, claiming, "The universe will be our vocabulary…. We shall add color to the dialogue by swiftly and simultaneously showing every image that passes through the actor's brain."[33] The synesthetic quality of this proclamation is noteworthy, as "color" and "dialogue" unite, despite being the two elements most glaringly absent from early cinema. Marinetti's statement suggests that he envisioned a Futurist cinema that, through its visual and narrative style, would achieve a potentially absorptive, compensatory experience for the viewer.

In total, the Futurist cinematic output consisted of a few abstract short films called "chromatic symphonies" (described only in Bruno Corra's manifesto "Abstract Cinema, Chromatic Music"), three feature-length films by Bragaglia—*Thaïs*, *Il mio cadavere* [My Corpse] (1917), and *Perfido incanto* [Evil Spell] (1918)—and *Vita Futurista* (1916), collaboratively attributed to and starring Marinetti, Corra, Balla, Settimelli, and Chiti.[34] *Vita Futurista*, now extant only in archival materials and stills, pictured each of the signers of "The Futurist Cinema" and was an attempt to illustrate the manifesto's tenets. In her analysis of surviving materials, Marcus asserts that *Vita Futurista* enacts a list-like application of the manifesto's calls for speed and the mechanized man.[35] While integrating disparate narratives through montage rather than the use of intertitles, the makers of *Vita Futurista* fell short of attempting the kind of abstraction and formal play that would characterize later avant-garde works.[36] Consequently, they demanded that the performing body itself make legible Futurist ideology in a series of sketches that were received with tangible hesitation by their first audiences. The vignettes alternately portrayed young men harassing a passéist older gentleman, women in tinfoil costumes dancing through rays of light, and bodies changing shape as they are reflected in a succession of convex or concave mirrors.[37] Although

most of the episodes center on human performance, some included objects as protagonists, manifesting Marinetti's call for cinema as the synthesis of narrative and plastic form. In an untitled sequence, Balla displays some sculptural objects and wooden neckties, illustrating their formal and dynamic qualities.[38] In another, titled "Caricatura dell'Amleto, simbolo del passatismo pessimista" ["Caricature of Hamlet, Symbol of Pessimistic Passéism"], Balla falls in love with a chair, whose spirit is represented as the double exposure of a ghostly young woman in a white dress, and together they give birth to a footstool.[39] Such scenes suggest that while the body and movement remained critical elements in illustrating the manifesto's tenets, conceptions of what constituted a living body or an acting agent were fluid and afforded space for satire.

Time, Movement, and the Body in Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*

Thaïs is the only extant Futurist film that can be seen in its entirety, so it is difficult to gauge its relationship to other Futurist films or judge its comparative success in implementing Futurist theories. The film shares its name, and very obliquely its content, with Anatole France's novel (1890) and Jules Massenet's opera, which premiered in Paris in 1894 and Milan in 1903. The novel and opera both tell the story of an Alexandrian courtesan (Thaïs) who converts to Christianity at the urging of Cenobite monk Athanaël. While this process of conversion reveals the monk's baser, lustful nature and compromises his holy status, Thaïs successfully achieves salvation. In contrast, Bragaglia's film follows its aristocratic heroine as she seduces the Count of San Remo, the lover of her best friend, Bianca Belincioni-Stagno. The film lacks any overtones of religious eroticism and has little in common with either France's plotline or Massenet's stage adaptation, with the exception of Thaïs's death, which dramatically concludes both the opera and the beloved early diva film.[40]

Thaïs defies easy characterization as Futurist because of its ties to "passéist" narratives and narrative forms, as well as its frequent use of intertitles (banned, according to Marinetti's "Futurist Cinema"). While passéism, or *passatismo*, was not a codified aesthetic movement per se, Marinetti saw it as a backward-looking cultural conservatism that the Futurists should seek to upend. The early Futurist performative declaration "Against Passéist Venice" offers insight into Marinetti's conception of passéism. In July of 1910, Marinetti, Boccioni, Carlo Carrà and Luigi Russolo tossed 800,000 leaflets from St. Mark's Clock Tower into the square below. They declared war on the old Venice, "enfeebled and undone by centuries of worldly pleasure," and flooded with tourists, newlyweds, courtesans, and the elderly.[41] Six years later, Marinetti and his co-authors declared cinema to be the Futurist

response to the quintessentially passéist novel: the "static companion to those who are sedentary, nostalgic, and neutralist" and an art form replete with romantic clichés and circuitous description.[42]

In addition to depending on "passéist" romance for much of its plot development, *Thaïs* relies heavily on descriptive intertitles to advance its narrative, particularly in its expository section. Blocks of text, some so long that they cannot fit within a single frame, describe Thaïs as both author and libertine. "Thaïs" is merely a nom de plume and one of several names, her true identity being the Slavic Countess Vera Préobajenska, nicknamed "Nitchevo"—meaning "nothing" in Russian.[43] She is educated, aristocratic, and free from the confines of marriage and traditional romances—the pinnacle of Futurist womanhood. But, like the courtesan from whom she apparently draws her name, Thaïs is a woman with many lovers, whom she manipulates like puppets while holding no emotional attachments, threatening the Futurist patriarchy as she entangles men in lustful traps and reduces them to playthings.[44] The echoes between the nature of Thaïs's menace and the distrust of the camera are striking; both disallow the will of the (male) subject, positioning him as a mechanism controlled by another (be it woman or machine), rather than as a machine-warrior, the multiplied-man of Futurist fantasies.

Overall, the plot falls short of revolutionary, either in Futurist or feminist terms, with its messy love triangle and the final desperate deaths of its two heroines. When Bianca discovers Thaïs's advances toward the Count of San Remo, she falls into suicidal despair and departs on a fatal horseback ride. Wracked by guilt, Thaïs commits suicide as well, precipitating the film's transition from a poorly acted melodrama to a lengthy, visually abstract, and graphic suicide sequence. Marcus argues that the first part of Bragaglia's film is not a failed effort at Futurist cinema, but rather a conscious depiction of passéism replete with femininity, heavy-handed descriptive intertitles, and lesbian undertones to the tune of Charles Baudelaire's erotic, Symbolist poetry. She suggests that Thaïs's symbolic death rejects and subverts this passéism, and claims that Thaïs must be removed from the narrative both as woman and as representative of sentimentality—two entities without a place in a Futurist world.[45] Marcus sees the final scene as both a violent, visceral rejection of passéism (symbolized by the death of Thaïs) and the apotheosis of Bragaglia's efforts to express the "interior essence of the object itself."[46] Prampolini's stage sets, Marcus argues, embody this "essence" as hallucinated manifestations of externalized psychological distress."[47]

I argue, however, that a closer analysis of Bragaglia's formal and narrative explorations compels a more nuanced reading, not reducible to an allegory of the erasure of passéism and femininity. Marcus is correct to note the striking contrast between the first 30 and final five minutes of the

film, and certainly there are elements that suggest a direct engagement with the anti-passéist Futurist rhetoric (the use of Baudelaire's poetry in some intertitles might be seen as ironic, for example), but Bragaglia's innovative visual strategies are present throughout the duration of film. Within the first five minutes, amidst the barrage of descriptive intertitles, several top hats parade across the frame, changing scale and shape as Bragaglia switches from close-up to long-shot. This sequence is delightfully textural, with the hats' sheen doubling the reflective surface of the cinema screen. The shot recalls Marinetti's call for playful synecdoche in "The Futurist Cinema" and the hats embody the previously discussed fluidity between human form and object.[48] They simultaneously evoke the blurred heads of Bragaglia's *The Bow* and *Portrait of a Photodynamic Woman* and anticipate the more active, abstracted role that objects will play in the final suicide sequence. Additionally, Prampolini's sets throughout the film are anything but passéist reproductions of the theater stage, and the characters move gracefully across them with gestures that suggest liquidity and continuity. A closer analysis of the final sequence of the film also reveals Bragaglia's engagement with theories of motion, photography, and film to be more complicated than previously acknowledged. The sequence does not merely revise Bragaglia's photodynamic experiments, but demonstrates a commitment to the specific instructions posited by "The Futurist Cinema." The loss of Thaïs does not herald a Futurist vision through allegorical self-sacrifice, as Marcus suggests, but her body itself makes legible that vision throughout the film. In other words, Thaïs's movement across the screen, over time, and through diegetic space, particularly in the final suicide sequence, evinces the Futurist fixation on time and its narratives.

If the film fails to illustrate every one of Marinetti's fourteen points, the final sequence can be seen as a montage-based visualization of interior experience, but not merely as a direct analogy to an object's "essence," as Marcus suggests. The first point of the manifesto stipulates, "If we should want to express a character's state of anguish, instead of showing him in various stages of suffering, we would give an equivalent impression with the view of a jagged and cavernous mountain."[49] Bragaglia, rather than showing mountains, has instead—with the help of Prampolini—created them on-screen and placed Thaïs within them. Geometric structures seem to swallow Thaïs as she navigates stacks of unidentifiable obstructions. The scene recalls the opening shot of the film, in which Thaïs smiles wildly as she is consumed by a set of interconnected triangles that seem to spiral into the screen and away from the viewer (Fig. 4). The arrangement of figure and ground in both of these scenes exemplifies Bragaglia's manipulation of scale, disorienting the viewer and alienating Thaïs from any recognizable diegetic space or narrative. On what resembles an assembly of large building blocks, there appears a panoply of painted shapes in black and white: a black cat,

Fig. 4. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Still from *Thaïs*, 16mm film, (1917). © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

biomorphic globules, sharp zigzags, and a tightly coiled spiral. Wearing a ruffled polka-dotted dress, Thaïs simultaneously floats and blends into the backdrop, raising her hand repeatedly in a gesture that is in dialogue with the shapes that surround her. Thaïs enlivens the objects that compose the set and together they exchange abstract patterns and decorative, enigmatic signs, muddling any distinction between the actress and her surroundings, or between the living body and the Futurist object.

Bragaglia allows Thaïs to languish across Prampolini's sets in agony or bizarrely ecstatic pleasure in a sequence whose duration suggests an affinity with the opera's final death scene, indicating that his goal is not a full erasure of Thaïs as a purported embodiment of passéism. Thaïs's curious nickname itself, Nitchevo, complicates the idea of Thaïs's mere existence throughout the film and obscures an easy reading of her death as such. Rather, the movements of the actress through the set—which becomes remarkably flattened in its geometric hallucinations, as if trapping Thaïs between two-dimensional frames—further develop Bragaglia's thoughts laid out in "Futurist Photodynamism" (Fig. 5). Even if Bragaglia was merely elaborating an allegorical death of passéist Italian cinema and the sentimental woman, he was also grappling with issues of durational movement and time, as well as the myriad ways to represent them. The disorienting effect

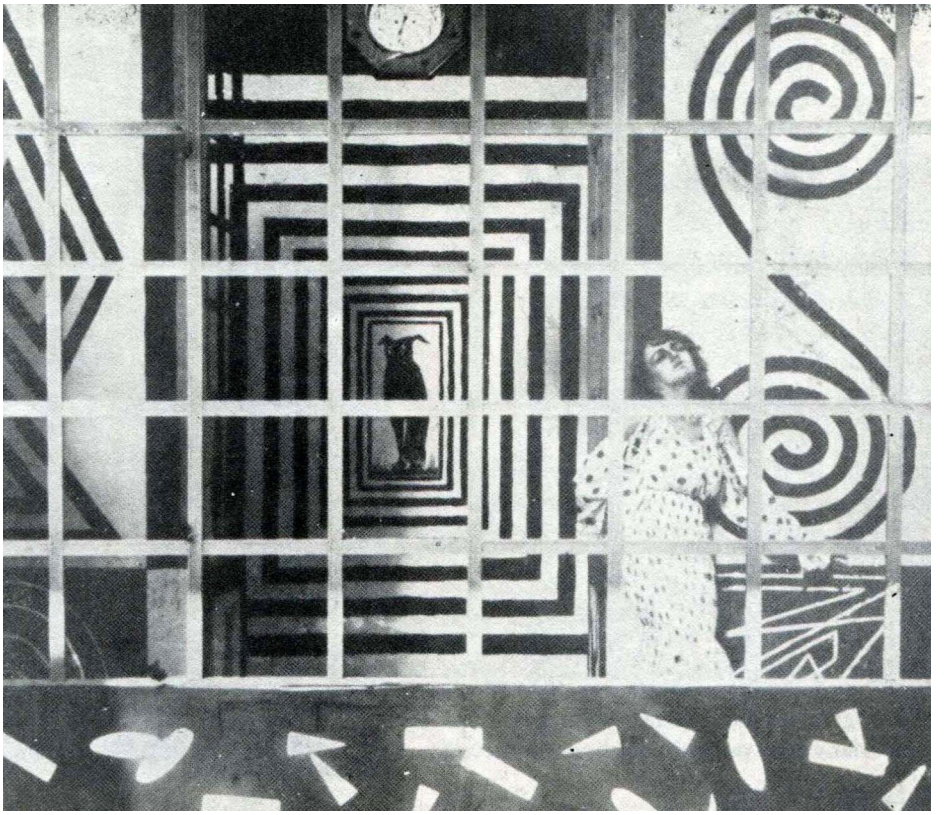

Fig. 5. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Still from *Thaïs*, 16mm film, (1917). © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

that Bragaglia produces through the manipulation of scale reappears in his close-ups during this final sequence. These shots mark a divergence from the cinematography in the first part of the film, in which he relied primarily on long shots and a static camera. In the suicide sequence, Bragaglia intercuts short close-ups of Thaïs falling through darkness or writhing, trapped behind crisscrossing spikes, with longer shots of her moving through the set (see Fig. 1). Bragaglia's close-ups break both spatial and temporal continuity, instantiating Doane's theorization of the close-up as a "for-itself," dissociated from the mise-en-scène and uncoupled from strategies of narrative cohesion.[50] In *Thaïs*, the close-up disrupts the semblance of durational movement that seems inherent to the moving image and introduces a space of static separation that is almost purely visual.

Returning to the scene with which I began this essay, Bragaglia's depiction of the clock in this final sequence is its most illuminating, as well as its most troubling, aspect. The clock fills the frame four times during the last two minutes of the suicide sequence at nearly regular intervals (ten seconds, thirteen seconds, and thirteen seconds apart), establishing a rhythm that illustrates what its face signifies. Still, time dilates; over the course of

two minutes, five minutes pass on the clock, such that our experience as viewers diverges from Thaïs's experience described in the intertitles ("Fearfully counting the minutes that seem to her to be centuries, Thaïs agonizes").[51] Thaïs experiences time more slowly than the clock depicts it passing, implying that the essence of lived time differs from the interval-based time marked by the clock. The minute hand strikes six-thirty and a final intertitle declares, "Thaïs dies!"[52] Yet, she appears again on screen with a minute remaining, during which she slowly, elegantly sinks into the black depths of the screen space away from the viewer. Moreover, Thaïs remains within the frame, in close-up—a movement out of time, if we apply Doane's theorization here—before a mist overtakes the lower half of the frame and she dissolves entirely into the darkness. Aestheticized, her death is not alien to Futurist narratives, but the structure and content of the sequence itself move beyond a merely allegorical reading and suggest sustained play with the notion of continuity and the visualization of cinema time.[53]

To a certain degree, *Thaïs* falls prey to the predicament of Marinetti's manifestos of literature: in an effort to reject passéist film style, it still partially embodies it. And if Bragaglia initially wished to investigate the way that photography could depict movement durationally and to visualize the "essence" of motion, he seems to have abandoned that effort in his cinematic endeavors of the late 1910s. During this period, Bragaglia subordinated that project to the potential of film to tell a Futurist narrative through performance, articulated in "The Futurist Cinema." However, like photodynamism's insistence on the human figure as signifer of narrative movement and the passage of time, performance does not purely serve narratological ends in Bragaglia's *Thaïs*. Rather, it plays a more nuanced role in the representation, manipulation, and experience of time. In the film's final moments, the clock manifests a rhythmic but unrealistic time, despite being a "realistic" (indexical) measure of time on screen (and, for Bergson, the quintessential signifier of non-durational time). In a paradoxical way, the clock fulfills Bragaglia's hope in "Futurist Photodynamism" to "in short, record reality unrealistically."[54] Thaïs performs this "unrealistic" time as she wanders through the disorienting, abstracted space of cinema. If, as Mary Ann Doane argues in *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, chronophotography "speaks its own time," then in cinema the performing body, be it human or object, "speaks" the passage of Futurist time.[55]

Notes

1. The intertitles that accompany the extant copy of the film are in French: "Comptant avec effroi les minutes qui lui semblent des siècles, Thaïs agonise." Translation is my own. Throughout the essay, translations appear in cited sources unless otherwise noted.

2. For Boccioni, "force-lines" represent the dynamic essence of an object. He writes, "We [the Futurists] want to give a style to our movement. We don't want to observe, dissect, or transpose into pictorial terms. We identify ourselves with the thing itself, which is a profoundly different matter. Hence, for us, the object has no form in itself; the only definable thing is the line which reveals the relationship between the object's weight (quantity) and its expansion (quality). This has suggested to us the notion of force-lines, which characterize the object and enable us to see it as a whole—it is the essential interpretation of the object, the perception of life itself." Umberto Boccioni, "The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 90.

3. F.T. Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 230.

4. Millicent Marcus provides an analysis of *Vita Futurista* and an account of its extant materials. Millicent Marcus, "Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*; or, The Death of the *Diva* + the Rise of the *Scenoplastica* = The Birth of Futurist Cinema," *South Central Review* 13, nos. 2-3 (1996): 64, https://doi.org/10.2307/3190372.

5. General Gabriele d'Annunzio was a prominent Italian poet, journalist, playwright, and later soldier and politician, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. His literary work married traditions of French Symbolism and British Aestheticism and emphasized youth, sensuality, and power. For one recent account of D'Annunzio's life, his artistic practices, and his influence on the rise of fascism in Italy, see Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *The Pike: Gabriele d'Annunzio, Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (New York: Anchor, 2014).

6. Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," 230.

7. In Marinetti's founding manifesto of the Futurist movement, he dramatizes a frenzied automotive crash fueled by the revelation of Futurism. He

writes, "'Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation, but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!' The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I spun my car around….and to my disgust rolled over into a ditch….Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water!….When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!" F.T. Marinetti, "The Founding Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint, trans. R.W. Flint et al. (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 48.

8. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, "Futurist Photodynamism," ed., trans. Lawrence Rainey, *Modernism/Modernity* 15, no. 2 (2008): 369, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/235931.

9. Giorgio Bertellini, "Photography and Cinema, and Vice Versa," in *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 49.

10. Giovanni Lista, *Futurism and Photography* (London: Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art in association with Merrell, 2001), 11.

11. The historical archive of the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn holds documents detailing Marey's work in Naples, where he studied the movement of fish in the center's tanks. Also see Lista, *Futurism and Photography*, 9.

12. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29-30.

13. Maria Elena Versari, "Introduction," in *Umberto Boccioni, Futurist Painting Sculpture* (Plastic Dynamism), trans. Richard Shane Agin and Maria Elena Versari (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016), 33.

14. Umberto Boccioni, "Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Rainey et al., 187. Lista, *Futurism and Photography*, 10.

15. Boccioni, "Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism," 190.

16. Bertellini, "Photography and Cinema, and Vice Versa," 52.

17. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Dover Publications, 1998),

305.

18. Homay King, *Virtual Memory: Time-Based Art and the Dream of Digitality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 48.

19. Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey* (1830-1904) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 303.

20. Bragaglia, "Futurist Photodynamism," 367.

21. "Our aim is to make a decisive move away from reality, since cinematography, photography, and chronophotography already exist to deal with mechanically precise and cold reproduction. *We are seeking the interior essence of things: pure movement; and we prefer to see everything in motion*, for in motion, as things are dematerialized they also become idealized, while still retaining, deep down, a strong skeleton of truth." Ibid., 376

22. Bragaglia characterized this aesthetic as the "recording [of] reality unrealistically." Ibid., 366.

23. Bergson, qtd. in Bragaglia, "Futurist Photodynamism," 376. Translated by Bragaglia into Italian and then by Rainey into English. As Rainey notes, Bragaglia's source for this quotation was not specified.

24. Boccioni wrote, "All the worse for those short-sighted people who thought we were infatuated with this episode; who thought we were merely chasing trajectories and mechanical gestures. We have always rejected with disgust and contempt even the remotest connection with photography." Boccioni qtd. in Lista, *Futurism and Photography*, 25.

25. Bragaglia, "Futurist Photodynamism," 369.

26. Marcus, "Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*," 63.

27. Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," 230.

28. Ibid., 231.

29. F.T. Marinetti, "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, ed. Flint, trans. Flint et al., 99. Italics mine.

30. Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," 231-33.

31. Ibid., 230.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 231.

34. Bruno Corra, "Abstract Cinema, Chromatic Music," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 66-70.

35. Marcus, "Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*," 65.

36. One such late avant-garde film is Fernand Léger's Dadaist *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), which is characterized by a dizzying grind of gears and frame-filling geometric forms.

37. The film was a failure at the box office and spurred viewers to throw rocks at the screen. Ibid.

38. Descriptions for each episode can be found in Marcus, "Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*."

39. Contemporary video and performance artist Trisha Baga created a short video titled *Love Story of Balla and a Chair* in 2009 for *Futurist Life Redux*, a Performa commission by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Portland Green Cultural Products to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publication of the Futurist manifesto. The video is at once interpretation, response, and remake, reviving and expanding upon the visual tactics that Marinetti calls for in "The Futurist Cinema."

40. See Angela Dalle Vacche, *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008) for a nuanced discussion of the diva in Italian film and literature. Chapter 7, "Tropes: Obsessions and Traumas of a Genre," 198-223, is particularly relevant here.

41. F.T. Marinetti et al., "Against Passéist Venice," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Rainey et al., 67.

42. Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," 229.

43. The intertitle reads: "D'origine slave, la Comtesse Véra Préobajenska que ses amis ont surnommé 'Nitchevo' a su se créer, par ses excentricités, une certaine réputation littéraire sous le pseudonyme de THAIS." ["Of Slavic or-

igin, the Countess Véra Préobajenksa, nicknamed 'Nitchevo' by her friends, used her eccentricities to create for herself a certain literary reputation under the pseudonym 'THAIS.'" Translation is my own.]

44. The intertitles read: "De la célèbre courtisane elle aime à se donner les folles allures: et pourtant, très sincèrement, elle n'aime personne" and, "Courte et bonne! Telle est la devise que Thaïs a imposée à ses nombreux adorateurs, dont, comme d'une collection de pantins, elle s'amuse énormément." ["As a famous courtesan, she loves to assume incredible guises: and yet, quite honestly, she loves no one" and, "Short and sweet! Such is the motto that Thaïs required of her numerous admirers, with whom, like a collection of puppets, she amuses herself enormously." Translations are my own.]

45. Marcus, "Anton Giulio Bragaglia's *Thaïs*," 77, 79.

46. Ibid., 77.

47. Ibid., 79.

48. Marinetti urges the Futurists to produce tongue-in-cheek "filmed dramas of objects," such as "two policemen-mustaches arresting a dissident tooth." Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema," 232-33.

49. Ibid., 231.

50. Mary Ann Doane, "The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 90, https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-14-3-89.

51. See note 1.

52. Original: "Thaïs meurt!"

53. Death, for example, is at once a force of *dis*continuity, but also in some ways the continuity of "nitchevo."

54. Bragaglia, "Futurist Photodynamism," 366.

55. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 231.

Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*: On Photography, Archives, and the Afterlife of Images

by Molly Kalkstein

In 1923, following his release from the Bellevue Sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, where he had spent three years in treatment for depression and schizophrenia, the German art historian Aby Warburg began work on the great culminating project of his career. Warburg intended the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* [Mnemosyne Atlas], as it has come to be called, to synthesize his previous scholarship and crystallize his theories about the migration and repetition of "images of great symbolic, intellectual, and emotional power" from the art and culture of Western antiquity through the Renaissance, and up through his own day.[1] Although Warburg is often credited with founding the study of iconology, later promulgated in the United States by his disciple Erwin Panofsky, the movement and impact of images he hoped to demonstrate through the *Mnemosyne Atlas* had a much deeper psychological inflection. As Warburg explained, his program was an attempt "to point to the function of collective memory as a formative force for the emergence of styles by using the civilization of pagan antiquity as a constant."[2]

Notoriously ambitious and elusive, and left unfinished at the time of Warburg's death, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* comprised a numbered series of black cloth-covered screens on which Warburg would arrange and rearrange groupings of black and white gelatin silver photographs, comprising nearly one thousand images in all. The photographs reproduced works of high art, maps, cosmographical images, manuscript pages, and were in some instances interspersed with contemporary newspaper clippings and advertisements (Fig. 1). Warburg selected these images from his own library, and specifically from his photographic collection, which, Katia Mazzucco proposes, he specifically assembled to support this project.[3] Warburg intended each panel to demonstrate a particular theme or argument, many details of which are still being parsed. Warburg summarized Panel 77, shown in Figure 1, for example, rather obliquely as "the catharsis of the 'headhunter' having taken the form of a golfer."[4] Its contents comprise, as Christopher Wood describes it,

> an irregular constellation embracing *Medea about to Kill Her Children* and *The Massacre at Chios* by Delacroix, modern photographs of golfers, two Greek coins, the cover of a fish cookbook, postage stamps from France and Barbados, an advertisement for a beauty cream, and a seal presenting Charles II of England as Neptune.[5]

Fig. 1. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* [Mnemosyne Atlas], Panel 77, 1929, digital positive from glass plate negative, 9 1/2 x 7 in. (23.7 x 17.7 cm). Warburg Institute Archive, London. © The Warburg Institute.

Wood, like many other scholars, is quick to admit that many of the meanings that Warburg ascribed to his aggregations of images remain enigmatic to this day.

Warburg intended to publish the completed *Atlas* as separate volumes of plates and text, but the extant version consists only of photographs of the individual panels in different iterations (there were supposed to have been at least 79 in all), the draft of an introduction, and an archive of notes and working materials. Despite, or more likely because of, both its idiosyncratic methodology and eternal state of incompletion, the ultimate form and meaning of the *Atlas* have been extensively debated. Ernst Gombrich's 1970 publication *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* fostered significant interest in Warburg, and *Atlas* scholarship in particular has picked up considerable steam from the 1990s onward.[6] Although Warburg was for many decades a relatively obscure figure within the discipline of art history—despite the fame of his library, now housed at the Warburg Institute in London, to which it was moved in 1933—recent scholars have come to find the *Mnemosyne Atlas* a compelling and versatile touchstone, one whose approach seems only to have grown in relevance. Indeed, this article will not be primarily concerned with the many detailed analyses of Warburg's art historical arguments, but will instead take its cue from scholarship that emphasizes the *Mnemosyne Atlas*'s material qualities, structure, and legibility as a visual, intellectual, and imaginative object. I am especially interested in what Emily Verla Bovino has referred to as the *Nachleben* [afterlife] of the *Atlas* and its emergence as an *Idealstil* [idea style], as evinced by the many exhibitions, digital projects, and other experiments that take the *Atlas* as their starting point.[7] As Bovino notes (but does not necessarily endorse), there is a sense among some scholars that the explosion of interest in the *Atlas* has resulted in both a loss of aura and its dilution as a scholarly object, in tandem with its ascendance as an aestheticized metonym for disparate practices of assemblage, montage, and "idiosyncratic free play with the juxtaposition of images."[8] I would argue, however, that this so-called afterlife of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is very much in keeping with both Warburg's original project and with its ultimate impossibility as a finished undertaking. Further, as the growing body of scholarship continues to suggest that the *Atlas* has in some sense come home, historiographically speaking, its resonance with contemporary discussions about the migration of digital images (especially digital photographs) and both the limitations and possibilities of digital archives remains to be developed. The movement and transformation of images, the special technological significance of photographs, and the fecundity of the archive are all key to Warburg's project, as well as to our increasingly networked, image-laden digital culture. In this article, then, I begin by outlining a necessarily selective historiography of both early conceptions of the structural qualities of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* and subsequent scholarship that contextu-

alizes it vis-à-vis the atlas format more broadly.[9] I then consider the *Atlas*'s peculiar relationship to photography, and, finally, examine it in dialogue with recent scholarship about digital images and archives. What ultimately becomes clear is that, having left the *Atlas* in an incomplete, contradictory, and specifically pictorial form, Warburg gave his project the space to carry out its own thesis, and to anticipate technological developments and cultural discourses that are only now coming into focus.

Early Historiography

The question of how, exactly, to interpret the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is one that has both beleaguered and fascinated researchers since Warburg's death, starting with the two most intensely vested members of his circle, Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing, as well as Austrian art historian Ernst Gombrich.[10] In these early years following the evacuation of Warburg's library and archive from Hamburg, Saxl and Bing were firmly intent on producing a finalized, published version—in English, no less—of the *Atlas*. This project never approached completion, but illustrates recurring attempts by Warburg's disciples to wrestle the *Atlas* into submission by pruning many of its more idiosyncratic qualities.

Fig. 2. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* [Mnemosyne Atlas], Panel 24, 1929, digital positive from glass plate negative, 9 1/2 x 7 in. (23.7 x 17.7 cm). Warburg Institute Archive, London. © The Warburg Institute.

One product of this attempt was known as the *Geburtstagsatlas* [Birthday Atlas], a personal edition of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* presented to Warburg's younger brother Max for his birthday in 1937. As Mazzucco explains, this revised version of the *Atlas*, although not itself intended for publication, reveals Bing and Saxl's vision for a finalized iteration. She points out that the *Birthday Atlas*, which was based on (indeed directly clipped from copies of) photographs of the last iteration of Warburg's panels, is primarily a revision of the *Atlas*'s layout and graphic presentation.[11] The overall effect is noticeably

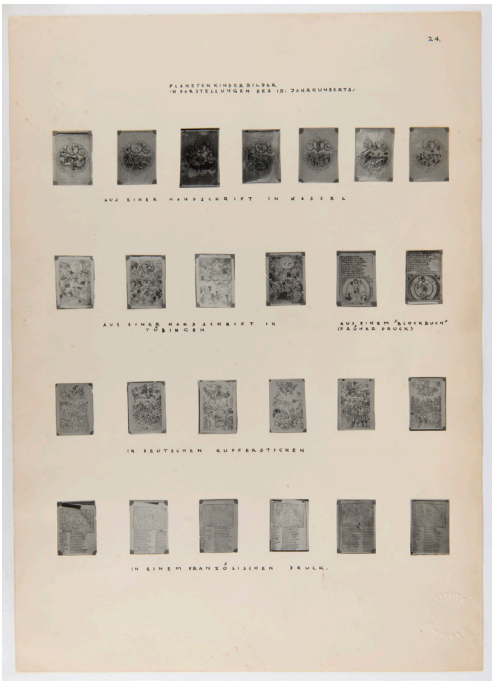

Fig. 3. Aby Warburg, *Geburtstagsatlas* [Birthday Atlas], Panel 24, 1937, collage of gelatin silver photographs on cardboard, 17 1/2 x 12 1/2 in. (44.3 x 31.6 cm). Warburg Institute Archive, London. © The Warburg Institute.

streamlined, with the resulting panels containing fewer individual images, each now neatly captioned, more uniformly spaced, and more consistent in size. Saxl and Bing omitted Warburg's characteristic repetition of enlarged image details, and transmuted the vertical arrangement of the original screens into a horizontal orientation (Figs. 2 and 3).[12] They also replaced the black cloth of Warburg's screens with white backgrounds, and excised of most of the *Atlas*'s "eccentric materials," that is, the various newspaper clippings and photographs, advertisements, and stamps that only appeared in the versions Warburg created just before his death.[13]

The ultimate intent of these revisions, Mazzucco suggests, was to exclude unfinished, unintelligible, or otherwise undesirable aspects of Warburg's work in progress. These alterations attempt to produce a more legible edition of the *Atlas*, with a thematic, linear sequence, rather than the "polyphony and anachronisms" of Warburg's own versions.[14] It is especially significant, then, that later scholars have explicitly pointed to Warburg's use of contemporary, vernacular materials as fundamental to his project. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, for example, suggests that not only was the inclusion of such images art historically unprecedented, but also that "if a unified theory of the 'human memory of images' was to be devised, it could hardly be restricted to the art and culture of the Renaissance."[15] The use of these materials thus acted as an important test of the viability of Warburg's entire thesis.

Despite the single-mindedness with which Warburg's disciples pursued their goal of publishing the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, by the time Ernst Gombrich produced his *Intellectual Biography* in 1970 (both Saxl and Bing having died years before), he was fully convinced of the "enormous technical and intrinsic difficulties" that made the project ultimately unachievable.[16] Further, it was only by "leaving aside some of the digressions and episodes to be found on the screens" that he was able to put forward even a top-level overview of the *Atlas*'s structure.[17] Indeed, it would seem that Gombrich's

entire approach to Warburg's oeuvre was marked by a conviction as to its intrinsic state of fragmentation, perhaps formed in part by his apparent shock upon first confronting, as a young scholar, the unruly mass of Warburg's archive. In his introduction to the *Intellectual Biography*, Gombrich writes that, as early as 1946, he was persuaded that "Warburg's notes should not be published so much as used in a presentation of his ideas."[18] Mazzucco presses the issue further, suggesting that Gombrich also attributed the disjointedness of Warburg's work directly to his struggle with the positivist scientific culture that characterized his historical milieu. Warburg's "ceaseless efforts," Gombrich wrote, "to grasp irrational experiences of mankind in rational terms without killing…their essence makes up…for part of the sense of tension and drama in his writings—more than that, it is mainly responsible for the inherent fragmentary character of his very work."[19] Throughout the *Intellectual Biography*, Gombrich emphasizes Warburg's unpublished notes at the expense of his finished articles (of which, admittedly, there are relatively few). His perception of Warburg's scholarship as incomplete is also evident in the ongoing project to streamline the *Atlas*, as outlined above. Although Gombrich's approach reflects a particular bias on the part of Warburg's successors, much criticized by later scholars, Mazzucco also suggests that it created a "rather original overturning of hierarchy between the scientific production that had been completed, and that which had been left incomplete."[20] This overturning of the standard scholarly order, prioritization of the fragmentary over the completed work, and tension between scientific positivism and the "irrational experiences" of memory and art, are threads that also run through more recent examinations of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. They are particularly relevant to contemporary ideas about the atlas format more generally.

The *Atlas* and Atlases

One of the most noteworthy contributions of later scholarship on the *Atlas* is a growing tendency to examine it in conjunction with disciplines other than art history per se. Benjamin Buchloh, for example, situates Warburg's project alongside examples of contemporary artworks—most notably Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*—linked by a common strategy of amassing large collections of photographs and presenting them in grid-like formations. For Buchloh, these works represent a clearly related group, but also a class of outliers within the recognized language of avant-garde art history and of photography more specifically. "Neither the term *collage* nor *photomontage*," he writes, "adequately describe the apparent formal and iconographic monotony of these panels or the vast archival accumulations of their materials."[21] Unable to fully account for these works in strictly art historical terms,

Buchloh lights upon the visual strategies of the sciences—charts, diagrams, technical illustrations, and the atlas—that have been used by artists starting with the historical avant-garde, but whose often didactic qualities reside in tension with these artists' more common emphasis on shock and perceptual rupture. Although the term *atlas*, along with its format, originated within a largely (though not exclusively) positivist scientific framework, Buchloh highlights its increasingly metaphorical usage by the early twentieth century. His conception of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as "the most important example of this anti-positivist tendency" thus calls to mind the tension, described by Gombrich, between the positivist underpinnings of Warburg's scholarship and his confrontation with the most fraught and irrational aspects of human emotion and experience (not least within himself). Buchloh calls attention to the displacement of a sequential model of history "by a focus on the simultaneity of separate but contingent social frameworks and an infinity of participating agents."[22] This displacement, he suggests, emerged from a range of loosely affiliated artistic, literary, and historical practices that coincided in the 1920s, including the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Further, he sees this new model—at least for the artistic avant-garde and for Warburg—as enmeshed in an ongoing debate about the potential of photography and photographic reproduction to reliably represent visual evidence, to construct (or demolish) social memory, and to fundamentally liberate the circulation of and access to visual information.

Other scholars have also taken up this notion that Warburg's use of the atlas format both drew on and radically diverged from positivist examples. Schoell-Glass points out that Warburg's screens, and the lectures he gave to explicate them, served not simply to illustrate but to *test* the ideas that informed his project. Noting, like Buchloh, the atlas's venerable history as a scientific tool, she adds that Warburg himself likened the *Mnemosyne Atlas* to a laboratory as well as, intriguingly, a seismograph to detect otherwise imperceptible movement.[23] Schoell-Glass also proposes that, generally speaking, the function of an atlas is to "*reduce* the world and information about it to the size of a book" whose contents can then be reorganized at will. At the same time, she writes that an atlas works to fix or even "depoison" its contents, such as the traumatic or pathos-laden gestures and symbols on which Warburg focused.[24] There seems to be a curious tension, then, within the nature of the atlas, which at once reduces, unifies, and fixes, and yet allows for perpetual recombination and reinterpretation—a migration from motion to stillness and back again.

Ulrich Keller, meanwhile, examines the *Mnemosyne Atlas* in the context of a more specific type of atlas: the art historical picture atlas.[25] Again echoing Buchloh, Keller writes that Warburg's decision to create his culminating work in the form of a picture atlas signaled a break with the increasingly hegemonic conception of art history as a linear progression, bol-

stered by the proliferation of paired photographic images in textbooks and classrooms.[26] Looking at the role of visual reproductions in the study of art history, Keller characterizes the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as "grandly anachronistic," harkening back to an earlier visual model in which plates of images were assembled and printed separately (often temporally as well as spatially) from their explanatory texts.[27] The picture atlas, Keller writes, produces a uniquely active reading and viewing experience when compared with that of the streamlined illustrated textbook. For Keller, the prime example of the picture atlas format, Séroux d'Agincourt's early nineteenth-century *L'Histoire de l'Art par les monuments* [History of Art by its Monuments], marks the first time that images of geographically dispersed artworks were accumulated in sufficient quantity that "it became possible to 'play' with them, to separate them from their local moorings and reconfigure them under an historical paradigm."[28] He proposes that the picture atlas in general, and the constantly shifting montage of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* specifically, "banked on the generative force of gaps or *Denkräume*." In other words, the interstices between individual images, and between images and text, required of readers a set of interpretive skills "honed in old-fashioned archival milieus."[29]

This tension between positivism and ambiguity, science and art, has also made the *Atlas* an irresistible model (or "idea style") for scholars such as Georges Didi-Huberman. In addition to writing about the origin of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* in the trauma of the First World War and Warburg's subsequent psychiatric institutionalization, Didi-Huberman curated a series of exhibitions that take the *Atlas* as their point of departure.[30] These exhibitions engaged both historical and contemporary artworks that resonate conceptually or methodologically with Warburg's project. Didi-Huberman explicitly characterizes the atlas form as abundant, provisional, and ultimately even dangerous to the kind of positivist methodology from which it originally sprang. The "tables" that make up an atlas, he writes playfully, function as "a prop for a work that must always be taken up again, modified, or even started again," and the practice of montage, of bringing (literally *mounting*) images together, is "*a heuristics of thought itself*."[31] The *Mnemosyne Atlas*, having never been fixed by publication, would thus constitute the very epitome of the form in Didi-Huberman's conception. But while the tables of Warburg's *Atlas* could always be augmented and reconfigured, this very inexhaustibility also suggests "the intrinsic madness of such a project."[32] And yet, Didi-Huberman continues, while we may admit the madness of the project in one sense, we also recognize Warburg's conviction that it is not the images or forms themselves that should most concern us, but their movement and transformation, as well as the spaces between them.

In the above examples, what becomes increasingly evident is the flexible, even liminal position that scholars have ascribed to the atlas format. Although rooted in positivist conceptions of history and science, and

ostensibly charged with demonstrating a unified, coherent argument, the atlas also offers itself as a potential space for interpretation, experimentation, and even subversion. Warburg's use of the format was already a reaction against the ascendant art historical order, something it seems his immediate successors had difficulty in accepting. The very anachronism of the *Atlas*'s method echoes that of its content, in which images of widely dispersed provenance—geographically, temporally, and conceptually—are pulled into conversation within the unifying (but ultimately porous) frame of the atlas panel. It is also worth considering the extent to which Warburg's *Atlas* represents an extreme example of this apparent flexibility, rather than a characteristic one. I will return to this point later on.

Photography, Gaps, (Im)possibility

As discussed above, Keller has convincingly argued that the emergence of viable technologies for reproducing works of art enabled the development of art history into the temporally oriented discipline with which we are now so familiar. The picture atlas, Keller writes, dealt in abundance and generated what he sees as productive gaps between image and text, between image and referent (the original work of art), and between images themselves. The proliferation of photography, halftone printing, and slide projection by the turn of the twentieth century subsequently encouraged the sense that all of these components had seamlessly fused, producing a linear, apparently self-explanatory timeline of art history. What receded, meanwhile, was not only the physical separation of image and text, and the interpretive disjuncture between image and object, but the distance between viewer and author, and the potential for viewers to engage in more activated forms of looking and reading. The *Mnemosyne Atlas*, then, takes up a fraught but uniquely productive position between the earlier picture atlas and the later art historical reliance on photomechanical reproduction. It seems clear that photography was essential to Warburg's project and that he used it in a way that reinstituted the "generative force of gaps" to which Keller alludes.[33] I would argue as well that photography has been critical to the *Atlas*'s afterlife, and to its imaginative force in more recent scholarship.

Between Image and Object

Keller asserts that art historical photographs quickly came to act as transparent surrogates, giving viewers a sense of interacting directly with original works of art.[34] For Warburg, however, the relationship between image and object appears rather more nuanced. Kurt Forster, for example, points

out that Warburg was summarily derisive of art historical connoisseurship, regarding it as a kind of gourmandise "peculiar to the propertied classes, the collector and his circle."[35] In fact, Warburg—who, as the scion of an enormously wealthy banking family, used his financial resources to build a library of books and images, but did not collect art—saw the ownership of original objects as an actual deterrent to art historical analysis, because the superficial appeal of physical possession often replaced true understanding.[36] Meanwhile, Matthew Rampley, Gombrich, and others discuss Warburg's pervasive anxiety that modern technologies such as the telegraph were responsible for "the destruction of distance," that is, the space and time needed for detached reflection.[37] This distance, Rampley further points out, was for Warburg the very foundation of cultural progress.[38] Keller, meanwhile, remarks on the material and qualitative diversity of the photographs that Warburg used for his panels, differing not only in size and tonality, but also in legibility. What these points suggest is that for Warburg, photographic reproductions were preferable to original artworks as objects of study, but did not act as direct surrogates. Their portability and manipulability were crucial to Warburg's methodology, but they also produced an essential distance between the scholar and the work, and it was in this gap that Warburg could carry out his analytical project. It was not important, apparently, for Warburg's photographs to capture the material subtleties of the original object, since Warburg's goal was to map the migration and social impact of forms and symbols, not to parse the nuances of style or technique. Although Warburg certainly intended his photographs to function as neutral representations, they were ultimately imperfect ones, revealing, even reveling in, their own failure to fully capture the materiality of the original objects. Given the time period and Warburg's working methods, black and white photographs were his only viable option, but one wonders whether Warburg might not have preferred them anyway, even if color versions had been practical. In fact, we can see in the process of translation between the original object and the gelatin silver photograph an echo of the way that he perceived the transformation of images across space and time. Philippe-Alain Michaud likewise suggests that photographic reproduction acts as a process through which disparate objects are reduced and unified within the space of Warburg's screens, adding that the *Atlas* "does not limit itself to describing the migrations of images through the history of representations; it reproduces them."[39]

Between Images

Meanwhile, ideas about the space around and between the images on each of the *Atlas*'s panels have proven central to interpretations of the atlas for-

mat by not only Keller but also Didi-Huberman and Michaud. If the perceptual distance between the photograph and its object was essential for Warburg to begin his analysis, then the distance between photographs and their capacity for movement were equally important for the ongoing evolution of his project. Didi-Huberman, as we have seen, argues that an atlas table is a platform on which things happen, on which connections are made between images, only to be unmade and considered anew. Michaud goes so far as to describe the black cloth of the *Atlas*'s panels as a "conductive medium," a space across which resonances between the images are transmitted.[40] Further, it is only through their assemblage within the frame (the table) of the *Atlas* that Warburg's photographs come to express his particular ideas; it is only in relationship to other photographs that they create and test the substance of his arguments. As Michaud writes, "within the panel, the fragment has no separate existence; it is the specific representation of a general theme running through every element."[41] Buchloh, for his part, emphasizes that photography's multiplicity and "capacity for serialization" play a crucial role in the atlas projects he considers, and certainly the scope and iterative nature of Warburg's project rely heavily on photography's reproducibility.[42] Per Rumberg notes that Warburg frequently cut up the photographs of the *Atlas* screens themselves in order to test new configurations on separate sheets of paper.[43] We see, then, that the migration and reconfiguration of images, which were central to Warburg's methods and arguments, depended on photography as a technology. Significantly, Warburg's late inclusion of contemporary images also extended the scope of the *Atlas* outside the prescribed boundaries of art history, and into the future of photographic mass media.

Between Image and Text, Between Viewer and Author

While the photographs of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* panels were an important way for Warburg to document and compare different stages of his thinking, these photographs are also the primary form in which we have inherited the *Atlas*, and therefore the foundation on which all which all subsequent scholarship rests. Warburg never intended for these photographs to carry the weight of the entire project, but the texts that were to have explained them exist in a state even more fragmentary and provisional than the images themselves. While we know that Warburg intended to publish the *Atlas* in volumes of both plates and text, even Gombrich suggests that Warburg hoped his argument could be conveyed solely through pictures.[44] And while Warburg may have appreciated the levelling effect and reproductive flexibility of black and white photography, it nonetheless functioned in his project primarily as a transparent image vehicle. In part a belief in the medium's

evidentiary power, Warburg's hope also underscores his faith in the intrinsic affective charge of the symbols he was presenting. Yet the *Atlas* panels as they exist, as photographs of photographs (or more often digital or halftone surrogates of the same) and as a set of contradictory iterations of a work in progress, belie such optimism, and perhaps extend the project in directions that Warburg may not have anticipated.

If we return to Didi-Huberman's conception of the atlas as a heuristic of thought, then what are the *Atlas* panel photographs *of*, exactly? One well-remarked aspect of photography is its capacity to arrest time and motion, and indeed these photographs would seem to capture the middle of a thought, an unfinished argument held forever suspended. They function as sketches in an ongoing visual project, or may be likened to screenshots of a digital workspace. Thus, as Didi-Huberman also suggests, in some ways we must recognize the unresolved, even futile nature of the project (both Warburg's project and our own), an endless effort to explain something that the author himself never fully grasped or came close to finishing. The fact that the *Mnemosyne Atlas* exists in an eternal state of incompletion means that what Warburg left was indeed a gap, perhaps unbridgeable, between image and text, between viewer and author. It is no surprise, then, that while many scholars, including Gombrich, believe the *Atlas* doomed to failure, it has also proven to be extraordinarily productive, generating an ever-growing intellectual and creative afterlife.[45] Impossibility, in this case, seems to merge with Didi-Huberman's idea of inexhaustibility, the potential for endless interpretation, recombination, and play. The *Mnemosyne Atlas*'s existence as photographs has also allowed for its own migration, its translation into other spheres, in much the same way that Warburg himself charted the movement of affective gestures. With its panels reduced to the unity and fixity of photographic reproduction, the *Atlas* reenters the larger archive of visual knowledge.

The Digital Image

Having arrived in our own digital age, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as Warburg left it takes on new resonances and suggests new fields of exploration. Keller, having mapped the rise, fall, and rebirth of the art historical picture atlas, concludes by suggesting that "our computer screens, at any rate, begin to look a lot more like Warburg's panels, and a lot less like the binary slide projections and double-page halftone pairings which have dominated art historical books and lectures for a hundred years."[46] One interview with Didi-Huberman begins with the casual observation that "long before computers, Aby Warburg invented a system with multiple, simultaneously open windows and hypertexts. Or at least, that is what his fabulous *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*

looks like."[47] This comparison has not been lost on scholars who are directly involved in the development of digital image databases and digital humanities projects. Hans Brandhorst, for one, wonders what Warburg would have made of a research portal called *Arkyves* that aggregates a number of disparate databases using *Iconoclass*, an iconographically controlled vocabulary.[48] Martin Warnke, meanwhile, introduces *Hyperimage*, a "digital filing box for image details," with a discussion of Warburg's conviction as to the significance not only of symbolic images but of the relationships between them.[49] Even more recently, Stefka Hristova has used Panel 45 of the *Atlas* as a case study in cultural analytics, exploring the idea of color as data in Warburg's visual argument.[50] In both its conception of images as migratory, contingent, and changeable, and in its non-linear, open-ended structure, the *Atlas* has much in common with what we have come to understand of and expect from digital images and platforms.

Given the premise of Warburg's scholarship, it is no great leap to propose that the thesis of the *Atlas*, almost by necessity, could or should continue to apply in our present age. It remains beyond the scope of this paper to assess Warburg's theories on an iconological level, but his notions about the circulation of images appear more relevant in the digital age than ever before. As artists and scholars Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis point out, the proliferation and cultural ubiquity of digital technologies and information networks mean that we see images of all kinds—art, news, games, personal snapshots—within the bounds of the same physical/visual space, usually a computer or smartphone screen.[51] This transformation of diverse objects into a common visual language, collected within a unifying framework, recalls our earlier discussions of atlas tables and the *Mnemosyne Atlas*'s use of photography. We can see in this transformation and subsequent montage of different images and information types a reverberation of Warburg's anxiety about technology's capacity to collapse discursive distances, but also an extension of his interest in the generative combination of images, in the ways that they circulate, change, and interact.

A number of recent scholars in the digital humanities also express a particular interest in the materiality and historical specificity of "the digital." Matthew Kirschenbaum, Johanna Drucker, and many others grapple with these themes on several interlocking registers. For example, there is the question of digital surrogates, of what happens—what decisions are made, what is lost and gained—when a digital image is made from a physical object, and how the meaning of that object potentially shifts as its digital likeness begins to circulate. (This ambivalence also calls to mind a much longer conversation about the nature of mechanical reproduction, which stretches at least as far back as Walter Benjamin, and has since been enthusiastically taken up by several generations of photography historians.[52]) Further, Kirschenbaum convincingly asserts that it is impossible to think about digi-

tal information without paying close attention to the physical platforms that store and grant access to it. Although we so often consider digital images to be ephemeral as well as infinitely reproducible, Kirschenbaum insists to the contrary that, as per the adage of forensic science, "every contact leaves a trace." That is, all digital files in fact bear physical evidence of their history and use, and, thus, no two digital copies are ever exactly alike.[53] Drucker, meanwhile, extends these ideas to introduce the concept of performative materiality, which proposes that "what something is has to be understood in terms of what it does, how it works within machinic, systemic, and cultural domains."[54] Elsewhere, she emphasizes the importance of design and interactivity to our understanding of information in both traditional analogue and digital forms.[55]

Collectively, these conceptualizations have something important to offer our consideration of Warburg's legacy in our contemporary age. Having already begun with mechanical (that is, photographic) translations of key images—or rather, the objects which bear those images—Warburg set the stage for any number of future transformations. The digitization of the *Atlas*'s photographic surrogates means that they have irrevocably entered the tide of images that circulate online in both scholarly and vernacular contexts, with or without texts, on different platforms, for different uses and users. Each digital instance bears the trace of its own journey, and in each instance, as Drucker insists, we must consider anew what these images are doing in order to parse what they might now mean. When perusing the *Atlas* online, we are looking at (perhaps even physically holding) a screen bearing a reversed digital image made from an original glass plate negative taken of a cloth screen covered in multiple gelatin silver photographs taken of physical works of art. Or, in some cases, of book pages bearing photomechanical reproductions, or of newspaper pages, in which case the trail goes on even further. The digital image itself may have also been copied, uploaded, and downloaded any number of times. These permutations each represent a series of choices, an ongoing and by no means linear material and cultural history, and, I would argue, a critical extension of Warburg's project.

Indeed, one effect of the perpetual circulation and reproduction of digital images is their eventual degradation. Daniel Palmer likens the internet to "a giant copying machine," noting that "when an image is viewed, it is copied from one database to the user's local hard drive," with the inevitable result that the files lose information and become, in Hito Steyerl's terminology, "poor images."[56] For Steyerl, the poor image is "a copy in motion" and is characteristic of information that has circulated outside of officially sanctioned channels.[57] Although Warburg seems to have accepted, even welcomed, the visual disparity between his source material and its photographic surrogates, it is difficult to ignore the reality that after years of circulation, having been copied and recopied, the resulting images are not as legible as

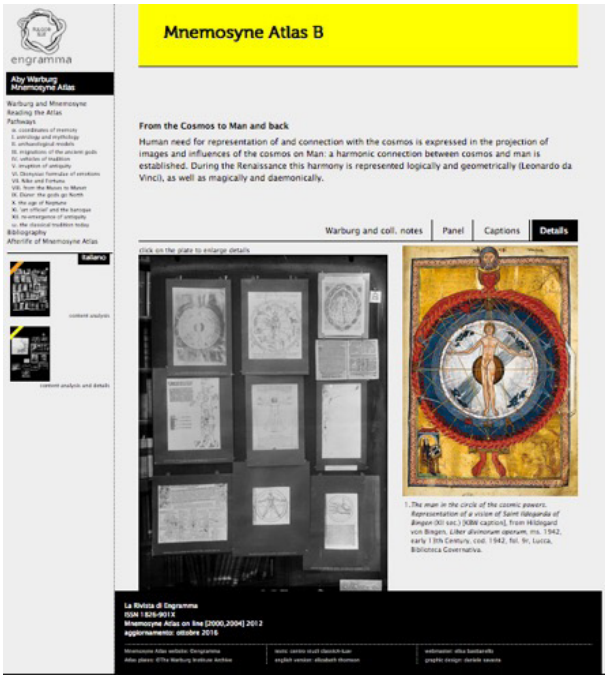

Fig. 4. Screen capture taken October 3, 2018, *La Rivista di Engramma* website, Mnemosyne Atlas webpage, "From the Cosmos to Man and Back," image open access, courtesy of Engramma, https://tinyurl.com/y29bwdqk. Includes high-quality image details taken from diverse external sources and provided to supplement the panel photograph. This feature has not yet been implemented for every *Atlas* panel or detail.

they once were. Websites such as Engramma's *Mnemosyne Atlas* resource or Cornell University's *Mnemosyne: Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas* attempt to remedy this reduced legibility by allowing users to zoom in on image details and including higher-quality reproductions from other sources, with varying degrees of success (Figs. 4 and 5).[58] But we might see the gradual degradation of Warburg's original sources as precisely a visible manifestation of his project's materiality: its trajectory not only across time and space, but also across media. As these images break down—at least for those of us without access to the gelatin silver "originals" in the Warburg archive—they may function less effectively as a means to study the individual details of classical friezes and Renaissance paintings, but they remain compelling as surrogates for Warburg's project more broadly.[59] This transformation is not necessarily what Warburg intended, and it elides much of the original depth and erudition of his project, but it is part of the reality of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*'s digital afterlife. Museum exhibitions offer another way for people to engage with the *Atlas* today. Some take Warburg's project as their conceptual starting point, while others seek to reconstruct his panels as physical objects. Such exhibitions are more limited in their capacity to travel, but translate the *Atlas* into a more immediate and legible—albeit highly mediated—form. Further, these exhibitions, along with the *Atlas*'s various digital manifestations, have the advantage of making Warburg's project more accessible and appealing to a broader, less academic audience.[60] Such an audience would likely be far less receptive to Warburg's art historical arguments in all their labyrinthine complexity.

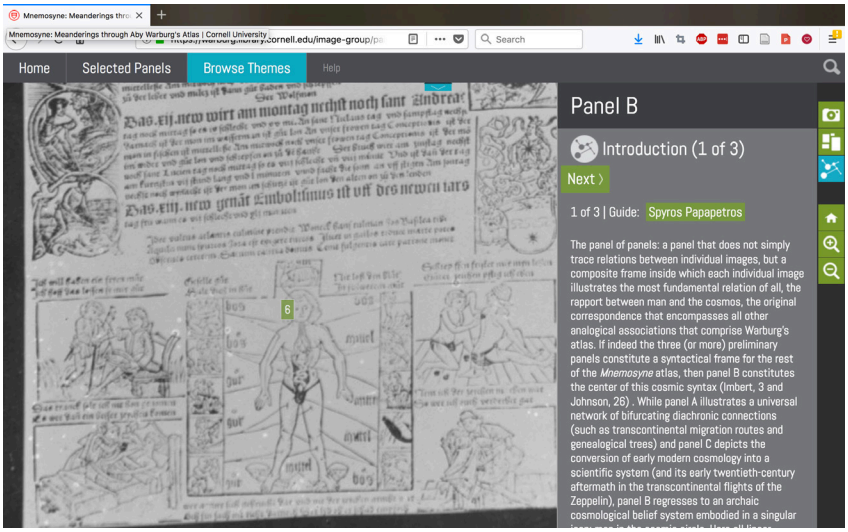

Fig. 5. Screen capture taken October 3, 2018, *Mnemosyne: Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas*, Panel B webpage, image used with permission of Cornell University Library, https://tinyurl.com/y32otuaf. Includes zoom function in the "guided pathway" feature, available for ten of the *Atlas* panels.

The Digital Archive

Finally, I would like to return to Didi-Huberman's conception of the atlas as a productive, indeterminate form, and to emphasize his distinction between the atlas—a "synoptic presentation" whose function is to visually represent the "secret link" between disparate objects—and the archive, which he sees as fundamentally non-visual and temporally protracted.[61] I do not intend to argue that we should conflate atlases and archives. Nonetheless, it would seem that Didi-Huberman's interpretation, discussed earlier, of the atlas as existing in a perpetual state of flux glosses over the differences between the atlas as a published book (therefore finalized, albeit open to interpretation) and an unfinished and thus inherently unstable project like the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. The *Atlas* was intrinsically bound up with the content and structure of Warburg's library, from which he drew his images. In light of this dependence, we might qualify Didi-Huberman's argument by proposing that the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, at the stage in which Warburg left it, rests (or perhaps vibrates) somewhere *between* the atlas and the archive. From the former, it derives its insistence on visual argument and its engagement with an admittedly circumscribed, if still unsettled, pool of records.[62] From the latter, it acquires its contingency, its fragmentation, and its perpetual state of expec-

tancy and motion.

These last qualities may be ascribed to archives in general, but they also suggest more recent conceptions of the archive and archival possibility in the digital age. Mitchell Whitelaw, for example, argues for what he calls generous interfaces for digital collections; that is, infrastructure for online databases that goes beyond the traditional and highly restrictive keyword search and static results pages, and instead encourages multiple, flexible ways of accessing records.[63] Recalling Warburg, he proposes that "in revealing the complexity of digital collections, a generous interface would also enrich interpretation by revealing relationships and structures within a collection."[64] Not simply a question of convenience or aesthetics, Whitelaw further contends that as cultural heritage increasingly exists and circulates across digital networks, "the life and use of that heritage will increasingly be conditioned by the forms in which it reaches us, how it is made concrete and available both for scholars and the wider public."[65]

Indeed, scholars are also recognizing the critical re-evaluation of the structure, content, and accessibility of public, and especially digital, archives as a social and political imperative. They consider this reexamination a matter of responsibility toward populations that have traditionally been denied access to such collections in one way or another. In these conversations, what (and who) has been excluded from the archive is just as important as what has been saved. Anne Gilliland and Michelle Caswell write about what they call "impossible archival imaginaries," for example. They argue that "the roles of individual and collective imaginings about the absent or unattainable archive and its contents should be explicitly acknowledged, in both archival theory and practice," as a counterweight to hegemonic conceptions of evidence that "so often fall short in explaining the capacity of records and archives to motivate, inspire, anger and traumatize."[66] Warburg, we will remember, spent the years of the First World War documenting the chaos and trauma that he and those around him were experiencing. In Gilliland and Caswell's speculation, the very absence of evidence constitutes its own kind of record, and has the potential to exert a powerful shaping force against or within the archive. Here again, we might identify Warburg's sense of productive distance, the space for interpretation not between image and text, but between archive and (missing) evidence, between archive and (missing) subject. Blurring the line between the visual argument of the atlas and the invisibility of the archive, we find in the latter the capacity to tell necessary stories, even in the absence of concrete images.

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* has proven to be immensely provocative and seductive over many decades, not only due to the complexity of its art historical thesis and the originality of its method, but also because of the tantalizingly incomplete state in which it was so abruptly left. Early attempts by Warburg's disciples, who were in many ways the best equipped to un-

derstand and give a satisfactory shape to the fragments of Warburg's *Atlas*, seem—admittedly, from the distant and biased vantage point of the present day—to have been incapable of appreciating its particular idiosyncrasies. Clearly, to fix Warburg's great project within the confines of a printed book is to stifle its most compelling aspects. Warburg himself may have recognized this potential shortcoming. With the extension of his project to include images from the mass media, the advertisements and news items of his own era, Warburg effectively precluded the possibility of settling the *Atlas* into a final state of rest. And while he may not have anticipated that his project would enact its own thesis, having left the *Atlas* in contradictory iterations and fragments, having turned it into a set of images *of itself*, Warburg left open this possibility. Thus the *Atlas*, while still studied by many scholars for the nuances of its art historical argument, has taken on entirely new valences and anticipated technological developments and cultural discourses at which Warburg could only have guessed. As a series of photographs, it has circulated and been reimagined and reinvented in ways that suggest both its inability to ever function as a finalized argument, and its inexhaustibility as a symbol, as images of and in motion.

Notes

1. Christopher D. Johnson, "About the Mnemosyne Atlas," *Mnemosyne: Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas*, Cornell University, 2013-2016, https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/about.

2. Warburg, qtd. in E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 270-71. The translation is Gombrich's. This quote comes from Warburg's lecture on Medicean Festivals.

3. Katia Mazzucco, "(Photographic) Subject-Matter: Fritz Saxl Indexing Mnemosyne – A Stratigraphy of the Warburg Institute Photographic Collection's System," *Visual Resources* 30, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 201-02, https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2014.936100.

4. Warburg, qtd. in Gombrich, *Intellectual Biography*, 301. The translation is Gombrich's.

5. Christopher S. Wood, "Aby Warburg, *Homo victor*," *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 11 (December 2014): 1-24.

6. Aby Warburg and Matthew Rampley, "The Absorption of the Expressive Values of the Past," *Art in Translation* 1, no. 2 (2009): 273-83, https://doi.org/10.2752/175613109X462708.

7. Emily Verla Bovino, "The *Nachleben* of Mnemosyne: The Afterlife of the *Bilderatlas*," *La Rivista di Engramma* 119 (September 2014): section A, http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/atlante/index.php?id_articolo=1618.

8. Ibid.

9. It is important to acknowledge here that I have looked only at English-language (and translated) scholarship for the present essay, out of practical necessity. Certainly there is copious additional literature on Warburg in German, as well as in other languages.

10. Gombrich arrived in London in 1936 on a two-year fellowship explicitly aimed at organizing and revising Warburg's notes.

11. For a complete overview of the contents of the *Birthday Atlas*, see Katia Mazzucco, "The Work of Ernst H. Gombrich on the Aby M. Warburg Frag-

ments," *Journal of Historiography* 5 (December, 2011): 8n21, https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/mazzucco-gombrich.pdf.

12. Interestingly, although Mazzucco seems confident in her understanding of the spatial orientation in which Warburg's original plates were arranged and meant to be read, other scholars appear less certain. Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, for example, insist on the significance of a horizontal reading of the panels, noting that their "lateral trajectory is crucial." See Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, "Robert Smithson's Ghost in 1920s Hamburg: Reading Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* as a Non-Site," *Visual Resources* 18, no. 2 (January 1, 2002): 171, https://doi.org/10.1080/01973760290011824. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, meanwhile, in her reading of plate 79, points out that "it is not made clear by numbers or other indications in which sequence we are to 'read' the images." She proposes that one "read the plate like a page of a medieval glossed text," in other words, "look at this plate as a composite that does not necessarily have to be read from top left to bottom right." See Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "Warburg's Late Comments on Symbol and Ritual," *Science in Context* 12 (1999): 631, https://doi.org/10.1017/S026988970000363X.

13. Mazzucco, "The Work of Ernst H. Gombrich," 16.

14. Ibid.

15. Schoell-Glass, "Warburg's Late Comments," 626.

16. Gombrich, *Intellectual Biography*, 292.

17. Ibid.

18. Gombrich, *Intellectual Biography*, 3.

19. Included in Mazzucco, "The Work of Ernst H. Gombrich," 20. The Gombrich text quoted here comes from an unpublished typescript in the Warburg archive, dated 1939. See footnote 35 in Mazzucco for its location within the archive.

20. Mazzucco, "The Work of Ernst H. Gombrich," 6.

21. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas': The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (1999): 118, https://doi.org/10.2307/779227. Emphasis in original.

22. Buchloh, "Anomic Archive," 129.

23. Schoell-Glass, "Warburg's Late Comments," 624.

24. Ibid. This is Warburg's term. Emphasis in original.

25. It is worth underscoring that *Bilderatlas*, which was the term Warburg used for his project, means "picture atlas."

26. Both Keller and Kurt W. Forster note the particular significance of the paired photograph to the highly influential art historical scholarship of Heinrich Wölfflin. As Forster puts it, "the binary order [at the basis of Wölfflin's method] leads to ideas that seem to issue from the images rather than from the historian's interpretative intent. Or, put another way, the historian is merely the *arrangeur* creating a disposition that helps instantiate the latent power of images." Kurt W. Forster, "Images as Memory Banks: Warburg, Wölfflin, Schwitters, and Sebald," *La Rivista de Engramma*, no. 100 (September-October 2012), http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/index.php?id_articolo=924. Interestingly, Johanna Drucker makes a similar point about graphical representations of knowledge as a whole. "Most information visualizations," she writes, "are acts of interpretation masquerading as presentation." Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 8.

27. Ulrich Keller, "Visual Difference: Picture Atlases from Winckelmann to Warburg and the Rise of Art History," *Visual Resources* 17, no. 2 (2001): 194, https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2001.9658588.

28. Ibid., 186.

29. Ibid., 195.

30. See, for example, Georges Didi-Huberman, "Warburg's Haunted House," *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 50-78, https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-1456881. Warburg's response to the chaos of the First World War, during which he feverishly attempted to collect any and all documentation of the conflict as it unfolded, is well documented. Warburg's institutionalization followed the end of the war.

31. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2010), 18. Emphasis in the original. Catherine Millet, "Atlas: comment remonter le monde," *Artpress*, no. 373 (2010): 55.

32. Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 20.

33. Keller, "Visual Difference," 195.

34. Ibid., 192.

35. Kurt W. Forster, "Aby Warburg's History of Art: Collective Memory and the Social Mediation of Images," *Daedalus* 105 (1976): 171.

36. Ibid. Indeed, Warburg famously traded his birthright at age thirteen for the promise that his brother would buy him all of the books he wanted—a rather expensive commitment, as it turned out.

37. Gombrich, *Intellectual Biography*, 224.

38. Matthew Rampley, "Archives of Memory: Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*," in *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1999), 96.

39. Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 278.

40. Ibid., 281.

41. Ibid., 283.

42. Buchloh, "Anomic Archive," 118.

43. Per Rumberg, "Aby Warburg and the Anatomy of Art History," in *Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History*, ed. Constanza Caraffa (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011), 249.

44. Gombrich, *Intellectual Biography*, 287.

45. Lyndell Brown and Charles Green in particular highlight the *Atlas*'s status as a "failed art historical curiosity," on the basis of which their aim is "to remove Warburg's last project…from the domain of his iconologist guardians, in order to place it in the context of contemporary art practice, proposing a new reading of a proto-conceptual work." Brown and Green, "Robert Smithson's Ghost," 168.

46. Keller, "Visual Difference," 196-97.

47. Millet, "Georges Didi-Huberman," 49.

48. Hans Brandhorst, "Aby Warburg's Wildest Dreams Come True?," *Visual Resources* 29, nos. 1-2 (2013): 74, https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2013.761129. The *Arkyves* platform can be accessed at http://dev.arkyves.org/.

49. Martin Warnke, "'God Is in the Details,' or The Filing Box Answers," in *Imagery in the 21st Century*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 324. *Hyperimage* can be accessed at http://hyperimage.ws/en/.

50. Stefka Hristova, "Images as Data: Cultural Analytics and Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne*," *International Journal for Digital Art History*, no. 2 (2016): 117-32, https://doi.org/10.11588/dah.2016.2.23489. Given my earlier point about the significance of black and white photography for Warburg's project, I wonder whether this colorization is productive.

51. Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis, "A Life More Photographic," *Photographies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 14, https://doi.org/10.1080/17540760701785842.

52. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

53. Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008). This phrase, which titles Kirschenbaum's first chapter, was adapted from the forensic pioneer Edmond Locard.

54. Johanna Drucker, "Performative Materiality and Theoretical Approaches to Interface," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2013): 4, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000143/000143.html.

55. See Drucker, *Graphesis*; Joanna Drucker and Bethany Nowviskie, "Speculative Computing: Aesthetic Provocations in Humanities Computing," in *Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Professional, 2004), n. p.

56. Daniel Palmer, "The Rhetoric of the JPEG," *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, ed. Martin Lister (New York: Routledge, 2013), 162; Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *E-flux* 10 (2009): 1, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.

57. Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," 1.

58. See https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/ and https://tinyurl.com/y29b-wdqk.

59. Steyerl argues that the insistence on "rich" (that is: pristine, authentic) images can lead to their invisibility, as original prints are "preserved," unseen, in archives or fade into material obsolescence. It is sometimes only as degraded, compromised copies that images are able to circulate and be viewed. Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," 3-4.

60. See for example the exhibition *New Ghost Stories (Nouvelles Histoires de Fantômes)*, organized by Didi-Huberman with photographer Arno Gisinger at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, in 2014. Mostafa Heddaya, "Lamenting Images: 'New Ghost Stories' at Palais de Tokyo," *Hyperallergic*, September 5, 2014, https://hyperallergic.com/146426/lamenting-images-new-ghost-stories-at-palais-de-tokyo/.

61. "Atlas. Entrevista a Georges Didi-Huberman," Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, December 21, 2010, 3:44, https://vimeo.com/18063038.

62. Didi-Huberman points out that the thousand or so images comprising the *Atlas* at any given time is relatively small "in relation to the life of an art historian." Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 20.

63. Mitchell Whitelaw, "Generous Interfaces for Digital Cultural Collections," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1-16, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/9/1/000205/000205.html. Whitelaw examines a number of promising examples of such interfaces, such as the website for the Prints and Printmaking Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, but suggests that they are exceptions to the rule.

64. Whitelaw, "Generous Interfaces," 1.

65. Ibid., 2.

66. Anne J. Gilliand and Michelle Caswell, "Records and Their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (March 2016): 55, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9259-z.

Therefore, I am: Subjectivity, The Body, and Ideological Subversion from Beyond the Iron Curtain in Milan Knížák's *Lying Ceremony* and *Difficult Ceremony*

by Kat Lukes-Caribeaux

"Everybody lies on a floor with a kerchief on his eyes. For a long time." – Milan Knížák, *Ležící Obřad* [Lying Ceremony]

Students at Douglass College of Rutgers University congregated in the college's Old Gym on the evening of December 17, 1968, waiting for the night's proceedings to commence.[1] They were eventually blindfolded with wide strips of black or white fabric tied at the back of their heads with pieces of string. Once their vision was securely obstructed, they lowered themselves onto the worn hardwood floor and assumed a recumbent position: some on their backs, others on their stomachs, still others on their sides.

Peter Moore, the renowned performance photographer responsible for 30 years-worth of Fluxus and Judson Dance Theater documentation, captured the night's events on black-and-white film. In one of Moore's snapshots, a curly-haired man kneels before a blindfolded woman, herself propped up on her elbows as she lays with her stomach on the floor (Fig. 1). The two figures clasp their hands together near the woman's chin in apparent communion. Here, Moore's photograph conjures visual parallels with the reverent head-bowing typical of many religious ceremonies.

This ceremonial tone was exactly the intention. The two-line directive that students followed that evening was the blueprint for Czech action artist Milan Knížák's *Ležící Obřad*. In Moore's photo, Knížák is the man mimicking some sort of liturgical gesture with the blindfolded woman (Fig. 2). Knížák instructed participants to continue laying on the floor, blindfolded and in silence "for a long time," or at least until 9:00 pm, when his lecture on action art in Czechoslovakia and the United States was scheduled to start.[2]

When Knížák arrived in the United States in 1968, he left behind a country in turmoil. In January of that year, the newly installed First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Alexander Dubček, began a series of policy liberalizations in a bid to give the Soviet presence in Czechoslovakia a "human face."[3] These liberalizations—which inaugurated the Prague Spring—included a legal end to censorship within the country, several economic reforms, and perhaps most importantly, the right to travel freely.[4] It was this latter reform that made it possible for Knížák to secure a year-long visa to the United States, where he planned to

Fig. 1. Milan Knížák, *Ležící Obřad*, 1968, gelatin silver print. Photograph by Peter Moore. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3160.2008.40a-n. © 2019 Milan Knížák / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Germany. Image courtesy of Milan Knížák.

stage several happenings and collaborate with artists in New York. Just eight months following the declaration of these policy reforms, Russian authorities arrested First Secretary Dubček, and all reforms were immediately reversed.[5] Warsaw Pact troops soon occupied Prague in an attempt to quell public demonstrations against these policy reversals.[6] Though August 1968 marked a violent period of Soviet conservativism, known as "normalization," Knížák was still able to leave the country on his visa. He arrived in New York near the end of the year.[7] The very reforms that had granted Knížák freedom of movement were squelched under Soviet pressure mere months before the artist left for a country whose own mythos allegorized rugged individualism and manifest destiny.

In response to the expansion of Czech liberties and their subsequent censure by the Soviet Union, Knížák enacted two happenings during his residency in the United States. Their core premise was a contemplation of individualism and the body through introspective exercises. First in *Ležící Obřad*

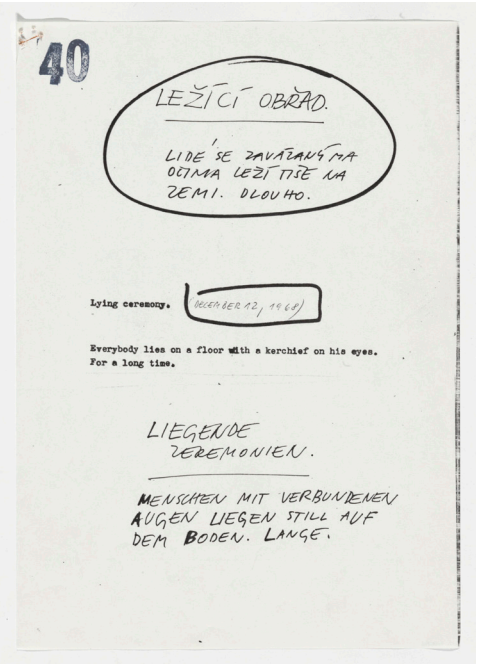

Fig. 2. Milan Knížák, *Ležící Obřad*, 1968, photocopy. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3160.2008.40a-n. © ARS, NY. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA I Art Resource, NY.

in 1968 and later in *Obtížný Obřad* [Difficult Ceremony] in 1969, Knížák and his participants willingly subjected themselves to varying degrees of bodily and sensorial denial (Figs. 3 and 4). As described at the outset of this paper, Knížák instructed the students in *Ležící Obřad* at Douglass College to lay on the wooden floor of the Old Gym, blindfolded and in silence, for an unspecified amount of time. One month later, Knížák facilitated his second action in the United States, *Obtížný Obřad*. Compared to *Ležící Obřad*, this ascetic endurance piece was characterized by dramatically increased sensory deprivation. I posit that both ceremonies used sensorial denial to demonstrate not only sovereignty of the body, but also its reunification with systems of knowing that were otherwise rendered disparate, contradictory, or punishable under Soviet ideology. Building on French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser's theory of interpellation and the public/private dichotomy that underpinned Soviet life, I argue that Knížák subverted Soviet ideologies by reconciling a subject's body and knowledge through participatory exercises in individual autonomy and subjective experience.

Before his sojourn in the United States, Knížák founded the Czechoslovakian collective Aktual Art in 1964, later simplified to Aktual. Over the course of the mid-60s, Aktual had independently reached similar conclusions about the ethics and theory of art to Fluxus in New York.[8] When Aktual and Fluxus established contact in 1965, Knížák was promptly dubbed Director of "Fluxus East" by George Maciunas and invited to the United States for a residency.[9] It was through Maciunas that Knížák came to host *Ležící Obřad* at Douglass College, where faculty were active collaborators in a network of Fluxus projects between New York and New Brunswick.[10] Maciunas, a Lithuanian-American artist and founding member of Fluxus, was committed to establishing pipelines of East-West artistic exchanges. This objective may have been his motivation in trying to absorb Aktual as an appendage of Fluxus, which was and remains more widely recognized, in part

Fig. 2. Milan Knížák, *Ležící Obřad*, 1968, gelatin silver print. Photograph by Peter Moore. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3160.2008.40a-n. © ARS, NY. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA I Art Resource, NY

Fig. 4. Milan Knížák, *Obtížný Obřad*, 1969, gelatin silver print. Photograph by Peter Moore. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3160.2008.41a-n. © ARS, NY. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA I Art Resource, NY.

due to Western privilege. Though Fluxus and Aktual were kindred in their theoretical approaches to art, there were some marked differences in motive and execution. Excluding the somber tone of Knížák's Ležící Obřad and Obtížný Obřad, Fluxus and Aktual actions and were often humorous and playful. Yet unlike Fluxus, Aktual's impetus for organizing actions was the desire to create targeted, if momentary, disruptions of Soviet public space.[11]

These two principles often converged in Knížák's work with Aktual, like *Demonstrace Jednoho* [Demonstration for One] on December 16, 1964 and *Procházka Prahou* [A Walk Through Prague] on December 5, 1965. *Demonstrace Jednoho* featured Knížák dressed in colorful clothing as he read from a book while lying in the street. Nearby, the artist stationed a sign that prompted pedestrians to crow as they ambled by him. In *Procházka Prahou*, participants engaged in a series of activities that playfully reanimated mundane objects in new environments. They selected a personal object "at least eight inches large" to fasten to their clothing as they left home, then later tied it to a piece of string and dragged it behind them on their way to the cinema, only to finally offer it to a fellow movie-goer. Other successive directions included "drink one beer as quickly as possible in a 3rd class restaurant," and, most importantly, as connoted by its punctuation, "KEEP COMPLETELY SILENT!!!"[12] In these happenings, quotidian objects like Knížák's book and the participants' eight-inch items were divorced from their domestic contexts and recontextualized in public spaces. An unsuspecting public was invited to participate in both actions and thus to disrupt the orderly authoritarianism that surrounded them, whether by accepting a participant's gifted object or by cawing on command. As if to contrast dreaming states with waking states, Aktual hoped that surprise ruptures in the fabric of the state-sanctioned reality would alert those moving through public space to its artifice. Essentially, Aktual playfully interrupted the quotidian life of Soviet Prague, which was otherwise entrenched in stifling bureaucracy, restrictive legislation, and police militarization.

Knížák kept a travel diary during his time in the United States entitled *Cestopisy* [Travelogues]. His account is preoccupied with the overwhelming sensory bombardment of Western consumerist splendor that he discovered upon his arrival. Knížák gives primacy to his haptic, optic, and auditory experiences over a theoretical or cultural analysis.[13] Knížák's descriptions of bejeweled clothes, libidinous affairs, commercial shopping centers, and anti-war demonstrations can be read as a sensuous rebuttal to the stringent corporeal regulation that his fellow Soviet comrades were experiencing back home.[14] Within the borders of the Soviet Union, Knížák's body was subject to its totalitarian governance. Though being abroad did not completely free Knížák of such subjugation, his American residency allowed him to experience a greater degree of physical and public autonomy than in Czechoslovakia, except when simulated by the humor and surprise

of Aktual happenings on the streets of Prague.[15] Of course, the independences afforded to Knížák during his stay in the United States and the affirmation of these independences through bodily autonomy did not extend to all Americans. At the time of his arrival, the Civil Rights Act was still new legislation that, while initiating some legal protections for Americans of color, would not introduce protections based on sex for over a decade (and still does not entirely guarantee protections for the LGBTQIA+ community). Knížák's travel accounts indicate a phenomenological awareness of the shift in body politics that occurred with his temporary move to New York.[16] The artist admitted reluctantly in *Cestopisy* that this shift had negatively affected his commitment to the cause of Soviet subversion, while the violent process of normalization in Prague continued to claim both the bodies and lives of his peers.[17]

Being in a body under Soviet surveillance, both before and after normalization, was a bisected performance. Public spaces mandated certain behaviors, which were regulated both by punitive bodies like police forces and one's own neighbors. Private spaces offered some respite from these daily performances.[18] Whichever realm the body moved through, its license for autonomous expression was dictated by the politics of the surrounding space. In public, the body was an agent of the state. In private, the body's ideological obligations were loosened, but only so long as subversion remained behind closed doors. Such regulation extended beyond what the body could do to what the body could consume. Western media and goods were officially banned under the hammer and sickle, but unofficially enjoyed in private by those who levied enough social or economic privilege to afford them.[19] For those who lacked such influence, domestic goods produced by and entangled with the Soviet ideological ecosystem were the extent of the available market. An anecdotal source in the compendium *Primary Documents* relates the story of an esteemed university professor who fervently slandered the Impressionists in public, yet secretly shared his own cherished collection of their paintings with his innermost circle.[20] These social dualisms produced double-speak and double-think among Soviet citizens, where one conviction was declared in offices, restaurants, and town squares, and another was quietly imparted in sitting rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms. Depending on the social sphere through which the body moved, a different and often contradictory knowledge was activated. Public space was inhabited by state-sanctioned bodies that carried state-sanctioned knowledge. Meanwhile, domestic space was imbued with personal importance by virtue of its privacy. It was a place that buffered experimentation, expression, and dissent against the watchful eye of the state.[21]

Even so, Knížák and the rest of Aktual did not consider the domestic haven an adequate solution for the problem of public repression. Aktual's actions were public by doctrine and designed to encourage participants or

spectators to "'live otherwise' against the grain of routine."[22] As Knížák later stated, "I didn't want to make social revolution, I wanted to make revolution in everyday life."[23] Knížák's slight non sequitur expresses his intention to inject routine-disrupting experiences into the public sphere, which was otherwise rendered compliant by Soviet mandate. Rupture came to characterize Knížák's practice not only as a method for his "everyday revolutions," but also as a way to collapse the boundaries between public and private realms. These actions often had a domestic dialect; that is, they retrieved intimacy, contemplation, and the avant-garde from private homes and introduced them to public plazas, among pedestrians and commuters.[24] Aktual actions pinched the layers of disparate, contradictory public and private realities together through subversive humor and spontaneity, enjoining them for a brief, seemingly impromptu moment of symmetry.

In the United States, Knížák adopted a starkly different approach to reconciling body and knowledge. The artist initiated *Ležící Obřad* shortly after arriving in New York. It comprised one part of an evening seminar at Douglass College in New Jersey.[25] The Douglass students who participated in the night's open events were given a single written directive: "Everyone is laying on the floor with a kerchief over his eyes. For a long time."[26] In the first half of this prompt, Knížák deprived the participants of their primary faculty, sight, leaving them dependent on touch, smell, taste, and hearing.[27] Denying sight to a sighted person requires a renegotiation of bodily familiarity; without the advantages of sight, activating the body's remaining senses becomes a labored, conscious operation. In the second half of his prompt, Knížák left the duration of the ceremony indeterminate beyond "a long time." Blind to the actions of their peers and to the passage of time, participants had to decide for themselves how long to continue participating. Each person understood "a long time" to mean something different. Within the opaque parameters of *Ležící Obřad*, time became an internalized, corporeal flux intimately felt by the subtle cycles of biology and cognition instead of an externalized, prescriptive system of measurement. In tandem, the blindfolds and vague duration prioritized the body and the knowledge generated by being in that body. As an anonymous participant reported afterwards, "bound eyes enabl[ed] us to perceive our inner world and gain an awareness of our inner space and feelings."[28] Another participant stated that "so many thoughts went through my head as to what I was doing and feeling that I became unaware of everything else about me."[29] Without vision's overwhelming sensorial input, participants could experience the body as a "site of knowledge."[30]

In early 1969, Knížák revisited an earlier Aktual happening, this time entitled *Obtížný Obřad*.[31] *Obtížný Obřad* invited participants, mostly other artist friends in New York, to sit with Knížák in a room for 24 hours without eating, drinking, sleeping, moving, using the toilet, or communicating

with each other in any manner. At the end of the 24 hours, the participants dispersed without speaking. American artist and Fluxus co-founder Dick Higgins, who had visited Knížák in Prague the year prior, hosted the action in his fittingly sparse apartment at 134 Greene Street on the edge of SoHo. Where *Ležící Obřad* was meditative, *Obtížný Obřad* was ascetic. The participants at Douglass College denied themselves their sense of sight, but the participants in Knížák's second ceremony actively denied themselves all means of comfort or sustenance. Peter Moore documented this action as he did the action at Douglass, and the photographic result is characterized by a sense of alienation (Fig. 4). Three slouching figures sit equidistant from one another on sparse, unadorned benches. The leftmost figure is wrapped in a blanket. None of the three interact with one another, instead electing to fix their gazes upon distant points in space. Though assembled as a group, each participant appears wholly disconnected from his peers, a direct consequence of the artist's severe dictum.

Obtížný Obřad was first mounted as one movement in Aktual's month-long *Manifestace Pospolitiosti* [Keeping Together Manifestation] in 1967 in Prague before its restaging in the United States.[32] The title of *Obtížný Obřad* frames the action as an endurance test that necessitated both mental and physical fortitude. Such extremes of denial bordered on masochism, a type of performance art that increased in frequency during the mid- to late-twentieth century, when Knížák was developing his own practice. Kathy O'Dell writes that the alienation of experiencing pain was a useful tool for performance artists of the '70s seeking to deconstruct alienation itself.[33] While the ceremonies used the alienation of pain and self-sequestration to critique the Soviet state, both O'Dell and Lara Weibgen write at length on the spectatorial nature of masochistic performance art.[34] Conversely, *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad,* if anything, were anti-spectatorial; for one, there were no spectators apart from Moore, no audience separated from participants by the decorum of performance to witness the happening. In *Ležící Obřad*, participants simply could not become spectators because of the intervention of blindfolds. Knížák's various masochisms were a declaration of corporeal sovereignty without the performative trappings inherent to the act of declaring; the participants in *Obtížný Obřad* were willing to starve their own bodies before the state could.

Reclaiming the body through radical, if harmful, exercises in agency was crucial to resisting the bisection of reality under Soviet rule. As knowledge of public and private realities was vested in the body when it crossed the border between diametrically opposed social arenas, Czech citizens were enacting French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser's theories of interpellation, and further, the misrecognition inherent to that process.[35] Interpellation is "the constitutive process where individuals acknowledge and respond to ideologies, thereby recognizing themselves as subjects."[36] For

interpellation to occur, ideology "hails," or calls, its potential subject through some sort of cultural, social, or material means. Althusser's example of interpellation is the scenario of a police officer calling after a potential subject to stop. If the potential subject obeys and turns to recognize themselves as the subject of the police officer's order, they submit to both the authority of the officer and the authority of the state, each representing the pervading ideology.[37] Though this interaction is typically understood as one figure exerting their authority over another, it can also be read as an acquiescence or agreement. By obeying, the subject legitimizes the police officer's claims to power, effectively granting them the authority that they were, until the point of submission, play-acting.[38] In accordance with Althusser's postulate, for interpellation to occur, the subject must misrecognize themselves as having always been under the influence of the ideology that hails them. The subject loses their own power, and by extension grants ideology dominion over their states of being and knowing, in turn legitimizing the authority of the hailer.[39] This shift in position hinges on a subject's misrecognition of their own forgotten agency.

As Knížák's participants struggled to reclaim political autonomy without the aid of external resources (food, water, companionship), they turned inward for resources. Discomfort increased over time, and so too did the participants' awareness of their bodily limitations and survival mechanisms, be they social or nutritional. The depleting effects of holistic bodily denial on their cognitive functions made apparent the biochemical nature of the mind. Psychology is biology, and a day without food, water, and socialization manifested itself as mental stress for the participants. Persisting under such adverse circumstances required strong inner resolve. As the body monitored the mind, so did the mind monitor the body. This awareness of the body through extreme discomfort and simultaneous reliance on the mind to persevere thus invoked an understanding of the mind as a faculty of the body: not hierarchically superior in its operations but gestalt in its codependency.[40] For Knížák and the participants of *Obtížný Obřad*, being in a deprived body was to know deprivation in a cyclical, cerebral-corporeal helix.

The intensity of this self-deprivation was such that *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad* yielded highly subjective, individualized experiences for the participants. Extending Deleuze's "What Can a Body Do?" to "What Can Performance Art Do?," Adair Rounthwaite of the University of Washington addresses inherent variations of being in a participatory body: "I want to emphasize the function of participation as a material practice in which a collective, pre-individual field of affect provides the ground for the emergence of varied subjective experiences."[41] "Affect" here means the changes or fluctuations in the body's power to act, used by the author to explore the "material dynamic" or interaction between bodies in a performance piece.

Drawing on the theoretical writings of Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Rounthwaite describes bodies in "reciprocal contact" as "reciprocally united," creating a new collective body composed of individual bodies.[42] While all participatory artworks generate personal knowledge or subjectivity, Knížák's ceremonies prevented most opportunities for socialization in favor of hyper-personal, solitary meditation or asceticism. *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad* harmonize with Rounthwaite's discussion of varied participatory experiences moderated by affect, but Knížák's ceremonies reject the imperative of collective experience forged by the material dynamic.[43]

As Claire Bishop writes in her landmark text *Artificial Hells,* understanding collective action in the context of politically mandated collectivism, as was the case in the Soviet Union, means problematizing traditional Western conceptions of collaborative practice.[44] Western art historical scholarship often conflates group participation with an inherent ideological subversion, or an "oppositional response to spectacle's atomisation of social relations."[45] But as Bishop observes, collectivism was the spectacle behind the Iron Curtain.[46] Unlike the subversive promise of cooperative participation in a Western context, collective practice in a state where collectivism is institutionalized could arguably catalyze the opposite outcome. It could alternatively result in recursive interpellation, wherein subjects continuously hail one another to submit to state ideology. Bishop argues that, instead, Knížák and other artists assembled for participatory works in order to achieve a heightened sense of individualism: that is, participants gathered to experience their unique subjectivities together.[47]

In light of Bishop's analysis, Rounthwaite's "pre-individual field of affect" is disrupted by *Ležící Obřad*'s blindfolds and *Obtížný Obřad*'s prohibition of all interaction during the happening. Instead, Knížák exploits the tendency for subjective individualism, encouraging private knowledge vested in the body to uniquely coalesce within each participant. Where Soviet interpellation negotiated the merging of body and knowledge through subject misrecognition, Knížák invited participants to apply interpellation practically and independently. In theory, the unification of body and knowledge could result in state supremacy and subject misrecognition. In practical application, as demonstrated by *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad*, being and knowing in the body generated an awareness of individualistic knowledge, composite in their reconciled realities instead of misrecognized under the hailing ideology.

Knížák had a few more ceremonies and lectures planned for his tour through the United States, two of which were scheduled to take place with students in San Bernardino and Los Angeles, respectively. The Los Angeles ceremony would have been realized with the help of UCLA students, but Knížák's proposal to allow multiple fires to burn freely in the Californian wilderness was deemed unsafe by the local fire department and never

brought to fruition. As Czech art historian Tomáš Pospiszyl noted, Knížák's trip to the West Coast did not culminate in significant artistic production, but was instead an opportunity for the artist to rest and relax.[48]

When Knížák finally returned to Czechoslovakia near the end of 1969, the process of normalization had solidified, leaving no trace of the liberal policies that had permitted his travel. Most of Knížák's peers had returned to practicing in private studios and homes, producing what was once again art on the fringes of Soviet sanction.[49] Disillusioned by the "impossibility of reform from without," Knížák continued to facilitate meditative, introspective ceremonies while increasingly withdrawing from Prague.[50] Eventually the artist and his family moved to the small town of Mariánské Lázné near the country's western border, where they began an alternative commune. By the mid-70s, Knížák was living in solitude with his wife and children.[51] Perhaps *Ležící Obřad* and *Obtížný Obřad* were conditioning for Knížák's inevitable return to the disciplined and severe realities of the Soviet Union; one can only speculate. Regardless, the reconciliation of conflicting bodily states of being and knowing, facilitated by two actions of increasing deprivation in the United States, marked a shift in Knížák's career and life. But the shift for which Knížák had hoped, the shift towards a revolution of everyday life, would not arrive for another two decades, when the Soviet Union dissolved.

Notes

1. Geoffrey Hendricks, ed., *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia, and Rutgers University, 1958-1972* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 112-14.

2. "Action" is the term used by Knížák, Aktual, and other participatory artists of the period in lieu of "performance." Word choice in this essay reflects this preference. Hendricks, *Critical Mass*, 113.

3. Marian Mazzone, "Drawing Conceptual Lessons from 1968," *Third Text* 23, no. 1 (2009): 79. https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820902786701.

4. Lara Weibgen, "Performance as 'Ethical Memento': Art and Self-Sacrifice in Communist Czechoslovakia," *Third Text* 23, no. 1 (2009): 58. https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820902786685.

5. Weibgen, "Performance as 'Ethical Memento,'" 54.

6. Mazzone, "Drawing Conceptual Lessons," 79.

7. Pavlína Morganová, *Czech Action Art: Happenings, Actions, Events, Land Art, Body Art, and Performance Art Behind the Iron Curtain* (Prague: Karolinum Press, Charles University, 2014), 71.

8. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 49.

9. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 70.

10. Hendricks, *Critical Mass*, 11-12.

11. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 70.

12. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 61-62.

13. Claire Bishop and Marta Dziewańska, *1968-1989: Political Upheaval and Artistic Change* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 212-13.

14. He writes, "And the clothes! (I've already bought boots with little bells on them and a Stetson. And a golden poncho.)" See Bishop and Dziewańska, *1968-1989*, 213.

15. While Knížák's own body was subject to the ideological hailing of the Soviet Union, the artist himself identified differently while in the United States: "It's almost ridiculous the things they have laws for here, as if Americans were not adults but a swarm of thoughtless and unreasonable children. (And at times they are.) In some places, you can't stand in one spot for more than an hour, in others you can only sing, in yet others only swing, and still in others walk on your cock… for a European, all this seems ridiculous…" Bishop and Dziewańska, *1968-1989,* 216. Knížák's self-identification as a European is interesting in light of his geopolitical positioning, but also for his understanding of these political institutions. Knížák's qualms with the United States's religiously tied legislation, such as alcohol restrictions on Sundays, contrast with his experience of the forced secularization of the Soviet Union. There is irony in a Soviet citizen describing Americans as a "swarm" of children in need of a government-parent, but it also speaks to Knížák's understanding of these two governing bodies as equally hyper-regulatory, though divergent in function.

16. Now, whether or not Knížák was trading one proverbial yoke for another—the Soviet police state for the trappings of capitalist consumerism—is another debate entirely. Zdenka Badovinac, *Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 46.

17. Bishop and Dziewańska, *1968-1989,* 218.

18. Laura J. Hoptman and Tomáš Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 39-40.

19. Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents,* 41.

20. Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents,* 41.

21. Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents,* 40-41.

22. Badovinac, *Body and the East,* 46.

23. Mazzone, "Drawing Conceptual Lessons," 82.

24. My intention with the phrase "domestic dialect" is to connote a system of meanings and symbols particular to domestic life. In the same way that dialects both resemble their referent language and are specific to a certain region, so too is domestic space composed of meanings and symbols that refer to the greater expanse of life but are specific to its private context.

25. Hendricks, *Critical Mass*, 113.

26. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 72.

27. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 72.

28. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 72.

29. Hendricks, *Critical Mass*, 114.

30. Weibgen, "Performance as 'Ethical Memento,'" 56.

31. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 70.

32. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 75.

33. Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 13.

34. O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 53 and Weibgen, "Performance as 'Ethical Memento,'" 56.

35. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), xxv. Throughout this paragraph, I use "they" in the third person singular intentionally.

36. Cindy Nyugen, "Interpellation," The Chicago School of Media Theory, accessed May 5 2019, https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/interpellation/.

37. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 2008), 1-141.

38. Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 1-141.

39. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, xxv.

40. Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1990), 220.

41. Adair Rounthwaite, "Cultural Participation by Group Material between

the Ontology and the History of the Participatory Art Event," *Performance Research* 16, no. 4 (2011): 94. https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2011.606054.

42. Rounthwaite, "Cultural Participation," 94.

43. Rounthwaite, "Cultural Participation," 92.

44. Claire Bishop, "The Social Under Socialism," in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and The Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 129-62.

45. Bishop, "The Social Under Socialism."

46. Bishop, "The Social Under Socialism."

47. Bishop, "The Social Under Socialism."

48. Tomáš Pospiszyl, "Milan Knížák and Ken Friedman: Keeping Together Manifestations in a Divided World," *Post at MoMA,* September 1, 2015, https://post.at.moma.org/content_items/683-milan-knizak-and-ken-friedman-keeping-together-manifestations-in-a-divided-world.

49. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 75.

50. Mazzone, "Drawing Conceptual Lessons," 84.

51. Morganová, *Czech Action Art*, 77.

Realism and Funerary Processions in Mahmoud Sabri's Work

by Suheyla Takesh

With a growing scholarly interest in alternative and comparative modernities, an increasing number of international exhibitions in recent years have centered on twentieth-century art from North Africa and West Asia. Yet, the work of Iraqi-born painter Mahmoud Sabri (1927-2012) has seldom appeared in retrospective group exhibitions or studies of modern Arab art. His paintings only began to crop up in auction house sales and public collections after his passing in 2012, with the exception of an earlier sale made by Meem Gallery to Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, in 2011. Sabri's decision to attend art school abroad partly contributed to his obscurity. He departed Iraq for Moscow in 1960, never to live in his country of birth again, thus forfeiting a direct connection with its dynamic and rapidly developing artistic landscape.[1] Sabri's self-imposed exile and his work's resulting lack of critical attention contrast starkly with his community involvement during the 1950s, when he was an active contributor to Baghdad's modern art scene, a socially driven artist, and an opinionated, politically engaged figure.

The 1950s, often called a golden age of Iraqi culture, saw a significant upswing in cultural projects and artistic innovation. It was a period of "raised political and social consciousness," when national movements were on the rise in the Arab world, and there was a palpable opposition to Western political and economic involvement.[2] Some Arab states had already gained independence from colonial powers, while others were still striving for self-determination, but all were in the process of redefining their identities. In the arts, this quest manifested itself in a search for authentic methods of expression that were at once modern and representative of local cultures, histories, and environments. Faced with rapid modernization, dramatic shifts in the region's political landscape, and swiftly changing lifestyles, artists actively engaged in experiments aimed at forging novel modes of expression that were both locally rooted and internationally relevant.

A number of art groups were established in Iraq at this time, including the Baghdad Group for Modern Art, led by artists Jewad Selim and Shakir Hassan Al Said, and Ar-ruwwād [The Pioneers], founded by artist and educator Faiq Hassan in 1950.[3] The former collective released a manifesto in 1951, which describes the twofold requirements of forging a "national personality in the arts" as being "aware of the current styles" and having an "awareness of local character."[4] Taking this mantra to heart, the group members conducted experiments with form and composition, attempting to bridge local histories with international modernism and their predominantly

Western training. Jewad Selim, who had worked at the Directorate of Antiquities in Baghdad between 1940 and 1945, championed a movement called *istilham al-turath* [seeking inspiration from tradition]. He promoted Iraq's material heritage as a wellspring of artistic ideas and sought to create an authentically Iraqi visual language that incorporated elements from the past.[5]

Mahmoud Sabri belonged to the latter group—The Pioneers—which, unlike other local collectives, did not publish a manifesto. They did, however, share a guiding principle, which was to take art outside the studio and into the streets, painting "directly from the surrounding environment."[6] Its members, including Sabri, often visited Iraq's rural areas and painted scenes of everyday village life. They, too, aspired to create a modern, national art in Iraq, and Sabri even exhibited alongside the Baghdad Group for Modern Art in 1951.[7] Yet, he adopted a distinct approach towards defining and representing an Iraqi identity. Unlike Selim, for instance, Sabri's engagement with heritage focused less on experiments with form and composition, and more on content and a reinterpretation of quotidian life and local customs. I argue that in Sabri's work from the 1950s, particularly his *Jnazet al-Shaheed* [Funeral of the Martyr] series, he employed elements of Iraq's vernacular practices and religious traditions, including those of 'Ashura processions and related performative acts, in order to create imagery that resonated with Iraq's general public. The notion of martyrdom in particular, due to its loaded connotations in Iraqi society, became central to his work at this time. Using the language of Realism, Sabri imbued the content of his work with a profoundly Iraqi character and looked at the past through the lens of a shared, lived present. His primary concern in the 1950s was to represent the injustice and socio-economic inequality in Iraqi society, so he turned to familiar imagery and symbolism that he believed capable of stirring the viewer. The differences between his approach and that of the members of the Baghdad Group for Modern Art thus reflect Sabri's overriding political commitment, which superseded his interest in formal experiments.

Published material on Sabri's practice from the 1950s and 1960s is largely limited to exhibition reviews, occasional references to his work in Soviet art journals and survey books on Iraqi art, and articles that he authored himself.[8] In the 1950s, Sabri wrote for numerous publications on art and politics, and his work attracted the critical attention of Shakir Hassan Al Said and other prominent figures in Iraq.[9] For instance, Jaleel Kamaluddeen's review of The Pioneers's 1958 exhibition for the journal *Al-Adab* praises the group's Realist approach to painting and gives Mahmoud Sabri the spotlight, dedicating nearly half of the article to a discussion of his work. Kamaluddeen commends him as a skilled muralist whose work is worthy of Iraq's National Museum and includes an image of Sabri's 1957 painting *Massacre in Algeria*, which he painted in response to the bloodshed of the Algerian War of Independence, and which garnered much recognition in its

time (Fig. 1).[10] Journalist and critic Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's 1961 essay "Art in Iraq Today" also mentions Sabri's work, noting that he sought to create an "Iraqi art" by addressing social and political injustices in Iraq and representing local scenes and everyday life.[11]

Fig. 1. Nadhum Ramzi, *Mahmoud Sabri in his studio in Baghdad in 1957, in front of his painting* "Massacre in Algeria," 1957, gelatin silver print. Image courtesy of Mohamed Sabri, the late artist's son.

In the early 2010s, Sabri's work began to garner international attention again, thanks to the abovementioned acquisition of his work by Mathaf, as well as a posthumous retrospective exhibition in La Galleria Pall Mall, London, in 2013, co-organized by Yasmin Sabri, the artist's daughter, and Satta Hashem, an Iraqi artist based in the United Kingdom.[12] Following the retrospective, Christie's began auctioning Sabri's work in their Dubai and London sales, and the accompanying catalogues often contain short essays about particular paintings by him.[13] Other sources of information on his work include several video interviews with the artist, most of which were produced by Iraqi filmmaker Bahjat Sabri Bedan and released between 1985

and 2008, and a monographic volume edited by Dr. Hamdi Touqmachi—a close friend of Mahmoud Sabri's—that was published in 2013.[14]

This paper seeks to shed light on the political circumstances that underpinned Sabri's artistic work in the 1950s and early 1960s, and offers a novel reading of the multilayered motivations behind his *Funeral of the Martyr* series, produced between 1951 and 1962. In contrast to the brief discussions of his work in exhibition and auction catalogues and Touqmachi's monograph, which position him as a revolutionary artist and a secular Communist and leave unaddressed the influence of Iraq's vernacular customs on his practice, I explore the role of tradition in Sabri's politically inspired canvases. Authors frequently link Sabri's later paintings to Christian imagery—especially Eastern Orthodox icons portraying the lamentation of Christ—but his work from the 1950s has not been situated against the backdrop of Iraq's religious traditions, which were also very much part of the country's secular cultural fabric, or the historical significance of martyrdom in Iraq. This paper analyzes Sabir's *Funeral of the Martyr* series and early embrace of Realism, suggesting that, like Communist artists elsewhere, Sabri saw painting as a tool for "national awakening."[15] He therefore opted for a popular art, one which was accessible, drew from Iraqi culture, and sought to cultivate a national consciousness.

Sabri's Early Life and Communist Beginnings

> *"My first social engagement, one could say, was in the year 1944. With a group of highschool boys, we went to the Minister of Education in Baghdad, and asked him if he could give us the school building over the summer vacation, so we could turn it into a place of combatting illiteracy in the community. And a large number of people joined us, I remember a few names, for example, Muhammad Salih Al-Aballi, Hafez Touqmachi, Youssef al-Ani, Adeeb George, Kamel Mohammad Ali…."*[16] —Mahmoud Sabri

In a 2008 interview conducted in Prague, Mahmoud Sabri, aged 81, recalled his 17-year-old self engaging in community work in his native Baghdad. Growing up in a middle-class household, he began to exhibit an acute proclivity for justice and a sensitivity towards the condition of the underprivileged and marginalized very early on. He volunteered his time launching social initiatives, and, as a teenager, grew increasingly interested in Socialist and Communist ideologies. Dozens of blue-collar workers attended the summer school for illiterate adults that Sabri organized with a group of friends in 1944. It served not only as a venue for learning how to read and write, but also as a space for lectures and discussions on such issues as freedom, democracy, independence, and the rights of workers and women.[17]

As an ideology, Communism resonated with Sabri's heartfelt concern for fairness and equality for all, and his yearning for a more even distribution of wealth and higher standards of living for the society's most disadvantaged. During World War II, he and many of his Arab peers viewed the Soviet Union as the leading force in countering Fascism and its discriminatory tactics in Europe.[18] After the war ended in a triumph for the Allies in 1945—the year of Sabri's high school graduation—he became an official member of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and an activist in the Party's various offshoots in Baghdad.[19] This trajectory was not uncommon for young men in Baghdad at this time. In fact, it was during the 1940s that the Communist Party gained significant political power in Iraq under the leadership of its charismatic first secretary Yusuf Salman Yusuf, also known as Comrade Fahd. Cheap editions of Communist literature were readily available in the markets, and as World War II drew to a close, a string of Soviet victories contributed to the ideology's increased popularity among students and the working class.[20]

Following Sabri's graduation from high school, he received a government scholarship to study in Egypt. The following year, however, he transferred to Loughborough University in the United Kingdom, where he connected and engaged with left-wing activists while pursuing painting classes in the evenings.[21] It was there, Sabri says, that he was first exposed to the work of world-class painters and began painting with oil colors. In 1949, he participated in the first art exhibition held at the Iraqi Embassy in London. There, he made his debut not only as a socially and politically driven artist, but also as a dedicated Communist, presenting a painting of the ongoing Chinese Communist Revolution at the group show.[22] It was on this occasion that Sabri first came into contact with other young Iraqi artists in the United Kingdom, who would later go on to become leading figures in the field of modern art in Baghdad and contributors to a vibrant, experimental art scene. This cohort included Jewad Selim, Atta Sabri, Hafidh Droubi, Khaled Al-Bassam, and Fahrelnissa Zeid, among others.[23]

Sabri returned to Iraq in 1949, roughly a year after the popular uprising known as al-Wathba had erupted on the streets of Baghdad. The mass urban unrest (a three-day strike and numerous demonstrations) broke out in January 1948 to protest the signing of the Portsmouth Treaty between Iraq and the British government.[24] The Iraqi people saw this agreement merely as a resumption of the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which had given the British control of Iraq's foreign political and military affairs.[25] While the uprising had been orchestrated by members of several opposition groups, including Iraqi nationalists and pan-Arabists, the ICP—one of the largest grassroots organizations in the country—led the coordination of protests and proved instrumental in mobilizing large numbers of workers and students. The uprising encountered opposition from the Iraqi police, who shot and killed

several hundred protesters from rooftops.[26] The ICP's involvement in staging al-Wathba placed it in a precarious position vis-à-vis the increasingly unpopular monarchy, which blamed the ICP for the civil unrest.[27] The defeat of Iraqi (and other Arab) troops in Palestine later that year, which further compromised the Iraqi government's prestige, only exacerbated the ICP's position. In December 1948, Prime Minister Nuri al-Said ordered hundreds of Communists to be arrested and executed, including the secretary of the Party, Ysusf Salman Yusuf, who was hanged in February 1949. As a result, the ICP went "deep underground" for nearly a decade, and worked in secret to advance an anti-monarchical, revolutionary agenda.[28]

Sabri returned to Iraq just in time to witness this backlash against the ICP and the incarceration and execution of many of its members. The tragic events unfolding in Iraq before his eyes found expression in his painting. Moral and political considerations took precedence over formal and aesthetic ones in Sabri's art-making during this period, dictating his choice of subject, composition, and embrace of Realism. As a life-long political activist, a spokesperson for justice, and a genuine believer in Communism, he resolved to use his art to serve socially oriented goals, fundamentally rejecting the concept of "art for art's sake" during this period.[29] For several years, he concentrated his efforts on addressing the plight of Iraq's poor and dispossessed, reflecting the country's ongoing civil strife and political unrest. His figures from this period are slender, almost underweight, with somber, stern faces, as can be seen in his 1955 pencil and charcoal drawing and 1958 oil painting, each entitled *Peasant Family* (Figs. 2 and 3). They both depict village folk with solemn expressions, either looking directly at the viewer or staring vacantly into space. Their unassuming postures and modest attires indicate a humble lifestyle driven by strenuous manual labor. Although these individuals represent the sliver of society

Fig. 2. Mahmoud Sabri, *Peasant Family*, 1955, pencil and charcoal on paper, 23 x 17 in. (59 x 44 cm), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar. Image courtesy of Meem Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Fig. 3. Mahmoud Sabri, *Peasant Family*, 1958, oil on canvas, 35 x 48 in. (90 x 121 cm), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar. Image courtesy of Meem Gallery, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

most closely associated with agriculture, there are no references to fertility or harvest in Sabri's images. Instead, he offers a downhearted depiction of their scanty circumstances and their daily struggle for resources. In the pencil and charcoal drawing, one of the men holds a shovel, indicating that he tills the soil for a living. The tool also serves a symbolic function here, representing a region-specific stand-in for the Communist hammer and sickle. Even when appearing in groups, figures look meager and estranged from one another, reflecting both the struggle for survival in impoverished villages and the alienation experienced by migrant rural workers in the country's urban centers. In his 1950s work *The Parsnip Seller,* for instance, Sabri depicts two withdrawn city-dwellers, likely on their way to work, buying a simple meal from a street vendor at dawn (Fig. 4). Their expressions are downcast and indifferent, making them appear emotionally detatched both from reality and from each other. Painted in the years preceeding the 1958 revolution, the work embodies the general spirit of futility and hopelessness experienced by the working class at this time.

This period of Iraqi history was marked by rapid modernization, aided by wealth from oil industry revenues, and spurred by the country's desire to establish itself as a progressive young nation on the world arena. The government funded the construction and development of urban infrastructure in major cities like Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra, with Western consultants and architects hired to help design large-scale projects. The

Fig. 4. Mahmoud Sabri, *The Parsnip Seller*, 1950s, oil on canvas, 35 x 28 in. (90 x 72 cm), Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

country's increasingly unpopular leadership, in an attempt to reestablish political stability, appointed the Iraq Development Board to supervise the construction of "dams, irrigation and drainage systems, bridges, roads, factories, power plants, housing, schools, hospitals, and public buildings."[30] This initiative drove countless rural workers into urban centers in search of jobs. Many ended up in overpopulated slums that were infested with diseases. The situation for the working masses in rural areas was not much better. An outdated feudal system of land ownership still dominated agricultural production in the early 1950s. Peasants lacked tenure over the fields they tilled and were often exploited.[31] These circumstances served as the basis for recurring peasant uprisings. Sabri, along with a number of other Iraqi artists and intellectuals practicing in Baghdad at this time, showed deep concern for the predicaments of these underpaid workers. He responded by producing art and text condemning the ill-treatment of laborers by the country's ruling elite.

Alongside poverty and destitution, the subject of death caused by political oppression soon began to dominate Sabri's work, triggered not only by targeted killings of members of the ICP, but also by other devastating political events across the region. His social and political drive continued to influence his work as a painter well into the late 1960s. During this period—aligning himself with the vision of Socialist artists internationally—he favored Realism as the style best-suited to both representing the lived experiences of Iraqi workers and highlighting urgent social issues.

Realism in the Work of Mahmoud Sabri

> "*…a good Communist is first of all a Communist, and only secondarily a technician, artist, and so on....All knowledge and skills are tools placed in the service of the class struggle*."[32] —Rote Gruppe [Red Group], Germany

Sabri was well-versed in Marxist writings on art and culture, particularly texts authored by twentieth-century European and American writers on the social and revolutionary role of art, often quoting them in his own work.[33] He demonstrated a clear preference for Realism in the 1950s and early 1960s, a mode of representation he considered accessible to a wide audience and adept at bringing political matters to the public's attention. Realism is defined in Marxist writing not only as a technique rooted in the mastery of traditional academic skills of painting, but also as a strategy for cultivating the mindfulness of its viewers, raising their awareness of prevailing socio-economic disparity and planting seeds of a revolutionary spirit necessary for the commencement of a class struggle. In other words, it was an artistic style framed not merely as a "theory of formal naturalism" or an effort to express the "actual conditions of life," but as a movement geared towards promoting revolutionary activity.[34] It was an art whose immediate goal was serving the public, not only by representing the circumstances of their existence, but also by catalyzing the transformation of these circumstances. Echoing these formulations, Sabri's artistic practice at this time was dedicated to, above all, exposing socio-political injustice through painting. In fact, this objective extended to his efforts in all other areas, be they anti-imperialist writings, community work, or underground political engagements with Iraq's opposition parties.[35] In his paintings of political executions and collective suffering, Sabri articulated oppression and unequal power distribution, presenting a critique of the government's policies and the state's dysfunctional socio-economic frameworks, thus foregrounding collective hardships over personal concerns. By prioritizing intelligibility to the masses over subjective expression in his paintings, Sabri adopted oppositionary tactics, originally directed at Iraq's monarchy and later at the nominal republic's Ba'ath regime.[36]

Sabri's deliberate use of Realism to reach a wide public calls to mind a passage from "Popularity and Realism" (1938), an influential essay by the German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht.[37] In defining the term *popular*, Brecht wrote:

> Popular means: *intelligible to the broad masses*, adopting and enriching their forms of expression / assuming their standpoint, confirming and correcting it / representing the most progressive section of the people so that it can assume leadership, and therefore intelligible to

> other sections of the people as well / *relating to traditions and developing them* / communicating to that portion of the people which strives for leadership the achievements of the section that at present rules the nation.[38]

Making art popular—in other words, accessible, representative of the broad masses, and rooted in recognizable local traditions—was an integral component of Realism's educational and revolutionary mission. Similarly, Sabri's work from the 1950s, particularly his *Funeral of the Martyr* series, deployed elements of Iraq's popular traditions to create images that would speak to the general public. He invoked religious martyrdom in his paintings of political deaths in order to elicit empathy and righteous indignation from his Iraqi viewers.

An acknowledgement of the role of popularity in democratizing culture motivated Communist artists worldwide to renounce easel painting in favor of monumental art, recognizing its potential to overcome cultural elitism and, in a literal sense, make art public property. Monumentality, apart from placing art in the public sphere, also naturally lent itself to the depiction of heroic, larger-than-life protagonists, whose Herculean scale imbued the illustrated scenes with a formidable character. On the international stage, Mexican artists Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco—the "big three," all of whom Sabri cited as influences—championed mural painting with social and political content.[39] Their approach to large-scale imagery evidently resonated with the Iraqi artist, because in 1960 he enrolled in the мастерская монументальной живописи [Monumental Art Studio] at the Surikov Art Institute, Moscow, to study under Aleksandr Deyneka.[40] There, Sabri created a blueprint for a six-meter mosaic mural in Baghdad called *Watani* [My Homeland], which, due to unfavorable political developments, was never realized.

In contrast to the aforementioned definitions of Realism, Socialist Realism—a term coined in the Soviet Union in 1932—was a style that not only sought to communicate with the masses and inform their worldview, but also declared artists "engineers of the human soul" and called upon them to create images of valiant heroes who persevered against all odds and would serve as role models for their viewers.[41] Foregrounding utopian conceptions of emancipation and equal rights, this art celebrated people fearlessly working towards a Communist state, overcoming hurdles along the way. Proponents considered Socialist Realism the style best suited to promoting Communism, and called for the portrayal of qualities like enthusiasm, optimism, and "the spirit of heroic deeds" in order to raise the morale of the proletariat and cultivate confidence in their ability to rise and thrive as a class. Rather than presenting social, political, and economic adversities as irreversibly weighing down the working class, Socialist Realism aimed to

show the masses audaciously overcoming hardships, and to "depict reality in its revolutionary development."[42] It was no longer a call for change, but a bold representation of change in action.

Scholars such as Leah Dickerman have linked Socialist Realism to corrupt political aims, calling attention to its strategic use as a means of "historical self-construction" and an effort in "memory management," and emphasizing its contributions to totalitarianism and top-down propaganda.[43] Although Sabri admired a number of Soviet artists working in the mode of Socialist Realism, and deliberately opted to study art at the Surikov Art Institute, his own artistic vision and treatment of revolutionary themes contravened Socialist Realism's mandate to depict only positive achievements and valiant heroism in art. Beginning in the late 1940s, Sabri's practice centered on poverty and political oppression, and in the 1950s also began to deeply address the subject of martyrdom. His resolve to depict tragedy rather than fictional scenes of community solidarity, combined with his desire to experiment and push Realism to new heights—moving it away from the rigid academicism that the Soviet curriculum still maintained—ultimately created a rift between Sabri and his Russian mentors.[44] While Sabri embraced Realism with enthusiasm, he never became a Socialist Realist.

Martyrdom and Funerary Processions

Sabri's first brushes with the theme of political martyrdom occurred during the government's backlash against Communists following the events of al-Wathba in 1949, but it was not until 1951 that he experienced an episode so moving that he embarked upon his *Funeral of the Martyr* series.[45] The motivating event took place on December 3, 1951, when an incarceratead member of the ICP, Nu'man Muhammad Saleh, lost his life during a collective hunger strike.[46] For several days, state authorities held his body in the forensic department and forbade his burial, until a member of the Central Committee of the ICP, Muhammad Salih al-Aballi (Sabri's long-time friend, who helped him establish the summer school for the illiterate), snuck his body out of forensics and organized a processional funeral.[47] Thousands of people attended the funeral, effectively transforming it into a demonstration denouncing the current regime and speaking out for the rights of the working classes.[48] Muhammad Mahdi Al-Jawahiri—a well-known Iraqi poet, Communist, and good friend of Sabri's—recited poetry over Saleh's grave, lending further emotional and political significance to the event.[49] Sabri's personal knowledge of the deceased, coupled with the unusual circumstances of Saleh's passing and the highly public nature of his commemoration—which Sabri's close friends played a very active role in staging—had an immense and lasting influence on the artist. The heightened sense of

comradery that the public funeral elicited, the shared disapproval of the ruling monarchy, and the fervent spectacle of the march itself surely had a tremendous psychosomatic impact on Sabri, as he bore first-hand witness to the events of that day. Iraqi Communists proclaimed Nu'man Muhammad Saleh a martyr and, following the march held in honor of his death, Sabri's canvases began to embody the spirit of intense grief, depicting funerary processions and impassioned lamenting figures.

Collective sorrow and lament are sentiments that have a historically symbolic importance for the people of Iraq. The land's long association and engagement with themes of ruination, warfare, and ensuing desolation date back to the country's roots in Sumerian history. Since antiquity, Iraqi artists and writers have created pensive works, including poetic dirges like *Lamentation Over the City of Ur*, *Lamentation Over the Destruction of Nippur*, and *Lamentation Over the Destruction of Akkad*, all circa 2000 BCE, and various depictions of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in the Battle of Karbala, which merits a brief historic account.[50]

In 680 AD, a battle took place in the desert of Karbala, in what is now Iraq. Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, along with his band of 72 followers, was attacked and overtaken by the Umayyad caliph Yazeed and his army over the question of succession. One of the leaders of Yazeed's forces, Shemr ibn Ziljawshan, beheaded Husayn in a bloody battle, which also took the lives of several family members, including his six-month old son, Ali al-Asghar. This slaughter took place on 'Ashura, meaning "the tenth day" of the month of Muharram. Shi'a Muslims congregate each year on this day to commemorate the death of the Imam and perform lamentation rituals, grieving his loss.[51] Typically, this day is characterized by large processions of people, who walk through the streets, often holding portable banners that depict Imam Husayn and the scenes of the battle.[52] They chant, cry, and sometimes ceremonially inflict physical pain on themselves. This self-flagellation expresses sorrow and emulates the suffering that Husayn experienced on the day of his martyrdom. 'Ashura days have also grown to incorporate a performative dimension, known as Passion Plays, in which people reenact the events of the battle and Husayn's martyrdom.[53]

Many of the paintings in Sabri's *Funeral of the Martyr* series appear to translate the popular practices of lamentation rituals into visual images. Echoing elements of 'Ashura marches and related Passion Plays, Sabri's works from the series typically depict a corpse being carried through a crowd, a group of mourners bewailing the loss of life, and, occasionally, a congregation parading through the city streets holding portable banners. *The Funeral of Numan Muhammad Saleh*, painted in the 1950s, presents one of the earliest works from the series and provides an example of these recurrent motifs (Fig. 5). On the left-hand side of the composition, a chaotic conglomeration of people expresses fervent remorse over the death of Saleh,

Fig. 5. Mahmoud Sabri, *The Funeral of Numan Muhammad Saleh*, 1950s, 31 1/2 x 74 13/16 in. (80 x 190 cm). Image courtesy of Dr. Hamdi Touqmachi.

Fig. 6. Mahmoud Sabri, study for *The Funeral of the Martyr*, 1950s. Screenshot from Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Longing for Freedom: Mahmoud Sabri, Part One," (1985, released May 31, 2012), YouTube video, 8:45, https://tinyurl.com/yx98339h. Image courtesy of Bahjat Sabri Bedan.

whose body is being carried by an organized file of figures on the far right. The mourners extend their arms towards the sky, cover their faces with the palms of their hands, and stoop to the ground in intense grief. One figure holds up a flag, presumably heralding revolutionary change. On a literal level, this painting narrates Numan Muhammad Saleh's funeral and highlights Sabri's disapprobation of Iraq's ruling monarchy, especially its practice of incarcerating and executing his Communist comrades. On a more metaphorical level, however, this scene addresses not only Saleh's passing, but also the deeply rooted significance of martyrdom and lamentation rituals in Iraqi culture more generally. By invoking these familiar themes and imbuing them with a more immediate political message, Sabri created both a charged depiction of tragedy and a call for change that resonated with local viewers on multiple planes.

Fig. 7. Mahmoud Sabri, study for *The Funeral of the Martyr*, 1950s. Screenshot from Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Longing for Freedom: Mahmoud Sabri, Part One," (1985, released May 31, 2012), YouTube video, 8:45, https://tinyurl.com/yx98339h. Image courtesy of Bahjat Sabri Bedan.

Sabri's depictions of a dead body in the *Funeral of the Martyr* series often include a pair of doves perched upon the deceased's torso (Figs. 6 and 7). Doves, which are frequently linked to notions of peace, were a popular Communist symbol in Iraq and were incorporated into some ICP insignia. Their particular placement atop a corpse in Sabri's compositions also recalls a theatrical ritual that is sometimes performed in public as part of the annual observances. A mid-eighteenth-century account of an 'Ashura celebration

describes how a man would perform the role of Husayn and, covered with a fabric shroud, be carried through the procession as a spectacle: "Several living doves sit on his body…. After a while, the men under the cover release their bonds, two at a time, so that they can 'fly to Medina' to announce Husayn's death to his sister."[54] Elements of Sabri's paintings resemble the description of this practice very closely, suggesting that he had likely witnessed similar rites performed on the streets of Baghdad.

Another detail that suggests a visual connection with performative rituals and 'Ashura marches in Sabri's work from this period is the repeated portrayal of men beating hand-held drums at the forefront of a procession, as can be seen in his 1961 work *Funeral of the Martyr* (Fig. 8). The rhythmic sound of this instrument is widely used both as an ordering mechanism for people walking in unison, and as a means to signal solemnity and ceremonial formality during a procession. It is likewise frequently linked to the act of calling people to action and symbolizing revolutionary change. On 'Ashura days, it is common for mourners to congregate for sorrowful, poetic recitations performed in memory of the martyr, collectively grieving to the tune of beating drums and chants of "Ya Husayn." After Sabri moved to Moscow in 1960 and began receiving technical training in draftsmanship and painting, the execution of figures and forms in his work became more detailed and an-

Fig. 8. Mahmoud Sabri, *Jnazet al-Shaheed* or *Funeral of the Martyr,* 1961, oil on canvas, 39 x 55 in. (100 x 140 cm). © Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, 2019.

atomically precise. The drums in his paintings from the early 1960s acquired a distinctive shape—one with a clear articulation of the instrument's many sides—closely resembling the images of octagonal drums that are used in contemporary Iraqi rituals (Fig. 9). The ample swing of the drummer's arm in many of Sabri's paintings also recalls the paced and ceremonial manner in which 'Ashura drummers sway their arms up and down, not only setting a rhythm for the movement and the chanting of the crowd, but also using their bodies to echo the pulsating motion of the procession. Impassioned lamenting figures that appear in several paintings from this series were also likely modeled on real-life marchers whom Sabri witnessed participating in ceremonial processions.

Fig. 9. Drummers at an 'Ashura procession in al-Mahdiya district, Hillah, Iraq, 2014. Screenshot from Qasim Suhael, موكب محله المهديه الحله [Procession of al-Mahdiya district in Hillah], (released November 13, 2014), YouTube video, 12:36, https://tinyurl.com/yxuybjd7.

These visual links to 'Ashura processions in Sabri's work suggest a folding of present-day events into the historical narrative of Imam Husayn's martyrdom. This approach gave him an opportunity not only to depict sensitive political subjects, but also to communicate the poignant experience of grief that political martyrdom entails. Some historical accounts equate the sorrow, suffering, and self-flagellation of 'Ashura marches with a mystical form of worship that facilitates a transcendental experience of the body—ideas that are also reflected in period reviews of Sabri's work from the 1960s. Journalist Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's description of Sabri's work is here particularly apt:

"…the agony dissolved gradually into lyricism, until Sabri's hell-tormented men and women began to emerge as though in a trance of joy."[55] Building on these connections, I have argued that Sabri used elements of local customs as metaphors for contemporary tragic events that were unfolding in Iraq, hoping that the dual reference to tradition and common practices would resonate with the Iraqi public. It was Sabri's interest in a shared, practiced identity—one in which broad sectors of Iraqi society took part, either as active participants or witnesses—that motivated his turning towards popular rituals, which he used to reflect upon current political issues. The notion of martyrdom, which pervaded his work from the period, was at once relevant to local audiences, characteristic of Communist glorification of political martyrs, and adept at referencing current events.

Research for this article was conducted as part of the author's work towards a master's thesis at MIT, titled "Iconographies of Pain in Mahmoud Sabri's Work."

Notes

1. After 1960, Mahmoud Sabri only went back to Iraq once, in 1973, to attend the Conference of Arab Artists. On this occasion, he remained in Baghdad for a month.

2. Nada M. Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 24.

3. Jewad Selim (1921–1961) was an influential Iraqi painter and sculptor who advocated for a synthesis of ancient heritage with modern forms. Shakir Hassan Al Said (1925–2004) was an Iraqi artist, writer, and educator who taught at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad between 1970 and 1980. Together, they co-founded the Baghdad Group for Modern Art in 1951. Faiq Hassan (1914–1992) was a prominent Iraqi artist and educator who served as the Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Institute of Fine Art in Baghdad from 1938 to 1962.

4. Shabout, *Modern Arab Art*, 24.

5. Ibid., 28-29.

6. *Mathaf Encyclopedia of Modern Art and the Arab World*, s.v., "Faiq Hassan," accessed October 6, 2018, http://www.encyclopedia.mathaf.org.qa/en/bios/Pages/Faiq-Hassan-Alawi-al-Janabi.aspx.

7. Baghdad Group for Modern Art, "Baghdad Group for Modern Art Manifesto, 1951," in *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents*, ed. Anneka Lenssen et al. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 150.

8. Soviet sources include Anatolii Andreevich Bogdanov, *Современное изобразительное искусство Ирака* [Modern Visual Art of Iraq, 1900s-1970s] (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1982); Boris Vladimirovich Weimarn, "*Проблема искусства в молодых государствах Азии и Африки* [The Problem of Art in the Young Countries of Asia and Africa]," *Iskusstvo* 3 (1966): 56-65. Articles by Sabri include: Mahmoud Sabri, "مشكلة الرسم العراقي المعاصر [The Problem of Modern Iraqi Art]," *Al-Adab* (1956): 65-69; Mahmoud Sabri, "الفن العراقي بين عهدين [Iraqi Art Between Two Eras]," *Al-Thaqafah Al-Jadeedah* 7 (1959): 19-37; and Mahmoud Sabri, "Художник и реальный мир [Artist and the Real World]," *Inostrannaya Literatura* 6 (1963): 239-40.

9. Shakir Hassan Al Said, فصول من تاريخ الفن التشكيلي في العراق [Chapters from the History of the Visual Art Movement in Iraq], vol. 2 (Baghdad: Ministry of Culture and Information, 1988), 140.

10. Jaleel Kamaluddeen, "تأملات في معرض الرواد [Reflections on the Exhibition of the Pioneers]," *Al-Adab 6* (1958): 87-90.

11. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, "Art in Iraq Today" (London: Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, 1961), 6.

12. Satta Hashem and Yasmin Sabri, *Mahmoud Sabri (1927-2012): First Retrospective* (London: La Galleria Pall Mall, 2013). The exhibition was on view from June 25 to July 6, 2013.

13. Sabri's work appeared in the following auctions: Christie's, *Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish Art*, Sale 1230, March 19, 2014, Dubai; Christie's, *Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian, and Turkish Art,* Sale 1233, October 21, 2014, Dubai; Christie's, *Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian, and Turkish Art*, Sale 1237, March 18, 2015, Dubai; Christie's, *Dubai: Modern and Contemporary Art*, Sale 14702, March 18, 2017, Dubai; Christie's, *Middle Eastern, Modern and Contemporary Art*, Sale 15694, October 25, 2017, London; Christie's, *Middle Eastern, Modern and Contemporary Art*, Sale 15890, October 24, 2018, London; and Sotheby's, *20th Century Art / Middle East*, Sale L19228, April 30, 2019, London. A work previously sold by Christie's also appeared in the following auction: Sotheby's, *20th Century Art / Middle East*, Sale L18226, October 23, 2018, London.

14. See Bahjat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds, Part One" (2008), YouTube video, 13:43, May 31, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y3b29zkz; Bahjat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds, Part Two" (2008), YouTube video, 15:00, June 1, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y5a9d7ra; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds, Part Three" (2008), YouTube video, 14:11, June 1, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y65tnhbm; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Longing for Freedom: Mahmoud Sabri, Part One" (1985), YouTube video, 8:46, May 31, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/yx98339h; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Longing for Freedom: Mahmoud Sabri, Part Two" (1985), YouTube video, 9:34, May 31, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y2a-jvxsn; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on Jewad Selim" (2007), YouTube video, 6:04, June 21, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/yxcxkyb5; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on Faiq Hassan" (2007), YouTube video, 6:03, June 27, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y6cxooc3; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on Al-Jawahiri" (2007), YouTube video, 3:08, June 21, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y5b8m7uu; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on Salam

Adel" (2007), YouTube video, 2:03, June 27, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/y2t-7x8r8; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on Visual Art and the Political Operation" (2007), YouTube video, 8:25, June 22, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/yy7nzsgk; Bahiat Sabri Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri on the Current Situation in Iraq" (2007), YouTube video, 13:34, June 22, 2012, https://tinyurl.com/yyb-fbqls; and Hamdi Touqmachi, ed., *Mahmoud Sabri: His Life, Art, and Thoughts* (Amman, Jordan: Adib Books, 2007).

15. Antun Gustav Matoš, "Art and Nationalism," trans. Iva Polak, in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945)*, vol. 3, pt. 2, *Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Ahmet Ersoy et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 288.

16. Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds." Hafez Touqmachi, whom Mahmoud Sabri mentions in this quote, is Hamdi Touqmachi's brother.

17. Touqmachi, ed., *Mahmoud Sabri: His Life, Art, and Thoughts,* 11-12.

18. Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

19. Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

20. Elizabeth F. Thompson, "The 1948 Wathba Revisited: Comrade Fahd and the Mass Appeal of Iraqi Communism," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 12, no. 2 (2018): 127-45, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcis.12.2.127_1.

21. Touqmachi, ed., *Mahmoud Sabri: His Life, Art, and Thoughts,* 282; and Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

22. The painting was sold at the exhibition, and no reproductions of it exist in published sources. Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds."

23. Atta Sabri bears no relation to Mahmoud Sabri.

24. Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 102-03.

25. Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 177-79.

26. Ibid.

27. Haj, *The Making of Iraq*, 103.

28. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted,* 177-79.

29. Sabri, "Iraqi Art Between Two Eras," 19-37.

30. Panayiota Pyla, "Architects as Development Experts: Model Communities in Iraq and Syria," in *Landscapes of Development: The Impact of Modernization Discourses on the Physical Environment of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Panayiota Pyla (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 171.

31. Jonathan E. Sanford, *Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2003).

32. "Red Group: Manifesto, 1924," in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 407.

33. Some of the figures and texts that Sabri quoted in his early published writings include: Bertolt Brecht, "Notes on Erwin Strittmatter's Play Katzgraben," 1953 in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic,* 1964; Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature,* 1925; Sidney Walter Finkelstein, *Realism in Art*, 1943; Finkelstein, *How Music Expresses Ideas,* 1952; Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art,* 1963; Louis Harap, *Social Roots of the Arts*, 1949; Francis Klingender, *Marxism and Modern Art,* 1945; Vladimir Lenin, *Karl Marx and his Teachings,* 1915; Lenin, *The Tasks of the Youth Leagues,* 1920; Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,* 1852; Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* 1859; Marx, and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1932; Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art,* 1931; Read, *Art and Society,* 1937; Read, *The Philosophy of Modern Art,* 1952; Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*, 1940; and Elie Siegmeister, *The Music and Society,* 1938.

34. See Francis D. Klingender, *Marxism and Modern Art: An Approach to Social Realism* (1943; repr. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975); and Francis D. Klingender, "Content and Form in Art," in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Harrison and Wood, 437.

35. Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

36. Prior to 1958, the Kingdom of Iraq was a Hashemite monarchy, ruled by King Faisal II. In July 1958, a revolution broke out, overthrowing the monarchy and establishing the Iraqi Republic under the leadership of army

brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim. In February 1963, the first Ba'ath military coup d'état took place in Iraq, in which the Ba'ath party overthrew Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim's government and seized state power. During their short-lived rule, they organized the execution of hundreds and the imprisonment of thousands of Communists, as well as other members of the opposition. This time around, Ba'ath rule lasted only until November 1963, when the party was overthrown and a new, pro-Nasserist government was established in Iraq under Abdul Salam Arif. The Ba'ath party seized power again in 1968, which they would hold until 2003.

37. While, to the best of my knowledge, Sabri did not cite this particular essay in his own writings, he did reference other texts by Brecht. Brecht's attempt to define what constitutes socially engaged art, published only a few years before Sabri joined the ICP, makes "Popularity and Realism" especially relevant to my discussion.

38. Bertold Brecht, "Popularity and Realism, 1938," in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Harrison and Wood, 499. The emphasis is my own.

39. Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds."

40. Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

41. The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union coined the term "Socialist Realism" in 1932. While the definition of Socialist Realism originally applied to literature, it soon extended to other creative fields in the USSR, and found expression in music, film, and the visual arts. See Andrei Zhdanov, "Speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers, 1932," in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Harrison and Wood, 428.

42. Ibid.

43. For further reading, see Leah Dickerman, "Camera Obscura: Socialist Realism in the Shadow of Photography," *October* 93 (Summer 2000): 138-53, https://doi.org/10.2307/779160; and Christina Kiaer, "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s," *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (2005): 321-45, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kci031.

44. Satta Hashem, email to Suheyla Takesh, November 25, 2017.

45. Bedan, "Mahmoud Sabri Between Two Worlds."

46. Bedan, "Longing for Freedom."

47. Al-Aballi was later executed by the Ba'ath regime on July 21, 1963, along with a number of other members of the Communist Party. See Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba`thists and Free Officers* (London: Saqi, 2013), 674, 989; and Muzahem Mubarak Malallah, "Mohammed Saleh Al-Aballi and the Ba'athist Coup of February 1963," last modified July 13, 2016, http://iraqicparchives.com/index.php/sections/objekt/45442-2016-07-13-19-47-55.

48. "Mahmoud Sabri (Iraqi, 1927-2012), *Jnazet (Funeral)*," Christie's Auctions and Private Sales, accessed March 21, 2018, https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/mahmoud-sabri-iraqi-1927-2012-jnazet-funeral-5875509-details.aspx.

49. Malallah, "Mohammed Saleh Al-Aballi."

50. Thomas F. McDaniel, "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 2 (1968): 198, https://doi.org/10.2307/1516916.

51. Peter Chelkowski, "Narrative Painting and Painting Recitation in Qajar Iran," *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 98, https://doi.org/10.2307/1602284.

52. Ibid., 101.

53. Ibid., 100.

54. Thomas Salmon and Matthias V. Goch, *Die heutige Historie und Geographie, oder, Der gegenwärtige Staat vom Königreich Persien* (Flensburg: Korte, 1739), 249-53. Translation in Chelkowski, "Narrative Painting," 99.

55. Jabra, "Art in Iraq Today," 6.

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