Artists as Historical Interventionists:
Archival Appropriation & Re-Contextualization in the
Art of Kara Walker and Shimon Attie

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Introduction:

Racialization, Appropriation, and Intervention
In the Art of Kara Walker and Shimon Attie

History in general is never over

- Jacques Le Goff ¹

History is not and never will be contained by inherently biased textbooks rendered outdated immediately after their publication by the unrelenting progress of time. It cannot be constrained by human methodologies because it is never complete. It unfolds continually, long after many might believe it concluded, existing not as easily defined, explicit events but as stones that drop, skip, and splash into the water of time, causing ripples to extend indefinitely outward, growing larger as the stones plummet deeper, deeper... Possibly never reaching the un-seeable seafloor of resolution.

This is particularly the case with culturally traumatic historical periods – such as the Holocaust and the trans-Atlantic slave trade – targeted at a specific, racialized group of individuals. Historically, the concept of race has irrationally simplified human life into superior and inferior, dominant and subservient, those who profit and those who are profited from. The social construct of race has a violent, wrought history that seeps from the cracks of this incredibly thin definition. The visual politics of racialization are the many associations,

experiences, and stereotypes socially and mentally ingrained in human minds concerning recognizably physically “different” people.

Systematic racism and its vicious manifestations cannot be contained by traditional constructions of “history” because it pushes past the boundaries of dominant narratives of events deemed important by powerful men.² The result of the racialization of groups perceived as “other” has been and still is predominantly enacted by white men of “Western” European descent³ who construct racial hierarchies in order to profit from the oppression of others and secure their own dominance in the existing social order.

Today, new technologies and methodologies allow us to critically examine the histories human beings constructed before and during our lives. Artwork, whether aiming at realism or symbolism, inherently constructs our memory of and attitudes towards the people and events that we were not alive to experience. Contemporary historians such as Leigh Raiford, Deborah Willis and Stuart Hall make use of visual sources in ways that were not even dreamt of by their predecessors, particularly to explore photographic representations of African Americans.

Emerging fields such as cultural memory studies and visual studies belong within history as a discipline. However, innovation and progress in the

² In Western Europe and North America – particularly in the 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ centuries – people in power= predominantly white men.
³ Includes North America, European countries such as France, Italy, Spain & countries where the majority of citizens are culturally read as “white” and are not victims of racial violence.
development of these fields stem from a new worldview, one that acknowledges and looks past the glories and conquests – so embellished and fawned over in historical records – to the violent underbelly of the silenced voices of racialized individuals. Contemporary historians and artists alike seek to reveal the complexity of predominantly white-male constructed historical archival narratives. In order to successfully challenge the authority of “factual” archival evidence, historic interventionists – defined for my purposes as those who attempt to rectify historical omissions or individual’s authorial perspectives, the audience to which this historical narrative is presented and the specific historic and social contexts that contributed to their creation.

Attie and Walker as Historic Interventionists

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how artists – using Kara Walker and Shimon Attie as prime examples – challenge the temporal limits of culturally traumatic historical events through appropriation and reclamation of the authorial voice of history. Furthermore, I will argue that Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) (2005) by Walker and The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter (1991-3) by Attie accomplish the daring historical feat of representing the experiences of descendants of distinctly racialized individuals who have been oppressed, silenced, and otherwise unable to construct their own societally acceptable histories, specifically unassimilated Jews in Berlin in the 1920s - 1930s and African Americans in the antebellum era. In this thesis, I argue that Walker and Attie act as historical interventionists by manipulating archival visual
representations of the “reality” of highly volatile histories which are indelibly impressed upon their heritage.

To consider the ways in which Attie and Walker’s personal cultural identities come to bear on their respective artistic projects, I will consider the positionality – the specific position in relation to others that an individual occupies, often having to do with race, culture, and gender – of both artists. Shimon Attie’s positionality as a Jewish American artist and Kara Walker’s as an African American artist allow them to consider their selected historical periods – pre-WWII Berlin and the American Civil War – from a distinctive culturally connected yet temporally distant perspective. Their cultural heritage links them to the periods of intense, racially motivated violence that they are drawn to as artists and historic interventionists. Given the impossibility of participation in these historically violent periods, Attie and Walker counteract the necessary lack of direct experience by re-surfacing and altering archival visual representations of the past. Furthermore, their intervention in historical materials – which predominantly exclude the narratives of those who experienced violence and oppression – is heightened by their own cultural identification with those marginalized, de-humanized, deceased individuals.

Both Attie and Walker interrogate the historians’ privilege of choice when appropriating archival images. They both intentionally include or exclude various images according to their own authorial and artistic inclinations. This process is similar to historians’ decisions to describe particular events and people while
failing to record other individuals and their experiences. The ultimate ambition of historic-intervention-inclined artists to articulate the voices that have been historically silenced and oppressed is hindered by the impossibility of achieving total and complete historical truth – choices are necessarily made that exclude certain narratives from the historical record.

Through his work, Attie seeks to empower “people to have a different kind of visceral, intellectual, and aesthetic experience...from a direct frontal confrontation with the historical facts.”\(^4\) Attie and Walker’s appropriation and recontextualization of archival visual sources – which they went out of their way to select and alter – position them uniquely as volatile, thoughtful, and unforgottably striking historic interventionists.

Racial Violence or Racial Vigilance?

Shimon Attie’s and Kara Walker’s historically contingent multimedia series are prime examples with which we may consider the significance of contemporary artists’ interventions in archival images which were themselves initially produced by unknown authors yet are perceived as indisputable historical evidence. In Attie’s series, *The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter* he made the distinct choice to appropriate images of unassimilated Jews, or *Ostjuden*, because of their distinctively Jewish appearance, predicated on choice of clothing, hairstyle, and association with a Jewish business. Attie’s projections of Ostjuden – who were

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recognizably different from gentile Germans as well as assimilated German Jews – reveals the existence of a physically recognizable – perhaps even *racialized* – religious group among more inconspicuous Germans of the same religious background. In Walker’s *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)* she intentionally chose images with few if any African American figures, opting instead to layer her own imagined, racially-explicit silhouettes onto the archival images to invoke universal symbols of Black bodies. Walker’s silhouetted figures are unmistakably African American, evidenced by visual stereotypes such as plump lips and afro-like hair.

As both artists appropriate and adapt archival images to reveal the constructed nature of racial categories, they necessarily engage with stereotypes in their art. Attie does this by selecting images of Ostjuden, while Walker creates intensely, violently stereotyped silhouetted figures. Although it may appear that Attie and (in particular) Walker perpetuate stereotypes and even contribute to their endurance in historical memory, their artistic depictions of racialized figures do much more progressive work. Attie and Walker’s representations of stereotypically racialized figures force spectators to identify the figures depicted as racially “other,” and thus confront their own internal process of visual racialization and categorization. This process is embedded in assumptions of whiteness, which have become deeply normalized within Western European and North American societies, thus situating individuals who do not appear “white” within a distinctly
“othered” racial category. This implication of the viewer in the visual politics of racialization is integral to the meaning of both artists’ work.

Both series demand engagement from the viewer in order to complete their intensely symbolic, yet historically and racially specific work. Viewers’ recognition of race and subsequent interpretations – whether the result is a feeling of intense discomfort, sorrow, indifference, or personal resonance – is an integral aspect of these images. In order to achieve their intended impact, Attie’s Ostjuden and Walker’s intensely Black bodies require viewers to read race in the silhouettes. The viewers’ gazes – along with their personal visual perceptions of race and narrative within the prints – are akin to individuals’ interpretations of historical sources. Any and all perceptions of historic events are necessarily derived from any given individual’s positionality, knowledge of, and associations with the subject. The visual process of racialization is affected by these very same factors. Thus, the viewer’s participation in both artists’ series activates the potent symbolism nestled within visual representations of racialized figures.

Both artists engage with culturally ingrained trauma as well as emotional history in their work. As descendants of historically oppressed, racialized groups, they have a distinct – if temporally distant – emotional and cultural connection to the historical periods that these series engage with. Attie and Walker use history as

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5 This does not mean that other factors – such as ignorance and unwillingness to learn about race and racism to name a few – do not also play a role in this process, but the plethora of influences on any individuals’ perception of physical race is too lengthy a topic to discuss in its entirety in this thesis.
healing in order to reclaim traumatic histories and prompt deeper consideration of
the individuals whose lives were destroyed due to the violence inflicted upon them
by Western Europeans’ inability to accept their recognizable physical difference.
Furthermore, the mobilization of – both social and scientific – endeavors to ascribe
false inferiority to racialized individuals as justification for the social exclusion and
exploitation of those deemed racially “othered” historically dehumanizes victims of
racism. Both artists employ the visual politics of racialization in their work to
stimulate consideration of the potency of racial stereotypes and the negative
associations and subsequent violence resulting from these perceptions of
unalterable difference.

Materiality as Historicity

The historical potency of Walker and Attie’s work is revealed not only in its
subject matter but in its materiality as well. The archival images appropriated by
both artists are encoded with *materiality as historicity*, the various significances
derived from their physical form and how the historic context in which they were
created imbues them with a different understanding than contemporary
interpretations. In the absence of precise authorship, we must rely more heavily on
the significance of archival images’ materiality as a historical source in and of itself.
In *The Writing on the Wall*, Attie appropriates images taken in Berlin’s Jewish
quarter from the 1920s-1930s. Walker, conversely, appropriates prints from the
widely circulated *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War* first published in 1866.
*Harper’s “Note to Subscribers”* identifies numerous artists, such as Thomas Nast,
N. Jewett, and Edwin Forbes, yet does not attribute specific images to their authorship. In both Walker and Attie’s series, the specific authors of the archival images are unknown and likely will never be identified.

The artists’ self-conscious invocation of racialized bodies as well as the lengthy process of research and mining for historic visual materials reveals the similarities behind otherwise diverse artists and their series. Furthermore, Attie and Walker’s cultural connections to the historic periods from which series emerge set them apart from other appropriation artists such as Andy Warhol, Sherrie Levine, Robert Rauschenberg, and Richard Prince.

Confounding Reality and Spatiality

The archival photos of the Scheunenviertel as well as the engravings in Harper’s Pictorial History were initially constructed and viewed by individuals who believed in their veracity, and thus toe the line between historical fact and fiction. Walker’s silhouettes thwart the original prints’ attempts to convey three-dimensionality through shading by insisting on the planarity – and thus constructed nature – of the archival images. Attie’s two-dimensional photographs of formerly three-dimensional subjects projected onto three-dimensional architecture and then photographed to produce a two-dimensional representation perform a similar action to that of Walker’s. Because Attie reframes – and re-photographs – archival images nearly 70 years after their conception, he creates a

\[ \text{Note to Subscribers.} \]

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cycle of dimensionality that exists both temporally and physically. Attie and Walker both confound the perceived truth of the images they appropriate by demonstrating how easy it is to gain control of the narratives they impart to viewers.

Some of the engravings Walker appropriates from Harper’s fade into the white matte, which takes on the symbolic role of an atmosphere, which bleeds into our own time and reality. The soft fade to white of many of Harper’s engravings contrasts with the crisply distinguished edges of Walker’s silhouettes, thus situating them on a different plane, in a different time, yet unified compositionally by their aesthetic belonging within the antebellum era. Similarly, Attie’s appropriated archival images blur into the architectural host they are projected onto. They are clearly not part of the architecture – because they are ephemeral projections of light and photons – yet they appear to fit into it like puzzle pieces. This is partially due to Attie’s extensive research – with the help of older maps and extensive outdoor exploration of the Scheunenviertel – to identify exact or proximate locations where the original images were captured.

**What to Expect From This Very Long Paper**

Chapter 1 of this thesis discusses the historic beginnings of the construction of race, considers definitions of both race and racism, and seeks to determine whether or not Jews have been racialized throughout history. Scholars such as Sander Gilman, Miriam Eliav-Feldon, and George M. Fredrickson guide my
intellectual perception of the history of race and racism, necessary groundwork in order to address these concepts in the context of Attie and Walker’s work. Chapter 2 describes Kara Walker’s 2005 print series, *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)* and the ways in which she appropriates and unapologetically inserts Black bodies into archival engravings to question and contest the authorial voice of history.

Chapter 3 focuses on Shimon Attie’s 1991-1993 installation-turned-photography series, *The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter* and his ambition to “remember” nameless individuals erased by the Holocaust yet anonymously preserved in these images. Chapter 4 discusses cultural and collective memory and how it fits into a broader historical context. Astrid Erll, Maurice Halbwachs, and Jacques Le Goff are scholars and theoreticians who have written convincing and coherent work on cultural, historic, and collective memory.

Thank you for taking the time to even make it this far into my thesis. I hope you enjoy or at least pleasantly tolerate the next hundred pages of my writing.

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7 I specify that the first chapter sets the scene for my *intellectual* perception of race and racism because I am not solely drawing upon emotional history – which Attie and Walker access in their work – but the scholarly, historically-grounded study of how these social constructions have shaped our world.
Chapter 1:

Race as Dichotomous Human Construct

Race is a constructed category of social organization as much as it is a reflection of some aspects of biological reality

- Sander Gilman

Before we delve into the central focus of my paper – Walker’s Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) and Attie’s The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter as artistic interventions in dominant historical narratives and archival sources – we must begin by putting together a working definition of the elusive, ever-changing concepts of race and racism. This chapter will discuss historic beginnings of the construction of race as well as the multifaceted ways in which racialized groups have been oppressed. The work of scholars such as Sander Gilman, Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, Joseph Ziegler, George M. Fredrickson, Max Hering-Torres, and Alain Corcos help to lay the groundwork for these very loaded terms.

Sander Gilman, renowned scholar of American and Jewish studies and author of The Jew’s Body, believes that the concept of race assumes positive as well as negative definitions and enacted realities. Gilman argues that the duality of race allows it to simultaneously enable belonging and “group cohesion or group identity” while being used as a tool with which those in positions of power racialize

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Chapter 1: Race as Dichotomous Human Construct

– and subsequently oppress – groups deemed identifiably physically different.\(^9\)

Both Kara Walker and Shimon Attie engage with the duality of race; they simultaneously belong to historically racialized and oppressed cultural groups while also invoking the visual politics of racialization in their artwork.

Although race is in the eye of the beholder, those whose lives are shaped by others’ racialized perceptions of them often derive unity and strength from the very racial grouping that dominant, often “white” groups have used to set them apart and subsequently deny them equality. Attie and Walker exemplify the dualistic nature of race, as it is not only constructed and manipulated by oppressors but is also used by many cultural identity groups to aid in constructing and sustaining a cohesive community.

In a French-Latin dictionary from 1552, Robert Estienne, a 16\(^{th}\) century Parisian Catholic-turned-Protestant scholar, deems “stirps, gens, or sanguine (stock/stem, people/tribe, from the blood of)” an accurate translation of race.\(^{10}\) In French-Jewish anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Race and History (1952), race is defined as intrinsically grounded in anthropology. According to him, “before scientific racism, race was how a tribe, nation, or an ethnic group defined itself, by rejecting all others.”\(^{11}\) These definitions of race refer to the genealogical origins of groups as defining their racial identities. They adopt the pseudoscientific opinion

\(^{10}\) Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, The Origins of Racism in the West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 200-201.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 201.
that race is an unalterable characteristic that is found in the blood and genes of an individual. Lévi-Strauss’ definition echoes that of Gilman, and both find the definition of race to be inextricably bound to an individual’s definition of their own “racial” group-identity.

What Came First, Racism or Race?

As fleeting as a definitive definition of race may be, that of racism is also ephemeral. Regardless of how definable race and racism are, their physically violent and emotionally damaging toll on racialized human beings is historically evident. What isn’t immediately obvious, however, is the process of the social construction of racism and race, and whether one was the product of the other or if both sprang up concurrently. W.E.B. Du Bois – the infamous 20th century African-American scholar, civil rights activist, and NAACP co-founder – referred to what we now conceive of as African American racism as “modern color prejudice.”  

He interprets this prejudice as “the child of the American slave trade and the Cotton Kingdom.”  

Du Bois attributes American color prejudice to the economic system of exploitative slave labor, asserting that racism was constructed by the slave trade itself, and the commodification and dehumanization of individuals based on their physically “othered” status that rendered them immediately recognizably different from predominantly European-descendant, slave owning Americans.

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13 Ibid., 119.
Du Bois believes the true beginning of racism as explanation for forcing Africans into slave labor was in the mid 19th century, when “the recognition of the value of black slave labor” begot “a determined, even though partially unconscious, effort to prove scientifically the essential inferiority of Africans.” This theory argues that the racism – or modern color prejudice – that characterizes white America’s exploitation and oppression of Africans preceded the actual historic fact of the trans Atlantic slave trade, rather than racism being used as an initial justification for the systematic enslavement of Africans. In The Souls of Black Folk (1903) Du Bois argues “to regard human beings among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends” begets color prejudice by objectifying and dehumanizing African Americans, valuing them only for their usefulness as a tool for labor, from which white America benefits.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, American author and journalist, considers these questions in his book, Between the World and Me (2015). Coates defines the Western European centered conception of racism as the offspring of presumed natural, scientific, physically embodied racial difference and inferiority which ignores the actual lives and histories of oppressed, racialized groups, including his own lived experience as a Black man in America. Coates argues, using metaphorical language similar to that of W.E.B. Du Bois to refer to race and racism as child and parent,

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14 Du Bois, Black Folk: Then and Now, 119.
Race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming 'the people' has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy.\textsuperscript{16}

Coates’ argument that race is constructed by racism is grounded in the history of racism itself, specifically the racial hierarchy constructed by the violent exploitation and dehumanization of Africans forced into slavery by Europeans and North Americans. Thus, racism enacted towards African Americans must be considered in its specific historic contexts rather than collapsing it into a broader category of racism. The numerous manifestations of racisms are overwhelming and difficult to tackle in their entirety, but distinguishing between the violent history of oppression and exploitation of specific groups is integral to properly studying and thus learning how and why racism emerged and has persisted as such a powerful and destructive force throughout history.

Du Bois also argues that those who wish to identify the beginnings of color prejudice must look “not to physical or cultural causes, but to historic facts.”\textsuperscript{17} As Du Bois explains, scientific racism has been invoked both as an “explanation” for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and to assert the erroneous racial superiority of a dominant group over a subservient, othered group. Du Bois and Coates refute this apologist perspective of race and racism by arguing that the social construction of race was created as an explanation for racism, one based on pseudoscience geared

\textsuperscript{16} Coates, \textit{Between the World and Me}, 7.
\textsuperscript{17} Du Bois, \textit{Black Folk: Then and Now}, 125.
toward the advancement and profit of the group that considered itself racially superior.

Critics of the aforementioned definitions of race may contend that there is no difference between ethnicity, culture, and race. However, for our purposes, it is helpful to distinguish between these seemingly interconnected strands of identity. In *Racism: A Short History* (2002), renowned race scholar George Fredrickson asserts:

> It is when differences that might otherwise be considered ethnocultural are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable that a racist attitude or ideology can be said to exist.\(^\text{18}\)

Thus, race is constructed by the perception of unalterable difference of a racialized group as observed by a dominant – and usually “white” culturally coded group or individual.\(^\text{19}\)

Fredrickson further defines racism as extending past a simple theory of human difference; “it either directly sustains or proposes to establish a racial order, a permanent group hierarchy.”\(^\text{20}\) Fredrickson, similar to Coates, refers to the intended construction of racial “hierarchy” as a central component of racist ideology. Thus, successfully implemented racism is actualized by the construction of a racial social hierarchy in which racialized groups are at the bottom so that


\(^{19}\) Definition I endeavor to stay faithful to in my exploration of whether or not Jews have historically been racialized.

white groups who were originally lower in the social hierarchy are automatically uplifted just by virtue of their physical appearance, genealogy, and biological belonging to a “superior” race.

Historians Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler delve into whether racism should be considered an ideology or intentional, embodied action in the co-authored introduction to *The Origins of Racism in the West* (2009). On whether racism is an attitude or a concept, they state that “it should be regarded as an idea that leads to and justifies certain attitudes” rather than simply an ideology. They further define racism as “a combination of group hatred and an extensive mechanism justifying such hatred as rational and based on an objective reality… ideology which claims to be based on scientific truth.” The historians’ identification of racism’s attempted basis in “objective reality” is integral to this definition. The use of pseudo-science to justify racism has historically been a powerful tool used to ostracize, deport, and destroy the lives of countless racialized individuals.

Many racist agendas have included at least a pseudo-scientific element. Science is the honorable, scholarly quest of those who dare to discover the secrets of the universe. Historically, it has been a highly regarded pursuit, as individuals who make important scientific discoveries often change the world around them and are nationally celebrated for their contributions to science. Thus, the true

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22 Ibid., 1.
danger of pseudo-scientific racism is not its potential for making important – and possibly racially divisive – discoveries, but rather its ability to convince the masses that racism has an infallible, logical, provable scientific basis. The very aspects of science that ennoble it as a discipline have enabled racism to shroud itself in a veneer of rationality. However, scientific justification alone does not a racist movement make. It truly takes the dissemination of genuine belief in the racial difference of human beings to fuel a racist movement.

Do Jews Count As a Race?

There is no straightforward answer to this question. The most frequent response is perhaps the most obvious: “Jews are a religious group, not a race.” While this is technically true, Jews have been racialized and oppressed due to their identity throughout history in ways that surpass simple religious persecution. Furthermore, many contemporary secular Jews consider their Jewish identity as derived from a feeling of belonging to a cultural peoplehood rather than to a religious group. Before Jews were a religious group, they were a “people.” Biological anthropologist Melvin Konner, author of *The Jew’s Body* (2009) argues:

The people came first. Call them Israelites, Hebrews, or what you will, they existed long before the Temple did, and before the laws of the Temple were set forth.\(^\text{23}\)

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While this explanation seems rather self-explanatory, it describes the oft-ignored duality of Jewish identity as a people that subsequently formed an organized religion.

Konner describes 21st century “liberal” Jews’ disproval of the concept of the existence of a genealogical Jewish race, and responds with his own belief that “the practice of Judaism has historically overlapped with a population that can, to some extent, be genetically defined.” Konner’s anthropological approach demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of studying historical racism and the process of racializing groups based on visible, unchangeable, physical characteristics. However, for all his discussion of the physical bodies of Jews, Konner does not explicitly use the word “race” to describe what he instead deems “Jewish peoplehood.” His careful choice of words distinguishes Jews from other racialized groups. This begs the question: if Jews are not a “race,” what are they, and why have they been consistently persecuted as a racialized group?

Early Christians shared Konner’s conception of a Jewish racial community. In fact because they were – for all intents and purposes – biologically “Jewish,” early Christians sought to distinguish themselves from Jewishness in order to establish themselves as an enlightened, superior people. Denise Buell, a scholar of religion, argues that early Christians racialized religion, and cites Christian texts from the late first thorough the early third centuries which encourage converts to

24 Ibid., 238.
conceive of Christianity as more than just a religion, but rather “a transformation from one descent, group, tribe, people…to a new and better one,” situating themselves in direct opposition to their Jewish ancestry and asserting their newfound, Christian superiority.26 Thus, entering the Christian community linked individuals by a newly formed, shared ancestry as descendants of Jesus – and therefore God.

Buell cites Clement of Alexandria’s27 late second century interpretation of the blood Christ shed as “the pain and blood of childbirth” thus blurring “distinctions between ‘religious’ and ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ belonging” through allusion to the birth of a new people.28 The primary motive of early Christians’ self-racialization was to assert their supposedly essential, biological difference from Jewishness. Although it is widely known that Jesus and his first followers were Jewish, early Christians felt a desperate urge to categorize themselves as both religiously and ancestrally different from Jews. By default, Jews became “othered” through refusal to convert to Christianity. So, if Jews were pigeonholed as distinct from their genetic – yet Christian – brethren, due to an early Christian desire to differentiate themselves, it begs the question:

Is It Possible to Be Racist Toward a Jew?

27 Clement of Alexandria was a Christian theologian (b. 150 AD Athens, Greece; d. 215 AD, Jerusalem, Israel).
Many individuals might answer, “Well, sort of; that’s called anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism, right?” George Fredrickson distinguishes between anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, and racism:

Anti-Judaism became anti-Semitism whenever it turned into a consuming hatred that made getting rid of Jews seem preferable to trying to convert them, and anti-Semitism became racism when the belief took hold that Jews were intrinsically and organically evil rather than merely having false beliefs and wrong dispositions. \(^{29}\)

*Anti-Jewish racism* – my chosen term to refer to the ideology behind the racialization and subsequent assertion of unalterable evil and inferiority of Jews – extended far past religious persecution. It is important to distinguish anti-Jewish racism from other forms of racism because it is a distinct historical phenomenon that, while it bears some resemblance to other racisms, is truly original in both its historical precedent and its non-linear implementation throughout time. The Spanish Inquisition was a terribly tragic example of mass-extinction of Jews on the basis of the presumed unchangeably malicious, dishonest nature of Jewish *blood*, regardless of their conversion to Christianity.

**A Bloody Distinction**

The Spanish Inquisition’s *official* focus was to achieve total religious conformity and eliminate all those who “deviate” from true faith. This nearly impossible-to-achieve goal resulted in the active search for Jewish individuals,

including converts to Christianity, rather than simply deeming Jewish all those who practiced Judaism. This departure from anti-Judaism, or persecution of Jews based solely on religious grounds, was one of the first steps towards anti-Jewish racism.

Alain Corcos, a survivor of the Nazi regime in France and scholar of biology and Jewish studies, extensively researched the Inquisition’s persecution of Jews. Just like Fredrickson and many other scholars of race studies, Corcos distinguishes between anti-Judaism and anti-Jewish racism. He believes that conversos – genetically Jewish converts to Christianity – were “persecuted not for what they believed, but for being descendants of Jews – which is racial persecution.”

Corcos differentiates between the extermination of conversos and the religiously driven murders of Spanish Jews as racism and religious persecution, respectively. European historian Max Hering-Torres also describes the process of labeling “biologically Jewish” Spanish converts to Christianity conversos. Unlike Corcos, Hering-Torres argues that the legal definition of Jewish converts as conversos was “formulated in order to make visible what was no longer visible: their past…their origin, which could only be traced in terms of blood.” This fear of Christian – or white – passing Jews did not disperse after the Spanish inquisition but in fact persisted throughout history.

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The Spanish and Portuguese doctrine of *Limpieza de Sangre* – *limpeza de sangue* in Portuguese – or purity of blood, asserted that “Jewish...blood was inferior to Christian [blood]; the possession of any amount of such blood made one liable to heresy and moral corruption.”\(^{32}\) The association of Jewish blood and “moral corruption” instilled the belief that Jews were fundamentally evil, dishonest people who necessitated annihilation in order to protect Christian society from their treachery. Thus, during the deadly Inquisition, even Jews who converted to Christianity were believed by “Old” Christians to possess impure blood and be incapable of ever becoming truly Christian. Fredrickson argues that the persecution of Jews on the basis of their difference of blood was, in fact, an early form of racism. He explains,

> The Spanish doctrine of purity of blood...represented the stigmatization of an entire ethnic group on the basis of deficiencies that allegedly could not be eradicated by conversion or assimilation.\(^{33}\)

This differentiation of individuals based on perceived unchangeable, internal, biologically negative characteristics distinguishes racism from religious persecution. Spanish and Portuguese Jews could not simply escape from life-threatening persecution by converting to Christianity – their Jewishness was


intrinsically and unalterably within them. Fredrickson concludes his discussion of the inherent, recognizable racism of *Limpieza de Sangre* by explaining the doctrine’s effect on the history of race:

When the status of large numbers of people was depressed purely...because of their derivation from a denigrated *ethnos*, a line had been crossed that gave “race” a new and more comprehensive significance.\(^{34}\)

Careful consideration of the Inquisition’s persecution and murder of Jews allows us to consider the connotations of considering Jews a race. Other scholars concur with Fredrickson’s assertion of the deeply racist ideology of the Inquisition’s *Limpieza de Sangre*.

Hering-Torres identifies *Limpieza de Sangre*, the Inquisition’s legal disenfranchisement, persecution, and murder of Iberian Jews who converted to Christianity to be “a colonial strategy of racialization because it codified social relations in a hierarchical forms by means of corporal and cultural symbols.”\(^{35}\)

Thus, he distinguishes this historical act as racism rather than anti-Judaism because the people themselves were considered inherently unchangeable, despite their attempts at conversion and assimilation.

Hering-Torres identifies the *Limpieza de Sangre* doctrine as “an incipient juridical concept” in the mid 15\(^{\text{th}}\) century, which spread through institutions with

\(^{34}\) Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 33.

\(^{35}\) Hering-Torres, “Purity of Blood,” 12.
the explicit “consent of both the King and Pope.”36 Thus, it seems that although the official statutes of Limpieza de Sangre were slow to be legally implemented, the doctrine’s ideology had a strong effect on the Iberian conversos who had reason to fear for their lives as well as their societal belonging. The actual laws of Limpieza de Sangre required purity of blood “for holding political and ecclesiastical office, to be a judge, or an educator” and required “certificates of ‘purity’ as proof that they did not have Jewish…ancestors.”37 Thus, those of Jewish descent – though not necessarily religiously Jewish – were systematically excluded from legal, political, and civil professions. This further separated them from ethnic Christian society and distinguished them as unworthy of the honors of contributing to and making decisions for their country. The conscious creation of a racial hierarchy, which dehumanized converted Jews and regulated them to an inferior civic and social status, is a central tenant of legally enacted racism.

It is indisputable that Jews share a common historic/genetic origin with early Christians. Yet, a long history of Christian assertion of superiority over Jews coupled with the desire to differentiate the new religious community resulted in the racialization of Jews as the “other:” a different, fixed racial category, a perception that unfortunately persisted long after the Spanish Inquisition.

37 Corcos, The Myth of the Jewish Race, 39.
Chapter 1: Race as Dichotomous Human Construct

The Quest for Racial Purity

Moses Hess, a German-Jewish revolutionary and political theorist wrote—long before Nazism—in *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862):

Even baptism will not redeem the German Jew from the nightmare of German Jew-hatred. The Germans hate less the religion of the Jews than their race, less their peculiar beliefs than their peculiar noses...the Jewish type is indestructible.\(^ {38} \)

Although arguments have been made to the contrary, anti-Semitism was prevalent in Germany before the Nazis came to power. In fact, Hess’s excerpt demonstrates that the perception that Jews were a distinct *race* was prevalent in European intellectual circles long before Nazi legislation defined them as internally, biologically distinct. Jews were go-to scapegoats for many of Germany’s problems. The catastrophic impact of World War I on Germany led to the widespread—though unsubstantiated—belief that Jews were responsible for the defeat by undermining the war effort. This coupled with other factors—such as the belief that Jews were responsible for the dire economic depression as well as for taking German jobs—led to a rapid rise in German anti-Semitism.

When Hitler became the chancellor of Germany, he brought his deeply anti-Semitic ideology as well as a dream of creating a totally “Aryan” nation with him into office. In 1933, shortly after Hitler assumed power, the first major law to

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curtail the rights of Jewish German citizens was the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. This law excluded Jews (and other political undesirables) from civic professions including being judges, teachers, professors, and other government positions. This was the first step in a larger plan to extract Jewish individuals and their influence from Aryan German society, and signaled the shift from Nazism’s intellectual anti-Semitism to true anti-Jewish racism. The exclusion of Jews from civil service professions – similar to that of Spanish Jews and Conversos from legal and civic professions during the Inquisition – thus signaled the beginning of the creation of a racial hierarchy in Nazi Germany. At this point in Germany, however, the definition of “Jewishness” was unclear and thus made it difficult to systematically oppress and exclude Jews from German society.

In 1935, Hitler passed the Nuremberg Laws, which included the Law on Citizenship and Race. This law deemed Jews “nationals,” rather than citizens of Germany and stripped them of all civic rights. Furthermore, it began the tricky business of defining who was or wasn’t a Jew. Article 2 of the Law on Citizenship and Race defined Jewishness by blood, and deemed “full Jews” those who had 3 or more Jewish grandparents as well as those who belonged to the Jewish religious community. They were distinguished from Aryan German citizens who were “of German blood or racially related blood.”[39] The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor was also part of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws. This law was driven

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by the desire to purify Germany’s Aryan stock, and forbade marriage as well as extramarital sexual intercourse between newly defined Jews and those of German blood. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor punished violations of these prohibitions with imprisonment, hard labor, and fines. The law was inspired in large part by American racial laws prohibiting racially mixed marriage as well as miscegenation.

James Whitman, a historian and legal scholar, posits that Hitler, and other Nazi officials, regarded America as “the country that had achieved the ‘fundamental recognition’ of the historic racist mission that Nazi Germany was now called to fulfill.” Inspired by American racial law which segregated African Americans and Western European – or “white” – Americans as well as the very exclusive and undeniably racist immigration laws of the early 20th century, Nazi officials were emboldened to construct anti-Jewish legislation. However, they did not directly draw from American racial law, as they deemed some aspects of it, such as the “one-drop” rule of anyone with black ancestry being legally black, too harsh and overtly racist to implement in Germany.

The Lasting Difficulties of Defining Racism

American historian David Nirenberg argues that race thwarts succinct, exact definition because it is

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An idea that has produced so heterogeneous a set of discourses and outcomes – even when limited to its most modern forms, such as “race” and “racism” – that these can scarcely be subsumed into a “concept” or a “theory.” The history of this idea [race] is not the history of a train of thought…but that of a principle of locomotion so general that any account of its origins, applications, and transmission will always be constrained by our ignorance… we cannot solve this difficulty by cutting (“race did not exist before modernity”), by stitching (“race has always already existed”) or by refusing to talk about what cannot be clearly defined (“races do not exist and race does not have a history”).

Nirenberg concisely explains the impossibility of homogenizing race and racism, as these terms are simply placeholders for a plethora of ideologies and actions which cannot be contained within a single definition.

It is integral to study race and racisms as particular instances within a broader historical context but not to make indelible linkages for the sake of simplicity by association. However, it is also important to recognize the rhetorical impact of the words race and racism. Anti-Semitism is an insufficient term to describe historical instances of oppression and murder of individuals based on a perceived physical difference grounded in genealogical Jewishness because it does

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not acknowledge the racialization of Jews and the construction of policy and racial hierarchy that lessened their status as humans as well as citizens of whatever country they occupied. Using the term “anti-Semitism” sets anti-Jewish racism too far apart from other forms of racism. While all racisms are distinct and should be considered as such, the power of the term “racism” is necessary to imbue the history of violence towards Jews with the weight and importance that it deserves and demands.
Chapter 2: Kara Walker

Denying & Defiling the “Master / Slave” Dialectic

I was so sick of that dialectic being the guarantor of
My colored gal experience …
I began working this way because, conversely,
So much of that paradigm became
My experience
When I really wasn’t looking for it to do so
- Kara Walker 42

Kara Walker’s reputation precedes her. Anyone who keeps up with the
contemporary art world can instantly identify Walker’s unforgettable,
unapologetically intense silhouettes. Whether they’re life-sized and dance about a
white gallery wall or on a smaller, more personal scale, her work is impossible to
confuse with that of any other artist alive today. Before Kara Walker rose to her
current level of notoriety, a family move rendered her culturally isolated. When she
was just 13, her family relocated from Stockton, California to Stone Mountain,
Georgia, the birthplace of the KKK. For the first time in her young life, Walker
“experienced both overt racism and ‘Southern hospitality’ where, as she puts it, a
‘layer of sweetness coats everything. But scratch beneath the surface…” 43

Walker’s relocation fundamentally changed the path of her life by igniting
her fascination with American race relations and their origins in the country’s

42 Darius James, Kara Walker, “I Hate Being Lion Fodder: An
Interview/Conversation via Email Between Darius James and Kara Walker.”
Deutsche Bank Art Magazine, http://db-artmag.de/archiv/02/e/magazin-interview-
walker.html.
fraught and violent past. Walker took a year off between completing her B.F.A. at Atlanta College of Art and getting her Master’s at RISD. She worked at a bookstore, and it was there that she first encountered “Harlequin romance novels and material laden with the southern mythology of subjugation she had been ignoring, or trying to.”  

In graduate school, Walker followed her newfound interest in colonial history by reading books on early Americana, and by studying miniatures and portraiture. She became enamored with silhouette cutting, and believes it may have been accessible to nineteenth-century African American women artists, as it was an inexpensive and historically more feminine art form.

Silhouettes In Walker’s Work

While Walker has explored a multiplicity of mediums – including but not limited to metal, paint, and collage – her most immediately recognizable works feature her incredible talent for cutting silhouettes. Walker’s feelings on her silhouettes are best revealed in her own words:

It was really just this blank space you could project your desires into.

It can be positive or negative. It’s just a hole in a piece of paper, and it’s the inside of that hole. That was the bolt of lightning.

Walker’s bolt of lightning opened her art making to infinite representational and metaphorical possibilities. The process of creating silhouettes as well as their materiality is particularly compelling. The inherent violence of cutting through

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
material to create figures with negative space is tangible in Walker’s work. She “directs the violence against the medium itself, as a maneuver to formalize her doubt when it comes to representation.”

Walker’s silhouettes challenge viewers to read their meanings like an inkblot to reveal internal, subconscious racisms. Furthermore, the history of cutting silhouettes has close ties to physiogamy, the 18th-century pseudo-science that was revived in the 19th century to promote scientific racism. Physiogamists were drawn to silhouettes because they believed that “a person’s facial features divulge his or her natural, ‘national’ character and give evidence as to the individual’s moral disposition.” Thus, Walker’s hyperbolized, racialized figures dance around this pseudoscientific “fact,” laughing and pointing as they revel in their ironic fulfillment of racist ideology.

Walker’s violent, disturbing, but nonetheless gripping silhouettes force viewers to see things that have historically remained unspoken, tapping into “the guilt reservoirs that lie within her spectators.” Walker utilizes and subverts nineteenth-century racist cultural traces by creating self-consciously disturbing, unapologetically stereotyped figures, thus “remembering an anti-narrative that exists in a place before memory and beyond it, always familiar, yet resoundingly alien.” The gut wrenching feeling of postmortem guilt for the grueling oppression

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48 Ibid., 10.
50 Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable: the Art of Kara Walker*, 42.
and dehumanization of African Americans suffuses the minds of many white
viewers, impacting the way they conceptualize racist ideology. Although Walker is
the creator and primary “author” of her artworks, she forces viewers to take on an
active role in looking, recognizing, and reading her images. Thus, the viewer’s own
experiences and preconceived notions, beliefs, and biases co-construct the artwork
along with Walker.

_Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)_

Historically grounded racial stereotypes are central to Walker’s work, as
they simultaneously exist as “artifacts of Black history” and “the consciousness of
the dominant class.”51 This resonates with Gilman’s conception of the duality of
race; the positive community-building potential of race as well as the historically
violent trace of oppression justified by erroneous racial inferiority. In _Harper’s
Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)_ , Walker plays with this dichotomy.
For this series, Walker appropriated a series of wood engravings from the
aforementioned publication of the same name and “annotated” them with her
signature silhouettes.

_Harper’s Magazine_ was established in 1850, and in 1857, Harper Publishing
Company switched from being a monthly magazine to become _Harper’s Weekly_ .
_Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (1866)_ depicted numerous landscapes,
battle scenes, and portraits of prominent men as well as detailed essays on

51 Michael Corris and Robert Hobbs, “Reading Black Through White in the Work
important events and individuals during the Civil War. The volume was sent to purchasers in installments with the option of eventually having the complete volume bound. The Note to Subscribers, which appears between installments, asserts that this volume is

Universally recognized as the great PATRIOTIC STORY of the event. While breathing the deepest patriotism on every page it is at the same time written in an absolutely impartial spirit… It is the only COMPLETE general history of the war… It is History…a narrative of Facts written in the very spirit of truth.52

The choice of language is incredibly revealing. The emphasis placed in bold and capital letters on certain words demonstrate the intention to proclaim the factuality of the historical account within. The assertion of patriotism, impartiality, and completeness underscores the very problems with which Walker takes issue. Walker’s silhouettes undermine the original assertion of authority and truth by reminding viewers that the authors of these images were only telling their story, not the story of all Americans.

**Historic Context of the Illustrated Press**

The history of the illustrated press reveals that an environment of close collaboration was necessary to create news worthy engravings. These images are

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Capitalization of specific words and letters as well as words in bold are faithfully transcribed from *Harper’s* Note to Subscribers and are not my own doing.
incredibly ripe for appropriation because they formed 19th century Americans’ perceptions of the Civil War. Thus, they represent a widely disseminated fictional reality of the war which contributed to the construction of Americans’ memories of events that most were absent for but desperately longed to know about.

The Harper’s engravings appropriated by Walker were originally created with a very specific purpose in mind: to depict the events of the Civil War to those who cannot directly experience it themselves. American historian – and scholar of the 19th century illustrated press – Joshua Brown believes that, when published in newspapers such as Harper’s, “the engravings were the images the public viewed and it was their representation of events to which readers responded.”

Thus, in the mid 19th century, the images Walker appropriates were perceived as quasi-photographic representations of reality, affording viewers a window into the events of the Civil War. In the mid-19th century – a time when photography was just emerging – these engravings would have seemed just as realistic a depiction of the war as the images we see in newspapers today. If we consider these engravings as taking the place of often staged and composed photographs, a whole new realm of symbolic possibilities is revealed.

In the case of Walker’s appropriated Harper’s engravings, the archival engravings were created by white male artists. Scholars of the American publishing press engage with the process of producing illustrations for 19th century

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newspapers such as *Harper’s* from various angles. Historian of the antebellum era, Ford Risley, discusses the public’s desire for images of the Civil War; artists endeavored “to faithfully record the conflict for a public that craved news and information.” The intention to create realistic depiction of the Civil War adds to the aura of truth around the *Harper’s* illustrations. 19th century newspaper engravings depicting contemporary events – within which many readers’ sons, fathers, brothers, and friends were embroiled – were understandably in high demand.

In describing the process in the engraving studio, Risley states that between 10 and 15 engravers worked together to complete a single image. This complicates notions of authorship, as specific images within *Harper’s Pictorial History* are not ascribed to the work of any author(s). Furthermore, the collaboration of multiple artists on one engraving disturbs the notion that engraved depictions of the war were accurate and truthful representations of reality, as most (if not all) of the artists involved derived information from notes written in the field rather than by direct observation of the war.

In-the-field artists produced quick sketches as well as short, written accounts of what they observed and they then passed this information onto engravers who finished the work. Risley describes how about 30 “full-time sketch artists – called ‘special artists’ by the magazines – covered the war, the vast majority

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working for publications in the North.”

This identification of a relatively small number of illustrators centralized in the North gives the impression that a multiplicity of perspectives was not considered in creating illustrations of the Civil War, which would be consolidated into pictorial histories of the war.

The archival illustrations that Walker annotates are described by *Harper’s* title page as “Famous War Pictures,” which lend “incomparable value” to the volume itself. When these images were created, they represented current events. They have since metamorphosed into historically significant evidence, not just of the war itself but how it contributed to constructing perceptions of the Civil War. Joshua Brown identifies the crux of news illustrations of the Civil War: they must be considered, as Brown says, as a *social practice* of constructing images for wide public consumption rather than as factual evidence of historical events. He touches upon the historical context of the press during the mid-19th century, and quotes *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* from 1857 as remarking

> The ‘illustration’ mania is upon our people…nothing but ‘illustrated’ works are profitable to publishers while the illustrated magazines and newspapers are vastly popular.

During the image-hungry 19th century, illustrations from news publications were frequently cut out and hung around the average American’s home. Brown

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believes this common practice was not considered taboo because “the war prints’ appeal was topical and yet – steeped in heroism, nationalism, and romance – not necessarily unfit for the respectable home”\textsuperscript{58} This demonstrates the lasting impact of published illustrations of the war and the everyday role they played in constructing Americans’ views on the events that transpired, as well as their ability to transcend the publication within which they were originally published and to be appreciated for their aesthetic and narrative value.

Working closely with both the original \textit{Harper’s Pictorial History} from 1866 and Walker’s series allowed me to consider the stark material differences between the two. The original book is a personal object mass-printed in series yet nevertheless created for individual use. Individual authorship of engravings is impossible to discern, and the images lack authors’ signatures. Americans who chose to subscribe received installments of \textit{Harper’s Pictorial History} for a price that was affordable to many Americans. Walker’s work, however, is not as accessible to 21\textsuperscript{st} century Americans as \textit{Harper’s Pictorial History} was to 19\textsuperscript{th} century consumers. Her prints are framed and hung on the walls of well-known museums and galleries, separated from viewers by a frustratingly reflective pane of glass. They are considered culturally (and monetarily) valuable, untouchable objects. The contemporary prints are signed – an almost unnecessary precaution, as they are unmistakably works by Kara Walker.

\textsuperscript{58} Brown, \textit{Beyond the Lines}, 10-11.
On the engravings in *Harper’s Pictorial History*, Walker remarked, “these prints…are the landscapes that I imagine exist in the back of my somewhat more austere wall pieces.” The recognizably mid-19th century engravings are dated, and thus their defined temporal authority confronts the lack of temporal specificity of Walker’s silhouettes. The confusion that this juxtaposition produces is crucial to Walker’s work; she intentionally complicates the notion of historical temporal specificity to prompt deeper consideration of the repercussions and continuance of racial violence outside the boundaries of historic temporality.

Walker intentionally chose images void of scenes of slaves suffering, although images depicting slave labor and the Fort Pillow Massacre existed in the original publication. Instead, she predominantly chose images that had only one or two African American figures, or none at all. To make the original archival images her own after selecting them she enlarged them in order to render their details more visible to the naked eye. She then applied her impossibly opaque, darker than dark black silhouettes over the faded-black and gray original archival images.

In *African American Visual Arts: From Slavery to the Present* (2009), Celeste-Marie Bernier, scholar of African American history and art, describes Walker’s production of anti-histories and anti-narratives as contesting “the authority of official records to open up alternative spaces within which to create

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new panoramas of never-before-seen experiences.” In Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated), Walker undermines the authorial voice and privileged status of the publication’s assertion of giving the definitive account of the war by obscuring, obstructing, and re-shaping the original print’s narrative with her “annotations” of opaque, unmistakably black silhouettes. Bernier describes Walker’s work as Visual slave narratives, [which] wrest control from white editors, patrons, and audiences and access the uncut and unmediated emotional lives of her African American subjects.

At the very least, Walker’s silhouettes access her own interpretation of the emotions of her African American subjects. Walker invokes hyperbole to wrest power from the oppressive situations – represented “faithfully” by Harper’s – that elicited very real horror, fear, and dark, ironic humor in all too real antebellum era African Americans.

All 15 of Walker’s annotations include one or more silhouetted figures that appear larger than life when compared to the scale of human beings depicted in the original archival prints. Numerous silhouetted figures are fragmented, as if violently torn apart by an unseen force. Many figures reflect pain and suffering, and a few even appear dead. Some of Walker’s silhouettes obscure the archival

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61 Ibid., 218.
image beneath, demonstrating Walker’s conscious decision to privilege her opaque figures over the original print. Her reasons are unclear, but some prints from the series — *Confederate Prisoners Being Conducted from Jonesborough to Atlanta* (Figure 1) in particular — create meaning through obstructing the original archival image.

**Walker’s Annotations**

In *Confederate Prisoners* (Fig. 1), Walker screen-printed a large, opaque profile bust of a man in the center of the archival image’s composition. His hair stands up in small curls at the top of his head, protruding beyond the limits of the original engraving. From the tightly wound silhouette of his hair to the fullness of his open lips, this *literally profiled* man is unmistakably African American. His incredibly dark, opaque bust consumes a little over a third of the background image.

When one looks at the image published in *Harper’s* before Walker’s intervention, a different story is revealed (Fig. 2). Walker’s silhouette obscures a beggar holding a cup out to a haggard man in uniform, who seems to contribute. To the right of the presumably charitable Confederate soldier is a seemingly never-ending line of prisoners, many of whom wear crumpled uniforms and walk with canes. The original image seems sympathetic to the plight of these downtrodden Confederate soldiers. Walker, however, denies viewers of her annotated images the opportunity to see this humanized vision of the suffering Confederate army. By obscuring the original scene with the profile of an African American man —
perhaps a slave – Walker reverses the narrative and prioritizes the suffering of black bodies over Confederates who fought to keep them enslaved. However, this is only speculation, as the intent behind Walker’s choice of scale and placement of the silhouette is unclear.

In *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War*, the source image Walker used for her annotated *Confederate Prisoners* (Fig. 2) dominates an entire page. Just opposite is *Exodus of Confederates From Atlanta* (Fig. 4) another full-page illustration. The two images face one another, with the bottom of each composition merging into the book’s binding. Both images depict Confederate losses, a historic theme that Walker was perhaps drawn to a normative representation of “good” triumphing over “evil.” Walker’s annotations thwart simple, palatable conceptions of justice and righteousness by embodying the very Black bodies that had no say in their own existence.

*Exodus of Confederates* (Fig. 3) is a mind-boggling maze of positive and negative space. Similar to the aforementioned *Confederate Prisoners* (Fig. 1), Walker’s silhouette of a young girl’s profile bust aesthetically dominates the original print. While the silhouetted girl looks towards the right side of the print, her hair curls towards the left. Walker accentuates the profiled girl’s hair – which twists and turns in abstract undulations – to articulate clearly the integrality of her curly hair to her African American identity. Although she is more racially ambiguous than most of Walker’s other figures, her curly hair and full lips – two details rendered ambiguously yet distinct profile – suggest that she is African
American. The top of her head and the smooth chest of the silhouetted girl’s profile extend past the linear boundaries of the original print, breaking free from the implications of its constraints.

If one looks carefully at the oddly shaped negative space within the girl’s silhouette, a second profile – that of a man – appears. In contrast to the girl’s profile, he looks to the left. Where the curves of the girl’s neck and chest are smooth, his are jagged and harsh. His full lips – by now a familiar indicator of African descent – hang ajar, while hers are more politely pressed together. His formal roughness provides a perfect foil to her captivatingly smooth appearance. Walker carved his profile from within the girl’s silhouette, creating a window into the original print. Like all frames imposed on a view, Walker’s negative space both obscures and reveals elements of the original archival image, wrestling narrative control from its original creators.

Within the man’s profile emerges a strange scene. Isolated from the context of the rest of the archival image, this snippet depicts a tree hanging over a Black man straddling a strange, disembodied mound. The tree – dark and clearly distinguished against a light gray sky – immediately catches the viewer’s eye. The undulation of the tree’s leaves and branches echo the silhouetted girl’s curls, creating a circular energy which connects the back of the girl’s head to the forehead of the man created within her. Walker’s decision to tightly frame a Black man with an ominous tree right above him may refer to the violent history of lynching.
The Black man in the center of the composition is framed by Walker’s imposed negative space as well as the white faces surrounding him. A white man stands below him, and other white faces appear farther down, as if they are emerging from the ragged edges of the inner profile’s neck. These figures are much smaller than those on either side of the silhouetted girl’s profile, but Walker’s annotations thwart the original image’s attempt at three-dimensional depth by obstructing the recession of the scene. However, Walker’s silhouettes do more damage than simply flattening the original archival image. The large silhouette of the girl’s profile obstructs numerous interactions – visible in the archival image – by removing one figure from each of three distinct points of interest.

*Harper’s Exodus of Confederates From Atlanta* (Fig. 4) depicts a chaotic yet clear narrative of a community packing their lives into wagons covered with white fabric covers adorned with black letters which spell “U.S.A.” The formerly central Black man sits atop a large, rounded horse-drawn carriage while two white men shove an article of furniture up towards him. Unlike Walker’s print, this man is not the central focus of the archival image, and almost recedes into the background without Walker’s disruptive silhouette. Right below the black figure is a white family of four including a mother, father, child, and a formerly obscured grandparent in a rocking chair. In the right foreground, a confederate soldier – yet another figure that Walker omitted through the addition of her silhouette – gallantly tips his hat to greet two women.
Chapter 2: Kara Walker

The most striking interaction that Walker interrupts with her silhouette occurs in the left foreground. Two Black boys gleefully dance together, each with a bare foot in the air. The dancing boys express their youthful exuberance amidst an otherwise stressful and somber scene. The curls of Walker’s silhouetted ponytail obstruct the boy to the right, leaving the boy on the left dancing alone. In Walker’s *Exodus of Confederates* (Fig. 3), the isolated Black child seems as if he is running away or even clenching his fists in preparation for a fight. Robbed of his companion, he is on his own, face-to-face with an unfamiliar black shadow twice his size. By obscuring the interactions of three different central foci, Walker confuses the original image’s narrative and elevates the Black man on the wagon to center stage.

I believe that Walker’s recurring trope of standalone profiles has to do with Bernier’s astute observation of Walker’s “concern with lost histories…visual narratives of decapitation and dismemberment.”62 Walker’s silhouetted profiles, such as those in *Confederate Prisoners* and *Exodus of Confederates*, disrupt the archival images’ coherency through their explicit existence as self-conscious artistic representations of individuals rather than realistic depictions of human beings in action. Walker’s careful obstruction of figures interacting with one another creates a disjointed scene that refutes the archival image’s assertion of truth. Walker obscures the little boy dancing with the boy on the left to wrest the ability of white male artists working for *Harper’s* in the 19th century to depict happy, young, Black

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bodies as pleasurable entertainment for predominantly white readers. In both
*Confederate Prisoners* and *Exodus of Confederates*, Walker exaggerates the prints’
materiality by placing undeniably two-dimensional silhouettes on top of more
nuanced attempts at depicting spatial reality.

Most of Walker’s annotations simultaneously obstruct and interact with the
original archival images. *Alabama Loyalists Greeting the Federal Gun-Boats* (Fig. 5)
is a prime example of Walker’s deconstruction of the appropriated images through
obscuring and revealing details through the figures of her silhouettes. The
silhouette of a woman in *Alabama Loyalists* thwarts understanding of its
background image while aesthetically mirroring the figures within. This feminine
silhouette is just as drastically racialized as the man in *Confederate Prisoners*. She,
too, has rather stereotypically full lips, and her mouth is slightly ajar. Her body is
voluptuous and sexualized; the outline of a nipple is visible just below her front
arm.

The silhouetted woman’s clothing is tattered, and the edges of her skirt
appear sharp, reminding the viewer of the inherent violence of Walker’s artistic
process of cutting silhouettes. Her bare feet are rendered in exquisite detail for a
silhouette, humanizing her while also demonstrating her probable identity as a
slave. The only other barefoot figure in the image is that of a small African
American boy on the far right of the archival image. He crawls on the floor and
gazes towards the silhouetted woman who should be invisible to him. He is
completely alone, and Walker’s insertion of the female silhouette gives him a belated beacon to follow.

Walker’s woman wears a bandana tied in front to cover her hair, striking a parallel between herself and the only other visible African American woman in the image, just to the right of the silhouette’s behind. The non-silhouetted woman runs towards an invisible boat, clutching a plump white child close to her chest. This woman, likely also a slave, wears shoes and a finer dress than that of the silhouette, but their similar stances as well as their headwraps aesthetically connect them. Headwraps as a means with which women tie back their hair has become a recognizable symbol of African American women. It has metamorphosed over time from its origins in sub-Saharan Africa to its unfortunate status as a compulsive uniform of enslavement imposed on African slaves by 19th century white overseers. Ultimately, much like the images appropriated by Walker, the headwrap was reclaimed by women of African descent as a symbol of their courage throughout many years of hardship as well as their origins.63 Thus, Walker’s silhouette invokes both negative stereotypes and positive associations to prompt racialization of her figure.

A continuous diagonal line – beginning with the silhouette’s arm, traveling down to the white child, falling down the dark folds of the woman’s dress and the

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silhouette’s foot—points to the small African American child left to fend for himself. Regardless of Walker’s intention, her addition of a spectral, unmistakably Black woman directs the viewer’s attention to the neglect of a child in favor of what is likely a white master’s— and perhaps even the slave’s—child, a detail which may not have been noticed as clearly in the original archival image with its central visual narrative climax of bodies rushing towards visible boats (Fig. 6). Walker’s annotation obstructs the viewer’s comprehension of the original image while allowing individual segments of the image to speak for themselves, with the help of her silhouetted female figure.

From the top of her bandana to the spaces between her toes, Walker’s woman is opaque yet spectral, partially by virtue of being a silhouette. Although she is not transparent, she obstructs the viewer’s comprehension of the original image while not interfering or even interacting with the original figures. She is frozen in movement, as if interrupted while floating from the right to the left side of the archival image. While the crowd in the archival engraving rushes toward the water, the silhouetted woman takes advantage of the chaos to flee, breaking apart from the crowd and floating away from the invisible boats, to the left. She appears as if carried by the wind, her arms are light and airy, and her feet don’t seem to touch solid ground. She could also be kneeling, echoing the body language of the solitary child crawling behind her, perhaps even guiding him to safety. This is an unrealistic, hopeful fantasy, one that Walker’s annotations allow us to imagine.
Walker’s insertion of unapologetically *Black* figures into the original prints, fundamentally usurps the authorial voice and subverts the historical interpretation that the original prints have imparted for over 150 years. The silhouettes’ dark, impenetrable opacity as well as their bounty of symbolic possibility sear into the minds of viewers. One is rendered unable to look at the original engravings without Walker’s annotations superimposed over them. While many of Walker’s silhouettes obstruct the archival image beneath, prints such as *Deadbrook After the Battle of Ezra’s Church* (Fig. 7) and *Buzzard’s Roost Pass* (Fig. 8) rely on their interactions with the original images beneath to construct their symbolic significance. *Deadbrook After the Battle of Ezra’s Church* is particularly striking once you “read” Walker’s annotation and realize exactly what she has depicted her silhouette doing.

Walker employs a visual lexicon of recurring metaphors throughout her work. These repetitive symbols are at once disturbing and deeply resonant. “Shit” is one such metaphor. Walker utilizes excrement to represent the “trauma of slavery” as well as to depict retaliatory yet mocking crude act of “violence” which inflicts no true pain on its victim.64 Walker depicts Black figures evacuating their bowels – and thus the trauma, violence, and oppression that they experienced, processed, and compressed – in order to focus “attention on detritus and debris.”65 By depicting racist ideology, suffering, and exploitation as waste, Walker thereby reclaims power

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64 Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable*, 49.
from these traumatic memories and exposes the ways in which official histories have been cleaned and scrubbed to appear honorable and noble. Walker’s silhouetted representations of Black bodies shitting is a disturbing yet powerful act of defiance against the dominant authorial voice of history which privileges the perspectives and experiences of white men over the groups they’ve deemed “other.”

Walker’s annotation in *Deadbrook After the Battle of Ezra’s Church* (Fig. 7) is at first rather subtle. Unlike many other prints in the series, her silhouette does not dominate or obscure much of the original engraving. Walker’s silhouette squats almost inconspicuously on the left side of the image. Due to the foliage behind the silhouette’s head and upper body, it is difficult at first to read her race and gender. However, the closer one looks, the more details emerge. The crouching figure’s head is dotted with a handful of corkscrew curls, and the outline of a breast appears just below the figure’s arms. These detailed features carved by Walker identify the figure as an African American woman. The curvature of her spine culminates in a paunch just at her low back and belly. Under her skin, her stomach seems to unnaturally wrap around her body, as if its contents have seeped out and occupy both her belly and her lower back. Excrement drips from her bottom, bound to land on one of the fallen soldiers just beneath her.

This is perhaps the most direct, explicit interaction that Walker depicts between her silhouetted figures and the archival scenes they inhabit. Walker’s defecating female figure is larger than – yet almost the same size as – the soldiers depicted in the original print. She stands on the back of one of the soldiers, whose
arms and legs are splayed lifelessly on the ground. Although stands on this soldier, it seems as though her excrement is targeted to land on the face of yet another fallen soldier. Regardless of the exact recipient of the figure’s insult, the fact remains that these men are dead, and thus have lost all sensation and consciousness. They are not and never will be aware of the figure’s impending shit. Thus, Walker’s figure is performing this act for herself rather than as a physical insult to these men – or, perhaps, the insult is in fact aimed at the heroicized fallen soldiers. Regardless of the intended purpose of this action, the metaphorical value of the desecration of Confederate soldiers’ bodies is rich with symbolic possibilities. This action epitomizes Walker’s intention in this series: to contest and complicate the authority of these images as historical truth.

Walker’s Buzzard’s Roost Pass (Fig. 8) is the last print in this series. It is visually confounding, disturbing, and poignant. Although Walker’s annotations carefully interact with rather than obstruct the original engraving, her additions necessarily complicate the archival image’s narrative. Walker annotates the original image – which depicts Union soldiers firing cannons at Confederates located in the gap between two mountains – with silhouettes of dismembered body parts. Walker’s silhouettes are airborne and seem to reach away from one another, as if pulled apart by an invisible force.

In the middle of the image – and only obvious to inquisitive, observant viewers – are two severed breasts with ragged edges where they were once connected to the same body. The breasts are barely recognizable as such because
they are severed a grounding torso as well as from one another. The nipples point out towards the boundaries of the archival image, causing the breasts to appear as if they are in movement, flying away from one another, perhaps never to be reunited.

Walker’s decision to include the woman’s breasts – rather than any other body parts – in this composition is significant. In the antebellum era, “a slave woman’s breasts, along with the rest of her body, did not actually belong to her; rather, her owner controlled them.” Thus, although the silhouette’s body has been torn apart by presumably violent means, perhaps this fragmentation and destruction can be perceived as the physical reclamation of the sexualized Black female body. Above the breasts, emerging from the gap between two mountains – also known as Buzzard’s Roost Gap – is the laughing profile of an African American woman.

This disembodied head is unmistakably that of an African American woman because – just like in previously discussed prints – Walker racializes this figure. She endows the woman with plump lips, ajar and showing teeth in an active smile and small, thick braids in her hair tied at the end with youthful, girlish bows. One may question why Walker depicts this woman – severed through violent means as evidenced by the torn, limp edges of her neck – laughing as if she were just told a hilarious joke, when she should perhaps feel pain instead. Humor has historically been used as a tool to reclaim agency, and Walker’s invocation of laughter and humor thwarts oppressive histories by demonstrating the ability to overcome past trauma through laughter.

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66 Shaw, Seeing the Unspeakable, 44.
The laughing woman’s profile is neither undisturbed nor uninterrupted. Two shocks of negative space disrupt her otherwise opaque silhouette. These appear rather similar to the little white explosive bursts in the archival image. Walker invokes cannonball explosions within her silhouetted figure to link the African American woman to the cannon fire. Although she is a contemporary annotation, she is physically marked by the Union army’s explosive blasts from the past. This thwarts dominant Northern narratives of the Civil War as a battle between good (the North) and evil (the South). Walker’s silhouettes powerfully contest that the Union army’s impact on African American bodies was irrefutably violent and painful, despite the abolition of slavery. Walker’s addition of a fragmented Black female body – laughing through what appears to be unimaginably intense physical pain – onto a historic engraving of a heroic Union army victory disturbs the predominantly white, male, heroic depiction of the Civil War by visually and symbolically representing the exclusion of African Americans’ experiences in this history.

Just above the silhouette’s severed head, a disembodied arm floats within the atmospheric white matte of the original archival print. Stretching out towards the edge of the print’s white matte, this limb shares the same sharp frayed edges as the woman’s head. This suggests that it is perhaps part of her body, which paints the gruesome image of a woman blown apart with different body parts scattered in the wind. This physical and metaphorical destruction and fragmentation of the
Black female body at the hands of the Union army is perhaps Walker’s most explicitly radical attack on the authority of the historic archival print she annotates.

The silhouetted shreds of a female figure that Walker adds to this print – as well as all of the other silhouettes added to archival prints in this series – simultaneously exist as placeholders for the violence suffered by antebellum African slaves as well as a vessel for the contemporary impact of past trauma and continued racism on descendants of African American slaves. Or, perhaps, the Black woman’s dismemberment is a role reversal of the power play between Southern slave owners and African Americans, as Confederates were the intended targets of the archival Union canons. Because precise meaning is elusive, Walker’s print is left open to infinite interpretation. Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) directly contests the authority of Harper’s – white male constructed – account of an event particularly violent and traumatic for African Americans, whose very bodily autonomy and freedom hung in the balance.

**Fictionalizing History & Runaways**

Figures such as Walker’s violently fragmented yet somehow laughing woman in *Buzzard’s Roost Pass* do not strive towards the same level of authority and authenticity as the archival prints published by Harper’s. In fact, they lean towards the impossible, the absurd, the disturbingly inhuman. Walker’s invocation of racial stereotype as well as her visual lexicon of humor and pain work together to contort and disrupt the natural outline of human bodies. Thus, her fantastical silhouettes masquerade as humans to serve as opaque yet intelligently legible
signifiers for Black bodies. Walker’s injection of fiction into a dominant historical narrative contests the possibility of accuracy or truth in depicting multifaceted conflicts and events. The simultaneously historic and anti-historic nature of Walker’s work lends it an air of fantasy and timelessness, causing it to exist both within and without history.

Kara Walker is by no means the only contemporary African American artist to re-contextualize antebellum era archival materials. In his 1993 print series, Runaways, contemporary African American artist Glenn Ligon appropriated archival visual sources from the antebellum era to make a powerful statement about the continued racialization and oppression of Black bodies in America. This particular series stands in compelling contrast to Walker’s Harper’s Pictorial History. Ligon’s series emulates classified ads describing runaway slaves, but instead of using text from 19th century ads, Ligon asked various friends to provide descriptions of him to add under engravings of antebellum era African slaves. The first print in the series (Fig. 9) re-contextualizes a well-known engraving, Am I not a man and a brother? first published in 1837 alongside an antislavery poem. A symbol of abolitionism, the historical context behind Ligon’s appropriated image opens his work to a multiplicity of interpretations. While Ligon’s Runaways invoke the visual politics of racialization through appropriation of archival visual sources

created by white men in the 19th century, it stands in stark contrast to Walker’s work. Ligon’s re-contextualization of archival engravings pushes them into the present through his insertion of friends’ descriptions of him, yet he does not truly alter the original archival images themselves, but merely adds text – thus submerging them in a new context – below them. Walker, conversely, superimposes intensely racialized silhouettes, thwarting legibility of the original archival images she appropriates.

Contemporary art historian Gwendoln DuBois Shaw’s interpretation of Walker’s work was written one year before the artist created Harper’s…(Annotated) yet nevertheless captures the series’ essence. Shaw argues that Walker is Radically transfiguring and subverting specific sources culled from nineteenth-century American visual, political, and literary culture: from slave narratives and sentimental novels, from abolitionist propaganda and scientific documents. She is re-membering an antinarrative that exists in a place before memory and beyond it, always familiar, yet resoundingly alien.69

Shaw’s recognition of the inability to categorize Walker’s work within the boundaries of memory invokes the lack of specific temporal categorization of her work. Walker’s work defies temporality by appropriating and annotating historically specific engravings, which depict dated events as if frozen in time with opaque, temporally indistinct silhouettes. Although her figures often don

69 Shaw, Seeing the Unspeakable, 42.
antebellum-era dress, their narrative ambiguity and the absence of true historic belonging allow them to function as symbols of Blackness, thus confronting the normative conception of temporally specific historic memory.
Chapter 3: Shimon Attie

Revealing & Re-constructing Forgotten Façades

My boundaries between past, present, & future
are perhaps more porous than other people’s
- Shimon Attie

Shimon Attie – a Jewish American contemporary artist based in New York – creates multi-media series on topics concerning cultural identity, visibility, displacement, and historical memory. Attie describes the metamorphosis of his art practice as historically and site-specific to being about “literature, fiction, or visual poetry.” A photographer at heart, Attie photographs his otherwise ephemeral series (sometimes for documentary purposes or, in the case of the series I will discuss) to create new works of art, which stand on their own rather than merely echoing the original installations. His 1992-1993 series The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter was the first phase of a larger Holocaust-centered series, Sights Unseen (1992-1996). For Writing on the Wall, Attie projected a series of archival images from 1920 until 1932 onto architectural facades in former East Berlin. When I spoke with the artist about his work, Attie explained that he chose not to include images that were taken after 1932, because

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70 Attie & Bastry, Interview, 6.
71 Ibid., 4.
Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and “we all know what happened then, so it’s sort of what you don’t say [rather] than what you do say.”72

The street photographs used in Attie’s series depict Eastern European immigrants and their businesses in the Scheunenviertel district. When possible, Attie projected his chosen images onto the modern sites of their original locations, creating a visual synthesis between past and present, which is disrupted only by the ephemerality of the projection itself. Each projection only lasted a night – or two, if Attie felt like he “didn’t quite nail it the first night” – providing him with just enough time to capture his ephemeral installations in the form of lasting art photographs. If not for Attie’s images of the projections, the intangible materiality of the projection and their very short exhibition duration would have resulted in the ultimate loss of the artworks. However, evanescence is part of the meaning of this series.

Attie took highly saturated long exposures – lasting from 30 seconds to up to three minutes73 – on a large-format camera in order to “remove viewers and passerby…[and] show empty street scenes whose color and contrast is enhanced with filters.”74 The filters intensify and augment the colors of Attie’s photographs, amplifying the naturally striking contrast between his vibrant, colorful perception of contemporary Berlin and the monochromatic, black and white archival images

73 Ibid.
74 Elisabeth R. Friedman, review of Shimon Attie’s Writing on the Wall: History, Memory, Aesthetics, by Peter Muir, AJS Review 35, April 2011, 217.
he appropriates. In The Writing on the Wall, Attie used color negative film balanced for tungsten lighting, which produces color shifts with long exposure. The film’s materiality acted in collaboration with his own authorial intervention as the photographer to produce a carefully constructed chaos. Attie explains this process himself as “a beautiful confluence where I was letting the materials do what they do.”

Attie’s photographs of his installation serve a similar purpose to the archival images: they, too, replace the original subject by creating a tangible, enduring copy. More viewers of The Writing on the Wall have seen it through photographs than in its original physical manifestation as site-specific projections. The enduring art photographs thus become the “only remaining traces of the original installations.”

Thus, Attie believes his work “lives in an arena between the document... and the fine art object,” or a representational binary which converge in his photographed site-specific installations.

Images of The Writing on the Wall are exhibited in galleries and museums as fine art photographs, prompting the question of whether Attie’s installation and the resulting images both exist as the official Writing on the Wall series, whether his art photographs eclipse the original site-specific installations, or if the captured images are simply echoes of the originals. The relationship of Attie’s enduring photographs to the temporally ephemeral, site-specific projections parallels that of

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the appropriated archival images to their historic subjects. Attie works with and learns how to mold an inexact chemical photographic film technique to create multi-temporal, re-materialized images that reflect his artistic vision. In fact, Attie felt that he trained his eye to detect differences in how the film reacted to different temporal exposures through creating the durable, deeply moving images of *Writing on the Wall*.

**Ostjuden & the Scheunenviertel**

The original purposes of the images Attie appropriates is unknown, but as photographs, they document the indisputable existence of Eastern European Jews living in Berlin. Known as *Ostjuden*, they were highly concentrated in – and thus strongly associated with – a neighborhood called the *Scheunenviertel*, which translates to English as “barn quarter.” In the early 19th century, the 27 barns that comprised the quarter were destroyed and replaced with shoddily constructed apartment buildings. Although Jewish residents occupied the neighborhood since the middle of the 18th century, the Scheunenviertel was not perceived as distinctly *Jewish* until Eastern European Jewish immigration to Berlin increased around 1865.

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77 Ibid., 209.
By 1910 Eastern European Jews consisted of 15% of Berlin’s total Jewish population. By 1910 Eastern European Jews consisted of 15% of Berlin’s total Jewish population. Ostjuden were stereotyped as filthy, diseased, and backward, an image that was

Propagated not only by gentile anti-Semites, but also by western European and (above all) German Jews, who were anxious to distinguish themselves from their less fortunate and less ‘emancipated’ eastern brothers. The vilification of Ostjuden was not purely driven by anti-Semitic inclinations, but also by a desire to blame economic and political downfall on a scapegoat. During and after World War I matters worsened when “Berlin witnessed an influx of refugees from the east, many of them Jewish, who competed with the native population for scarce resources.”

Residents of Berlin declared a general strike on March 3, 1919. That evening, numerous businesses in and near the Scheunenviertel were looted, and many police stations were stormed. According to Geisel, “these events had absolutely nothing to do with the general strike.” This observation demonstrates the ease with which business and homeowners in the Scheunenviertel were

80 Ibid., 127.
82 Ibid.
victimized, looted, and destroyed by opportunists invigorated by poor economic conditions.

In November 1923, a riot in the Scheunenviertel resulted in the massive destruction of homes and stores, widespread theft and looting, and physical violence. Although the rioters chanted “out with Ostjuden” and targeted this community specifically, the riot began after a group of unemployed Germans were told that they would not receive any relief payments that day. Thus, the massive wave of violence that lasted for two whole days appears to have been an economic and political demonstration of unrest directed towards the eternal Jewish scapegoat, and who better to target than already impoverished, foreign Ostjuden?

Alfred Döblin, an assimilated German Jewish doctor and writer present for the 1923 riot, describes the shocking experience from memory: “crowds of people congregated on the corners; there were smashed windows, and wrecked shops…many contemplated another exile.” His use of language is revealing; he immediately associated the Jews standing on the streets in anticipation as “congregating,” adding an inherently religious double meaning to his observation. Furthermore, as most residents of the Scheunenviertel were known to be Eastern European Jewish immigrants to Berlin, his reference to their fear of “another exile” reinforces their identity as foreign entities whose belonging is conditional.

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83 Large, “Out with the Ostjuden,” 130.
84 Ibid., 123.
By 1933 Ostjuden accounted for 30% of all Jews living in Berlin.\(^5\) Few intentionally settled down in Berlin, while many ran out of money on their way to countries such as the United States and Palestine.\(^6\) Their poor socio-economic status coupled with their traditional Jewish way of dress and unwillingness to assimilate were apparently too much for Germans and culturally German Jews alike, who considered Ostjuden “stereotypes for Eastern Jewry, wherein anti-Semitism fused with anti-Slavism…the unreconstructed ‘oriental’ poor.”\(^7\) In fact, after Hitler became the Chancellor and subsequently the President (and thus assumed total control) of Germany, the first Jews who began to be systematically oppressed targets of violence were the Ostjuden. As early as a few days after the parliamentary election on March 5, 1933,

The first wave of Jewish arrests in Berlin began when brown-shirted SA storm troopers marched into one of the city’s largest Jewish quarters, the Scheunenviertel, and seized dozens of East European Jews.\(^8\)

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\(^5\) Alt, “Yiddish and Berlin’s “Scheunenviertel,”” 30.

\(^6\) Ibid.


Eastern European Jews were particularly targeted because of their ‘eastern’ origins, which many Germans and Nazis alike considered “a backward, uncivilized, and threatening unknown” wholly inferior to Aryan Germany. 89

Attie chose to project images of Ostjuden onto the sites that they disappeared from in order to give his series a “visual identity.” 90 Attie specifically chose images of Ostjuden because of their recognizably Jewish appearance. While searching for compelling images of Jewish street life, Attie discovered that most images of German Jews looked like non-Jewish Germans and lived in West Berlin, where “there weren’t even Jewish shops with Hebrew letters in the windows.” 91

Ostjuden, however, stood out against the backdrop of assimilated German Jews. The Scheunenviertel – an impoverished yet culturally coherent site of the creation of a strong Eastern European Jewish community– was a “visible reminder of their own collective past” as well as a weapon yielded by anti-Semites to decry the “disease, corruption, and…flood of refugees pouring into Germany” at the fault of Ostjuden. 92 The reference to the diseased nature of Scheunenviertel echoes the Nazis’ racist perception of Jews as a plague infecting Germany.

Attie’s images “remind the spectator” that the residences depicted in his projections “once bore a great deal more of life…than [the] dilapidated façade[s] 93

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89 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, 323.
90 Attie & Landau, Interview.
91 Ibid.
would otherwise reveal.”93 The Scheunenviertel district was left relatively
untouched by “unintentional preservation” and thus its buildings have endured in
more or less the same form as “when its Jewish residents were rounded up for
deportation.”94 The exteriors of the contemporary buildings depicted in Attie’s
photographs are dilapidated and wrapped in an epidermis of peeling paint. Their
decaying façades, though rough in appearance, endured the test of time, just like
the memories of the Jewish residents who once lived within their walls are
remembered in Attie’s Writing on the Wall. If Attie attempted to recreate this series
today, he would be met with possibly insurmountable difficulty. Most of the former
Scheunenviertel has become gentrified in the last two decades and is now a “hip,”
flourishing neighborhood. Many of the façades used in Attie’s photographs are no
longer recognizable due to the contemporary gentrified state of East Berlin. Thus,
Attie’s series preserves both the archival images as well as the appearance of the
former Jewish quarter in the early 1990s. The last few physical traces of Ostjuden
in the Scheunenviertel are gradually eroded by the passage of time.

The Archival Photographs

In order to create his stunning projections in East Berlin, Shimon Attie first
has to locate and select images to appropriate. Attie visited different governmental
archives such as the state and federal archives, Stats and Bundesarchiv, as well as
the city library for East Berlin, Stadtsbibliotek Ost to acquire archival images for his

93 Jeanne Wolff Bernstein, “Making a Memorial Place: The Photography of Shimon
94 Ibid., 354.
series. Attie also relied on press archives such as *Ullstein* and *Springer* and one family’s personal photographic archive for images of Ostjuden. When he visited an archive, he spoke with the archivist directly and asked specifically to see black and white photographs of Jewish street life. Attie engaged with the visual politics of identifying bodies as Jewish – not unlike that of Nazis or average Germans who denounced their Jewish neighbors – both by specifically choosing images that depicted “visible” Jewish bodies as well as by fastidiously locating their original dwellings and places of business.

Attie’s appropriated photographs elude distinct authorship, as their origins are equal parts known (researchable and/or identifiable by Attie himself) and unknown (images taken from obscure sources and/or Attie cannot immediately recall the names of the sources). In my interview with Attie, he identified a number of photographs from *The Writing on the Wall* as from the collection of Eike Geisel, a German polemicist, cultural historian, and journalist who had an enormous archive of photographs from the Scheunenviertel. Attie befriended Geisel and received permission to use his photographs for his series.

In 1981 Geisel published the first-ever book focusing specifically on the Eastern European Jewish ghetto, *Im Scheunenviertel*. Geisel does not see the quarter as a cultural haven for forgotten remnants of Jewish life but rather “a neighborhood that exemplified German xenophobia and anti-Semitism.”95 Geisel’s choice of which photographs to collect and subsequently include in his book was

an authorial decision – derived in part from his positionality as a German Jew born in 1945 – much like that made by Attie when selecting archival images for his projections.

After searching for and finally selecting images for *The Writing on the Wall*, Attie consulted maps of Berlin from 1925 – complete with old street names and lot numbers – to identify the contemporary physical locations at which the archival images were taken. Attie’s physical intervention in the origins of the archival images demonstrates the integrality of historic materiality to the images he chose to project. The archival photographs chosen and appropriated by Attie possess an aura of documentary modality. Although the specific purpose of these images is unknown, they fall into the genre of street photography, the aim being to capture the candid reality of a particular neighborhood and its inhabitants. Attie re-inscribes the street photographic / documentary purpose of these images by projecting them onto streets in the Scheunenviertel. Thus, the archival street photographs return to the streets from which they originated, albeit re-framed by a contemporary artist. The precise purpose of these street photographs of Ostjuden is just one of many mysteries surrounding the archival images Attie appropriates.

The anonymous individuals depicted in the photographs are further obscured by the lack of distinguishable authorship. Most of the archival images appropriated in his series lack a historically identifiable purpose or author. To Attie, the absence of authorship was neither important nor germane to his work, because he assumed most images were taken by anonymous press photographers.
The absence of any traceable authorship of the images prompts consideration of what happens when authorship disappears? Does the photograph stand alone, free from authorial context, or does this lack of origin hinder complete understanding of the image’s content? Regardless, the absence of authorship adds to the history of the physical visual object itself, and expands the realm of possibility for the image’s intended purpose. In the case of Attie’s Writing on the Wall projections, the images’ unknown origins become part of their materiality.

The lack of authorship of the appropriated archival images allows the photographs to float in a historical void of unspecified context and intent. We don’t know who took the photographs or what purpose the images were meant to fulfill. Attie intentionally chose images that he believed depict individuals, events, and narratives that have “fallen into oblivion.” He then consciously “tries to place them within the process of historical becoming.” Attie’s appropriation of these authorless records of Jewish individuals lends the original photographs a new function and historical identity.

Attie’s intention in creating the Writing on the Wall series was “to peel back the wallpaper of today and reveal the history buried underneath.” Attie’s work functions as a reminder and interpretation of what was lost as a result of the Holocaust, rather than as an unfiltered representation of the past. However,

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97 Ibid.
98 James E. Young, At Memory’s Edge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 70.
because the photographs prevail as some of the only surviving visual depictions of Jewish life in the Scheunenviertel just before the Holocaust, they endure – along with other forms of memory such as diary entries and oral histories – as our most reliable representation of this time and place.

Attie’s projections should be considered “simulations, not historical reconstructions.” Their value is not derived from the accuracy of their depiction of loss but rather by their ability to resonate with the viewer and portray how “loss itself is part of this neighborhood’s history, an invisible but essential feature of its landscape.” Although Attie could not actually reveal the past through his contemporary art work, his series functions as a remembrance of loss and the endurance of memory over time. The archival images ultimately serve as placeholders for the individuals and places they depict, almost eclipsing and encompassing their existence. Attie’s series functions as physical remembrance and depicts specific, albeit nameless, individuals and buildings.

The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter

Today, Attie’s Writing on the Wall consists of 16 vibrantly saturated and visually engaging photographs. The projected archival images are life-sized and some even depict larger-than-life figures. The majority of the photographs depict individuals – in fact, many of their faces are visible – but some are void of any human figures and simply depict the façade of a long-gone Jewish business. Today,

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99 Young, At Memory’s Edge, 71-87.
100 Ibid., 70.
the art photographs are often exhibited and considered individually as well as of part of the full series.

Attie’s photograph of *Joachimstrasse /corner of Auguststrasse: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Resident, 1931, Berlin*, (Fig. 10) is highly saturated and the projected image is incredibly well integrated into the composition of the photograph, causing it to appear rather realistic. In *Former Jewish Resident*, Attie projects an archival photograph of a man looking out of a window onto the second story of a building. Although his facial features aren’t immediately clear, he seems to look downward toward the street below him, rather than toward the photographer. The man peeking out of the window is dwarfed by a giant, white Star of David above him – which stands out against the dark background – and is framed by the two parallel lines of the window frame. His identity is clearly demarcated by the star affixed to his window: there is no mistaking him for anything other than a Jew.

The Star of David that labels the man as Jewish stands in stark contrast to the numerous crosses created by the surrounding windows’ grilles which divide each window into different panes. One could interpret the overwhelming dominance of crosses over the singular Star of David as symbolically illustrative of the dominance of the Christian, *Aryan* norm in Berlin over the Jewish minority. The prevalence of shut windows marked with a cross inadvertently symbolize both the contemporary, non-Jewish residents of this neighborhood as well as the Gentile
Germans in the early 20th century who allowed the Ostjuden – unassimilated Jewish immigrants to Germany – to be “othered,” oppressed, deported, and exterminated.

The white lines of the window frame in Former Jewish Resident extend upward and outward, breaking through the boundary of the image into the realm of reality. The parallel lines continue in the existing, dilapidated façade of the building. The appropriated image grants us a distorted, past view into the building itself: the window lines up perfectly with the lower section of the building’s contemporarily bricked-in window. Beyond the man and the decrepit building he peers out of is a sunset that paints bold, vibrant strokes of pink and purple across the sky. The window to the left and above the projection reflects the luminous, nearly fuchsia sunset. The vivid, colorful sky captured in Attie’s photograph contrasts with the monochromatic projected archival image, calling attention to the distinction between projected past and contemporary reality.

In Police Raid (Fig. 11), the projection blends less seamlessly into reality than in Former Jewish Resident, yet some architectural elements within the image still align with the contemporary building. Comparing the original archival image (Fig. 12) and Attie’s photograph of the site-specific projection reveals the artist’s decision to project an incomplete portion of the archival image. The figures in the original image are infinitely more legible and crisply rendered than in Attie’s site specific installation, where the figures on the right are segmented by the harsh horizontal line of the building’s façade. Attie excluded the far left two figures in the original archival image – a sharply dressed young boy, possibly Jewish, and another
German officer – from his projection. The intent behind this visual execution is unclear.

The archival image, depicted in Geisel’s Im Scheunenviertel is dated February 1920, well before Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The caption below the image imbues the scene with integral historical context:

House on Grenadier Street cordoned off during a search. Eastern-European Jews who had fled from the East were often arrested and taken to military camps outside of Berlin. In spring 1921 the unwanted foreigners were interned in the concentration camps that had been established for this purpose, Stargard and Cottbus.101

Although the caption does not reveal the author of the photographer or the intended purpose for capturing the image, it fosters deeper consideration of the historical context of persecution of Ostjuden in Berlin before Hitler came to power. Furthermore, the caption’s invocation of the displacement and internment of Ostjuden in concentration camps gives us a window into the violence suffered by German Jews well before the Holocaust.

Although the building number and street name have changed, there is no doubt that this building was the original site of the archival image. The geometrically carved wooden doors as well as the uniform large cement blocks of the building’s façade endured from when the archival image was captured in 1920 to the early 1990s. Although the projected window on the right lines up perfectly

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101 Geisel, Im Scheunenviertel, trans. Sickinger, 69.
with the contemporary window, the door in the archival image is transposed a little too far to the right of the actual door. The most striking discrepancy between projected image and architectural reality is the ghostly effect of the visibility of two unintelligible words carved into the lower portion of the modern building’s exterior through the transparent photographed figures. This explicitly demarcates the former residents of the building as unreal, remembered symbols rather than existing individuals.

The unrealistic effect of this image’s projection onto the building is exacerbated by the figures’ increased proximity to the photographer. Some of the figures’ feet are not visibly touching the real or photographic ground, making them appear ghostly and almost transparent. This visually destabilizing effect heightens the eight figures’ identity as long-gone, contemporaneously remembered individuals. The spectral appearance of the figures foreshadows the inevitable destruction of property and violence enacted towards Jews whose homes were raided. This photograph depicts just one of many assaults on Jewish families living in the Scheunenviertel.

The title of *Police Raid* is necessary in order for contemporary viewers to comprehend the archival photograph’s narrative despite the stark contrast between the German officers and the persecuted Jews. Although the Jewish residents are photographically captured awaiting the end of the raid, they stand with “proud self-
composure.” In contrast, the German officers wear formal uniforms and stand up straight, with their arms crossed behind their backs. The police uniforms take on grisly new meaning in historic hindsight, recalling other, later uniforms. The officers are clearly aware of their superior position of power in this circumstance, and their physical stance conveys this knowledge.

While most of the German officers turn away from the camera, all of the Jewish figures in the projected photograph gaze outwards at the viewer with a wary look in their eyes – they see us watching and standing idly by. They compel us to remember what occurred. Through looking at this image, we become complicit in watching the raid take place. However, we are intensely aware that we are temporally detached voyeurs with no real ability to intervene. This image in particular calls attention to the complicity of early 20th century Germans in allowing the early signs of injustice towards Jews to occur unquestioned.

The formerly mentioned caption of the archival image indicates that Ostjuden were sent to concentration camps before Hitler came to power, and thus framing the past as prologue. This image foreshadows the Holocaust yet also demonstrates that it did not exist in a vacuum: Jews were persecuted, oppressed, and displaced in Germany before Hitler came to power. We watch numbly as Ostjuden are frozen in time, knowing that they will suffer a cruel fate, which is implicitly evident in the photograph. Attie’s projection of this image onto its original site forces spectators to acknowledge the documented official violence

102 Bernstein, “Making a Memorial Place,” 354.
enacted against Jews, as well as their former belonging in a space, which was subsequently occupied by non-Jewish Germans after the ejection of Ostjuden.

In *Alte Schoenhauserstrasse 6: Slide Projection of former Kosher Butter Shop, 1930* (Fig. 13), language and content play a dazzling game of cat and mouse. An archival photograph fits cozily into the frame of a contemporary display window. The black and white projection features its own wooden frame, within which a window advertises the former business’ wares. Three words are stacked atop one another and are the brightest white in the archival image. The positioning of the words is striking, as “Butter” (both the German and English word for the oft-used dairy product) is the largest as well as the last word projected onto the window.

The very first word, “Kolonialwaren,” is a strange shape. The English translation of this half-ellipse is “Colonial products.” The bottom of the K begins at about the same level as the top of the second word and continues upward to form an incomplete ellipse then falls back down after reaching its highest point in the middle, framing the word below it from above. The middle word, “בּשר,” is written in Hebrew and translates to English as “meat.” The use of Hebrew to convey that this butter store also sold meat indicates that the sale of meat was directed towards those who would be able to read and understand Hebrew. The store was most likely Kosher, a fact that was useless to non-Jewish German shoppers but integral to the everyday cultural practices of Ostjuden.

Below the stacked words, the head of a young girl appears at the lower right corner of the archival image. Her features are hazy and difficult to read, but she
seems to look off towards the left side of the image, her gaze penetrating the photograph’s borders. She wears a white hat on top of her short, curly hair. Directly below her – as well as below the rest of the archival image – is what appears to be a train set. This interpretation of wooden blocks as a train set is supported by the German signage at the top of the contemporary store. Two German words, “Spielwaren” and “Modellbahn,” separated by a single dot translate to English as “toys” and “model Railroads.” Attie’s choice to project the archival image just above the bottom of the windowsill allows us to view the toy train set.

The miniature railroad – visible just below a visual trace of the racialized and ostracized Ostjuden community – resonates with the history of the Holocaust. Train stations outside of concentration camps were deceptively designed to appear as if they provided return trips. Often outfitted with fake clocks with unmoving hands – a stark metaphor for the halt of time in the lives of Nazis’ Jewish victims – these all too real railroads were the first step in the large-scale extermination of Jews. Attie’s intentional decision to include a view of this miniature train – meant to provide entertainment and joy to German children – reminds the viewer of the millions of Jews who were transported via trains to their ultimate demise.

Below the clearly advertised purpose of the store is the name of its proprietor, “B. Fenner.” While this name did not yield many useful results during my research, it is a certifiably German surname. Thus, although the exact identity of the subsequent owner of the former kosher butter store property is difficult to ascertain, his nationality as a German is translated through his name. Furthermore,
Attie’s choice to project the Jewish-owned butter store onto a site that became a German toy store immediately communicates the narrative of Jewish displacement and subsequent acquisition of formerly Jewish spaces by non-Jewish Germans.

Attie’s Mulackstrasse 37: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Residents, ca. 1932 (Fig. 14) is incredibly ripe for interpretation. The photograph of this site includes much of the surrounding urban landscape as well as the building upon which the archival image is projected. A tall, strangely shaped structure emerges from buildings on the left. Called the Fernsehturm, or TV Tower, this building begins as a thick columnar structure, which culminates in a bulbous, futuristic sphere. From the sphere, a thin column ascends upward becoming thinner and thinner like an antenna.

The Fernsehturm – created to house the GDR transmitter – is the tallest building in Berlin, measuring 365 meters. Construction began in the 1950s and was completed in 1969, and to this day the tower remains one of the most recognizable monuments in Berlin. The tower was intended to “demonstrate technological advance” of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) and has since become a tourist attraction.103 The inclusion of this tower in Attie’s photograph demonstrates the passage of time from the archival photograph from 1932 to 1992, the year Attie created his site-specific series.

Below the TV tower is a procession of residential buildings, pockmarked with illuminated windows in relatively regular rows. The line of buildings begins on the left side of the image and continues to recede into the distance as well as towards the center of the image until hidden by scaffolding. Beneath the buildings’ windows are ground-level storefronts, much like the display window in *Former Kosher Butter Shop* (Fig. 13). Between the foreground and the buildings in the background is a large pit of dirt, likely the result of an unfinished construction project. It looks as if a building was demolished but never replaced with another structure. Randomly spaced mounds of earth behind a chain link fence are all that remain of the former structure. This begs the question – what happened to the building that once existed on this site?

While that question may never be answered, the building in the foreground on the right side of the image – onto which Attie projects the appropriated archival image – suggests an architectural context within which we may place the demolished, invisible building. At the top of Attie’s 1992 photograph (Fig. 14) are three human-sized, second-story windows. They appear to have lost their glass panes, and each is divided into two equal bottom sections and two slightly smaller but equal top sections. Thus, similar to *Former Jewish Resident* (Fig. 10) each of the window’s grilles form a cross. The three crosses transposed onto the windows – as well as the spiritual significance of the number *three* in Christianity – imbue the windows on this façade with symbolic meaning. However, the Holy Trinity – in this photograph at least – appears dilapidated and ill cared for. The windows
appear to exude thin, irregular sheets of plastic or paper, which flit in and out of the building as if dancing between two different dimensions.

German words painted in white appear on a strip of the plain concrete façade below the windows; “Was der Krieg verschonte.” Translated to English, this message reads “What the War spared.” While the exact date of this graffiti is unknown, it can be presumed that it is dated after May 8th, 1945. The ruinous landscape and absence left by the demolished building echoes the tangible lack of a strong (Eastern European) Jewish presence in the former Scheunenviertel neighborhood. The dilapidated, possibly gutted – and certainly abandoned – building is quite literally what the war spared. Its Eastern European Jewish residents, however, were not spared. The archival image chosen by Attie leaves little doubt that the lives of the building’s occupants – or at least individuals who felt comfortable enough to sit on its’ stoop – suffered a cruel fate.

This is perhaps the most heart-wrenchingly harrowing photograph appropriated by Attie in the series. It depicts two children – one on the left appears to perhaps be 12 years old, the other around 8 years old. Bundled in many tattered layers, these two children sit on the stoop of the now decrepit building. The younger child gazes to their left, the viewer’s right, permeating the boundaries of the archival image, as if viewing Attie’s photographed surroundings within which he is immortalized. The older child sits with open legs bent at the knee, relaxed but gazing warily into the eyes of the photographer and, by extension, the viewer of Attie’s image. The older child’s projected feet extend past the building’s façade and
onto the street’s sidewalk, causing them to appear almost severed from his legs, as they are a different color and less opaquely visible than the rest of his body. This adds to the spectral nature of the monochromatic archival photograph compared to the very real, decrepit contemporary surroundings.

This is one of only three archival images chosen by Attie that depicts children. The youth of the subjects of the photographs, combined with their morose expressions, ragged clothing, and physical positioning of sitting on the street, elicits immediate sympathy from the viewer. Attie’s juxtaposition of the two spectral, morose children in the projected archival image with the graffiti and ruinous urban landscape creates an image teeming with contradictions between layers of memory, history, and reality.

In *Joachimstrasse 11a: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Café with Patrons, 1933* (Fig. 15) Attie projects a snippet of an archival image onto the arched doorway of a ragged building. Attie’s photograph provides a glimpse into the greater urban context of the image. To the right of the building is an unpaved, dirt alley with two dark, silhouetted buildings framing a theatrically lit building in the distance, creating an intense contrast between light and dark. In the upper right corner, a ghostly, white light – almost completely opaque at the top and fading to transparency – shoots towards the center of the image, forming a diagonal line. The white ray of light – perhaps emanating from an unseen streetlamp – dissipates as it moves towards the center, where it dissolves into complete transparency, marking the image with distinct yet ephemeral lines in the air. This spectral ray of light
appears almost as if it were the projection itself. However, because the source of the
light is not visible in the image’s frame, there’s no way to know its true origin.

Attie projected the archival image onto the two wooden doors of an arched
doorway located at Joachimstrasse 11a in Berlin. Google street view shows us the
contemporary state of the very same address featured in Attie’s 1992 photograph.
In the Google street photograph (Fig. 16), we see the recognizable arched doorway
and small-tile cobbled sidewalk depicted in Attie’s haunting long exposure
photograph. In this image, too, we see two men – their faces and thus their
identities blurred – effectively obscuring their identities. The dirt lot portrayed in
Attie’s 1992 image to the right of the building has since been paved over with
asphalt and concrete. The building’s façade itself has accumulated colorful,
unintelligible graffiti, scattered yet symbiotic, like stretch marks indicating slow
change over time. Although physical degradation has made its mark on this
building and its surroundings, they remain in the same recognizable state as in
1992. If I were born just 25 years earlier, The Writing on the Wall would have been
my only window into Berlin’s former Jewish ghetto.

Attie’s 1992 photograph of Joachimstrasse 11a (Fig. 15) is an immersive
viewing experience. A physical barrier stands between the projection and the
photograph’s authorial perspective, invoking physical distance and the tantalizing
impossibility of reaching into the photograph. Between the projection and the
perspective of Attie’s camera, just past the cobbled sidewalk, two horizontal lines –
formed by a long, partially painted wooden plank and a string of ephemeral white
and orange flags, blurred by their movement with the wind – segment the majority of the image. The long exposure photograph and the spontaneity of the wind at that moment in time collaborate to capture the flags in a blur of movement, imperceptible to the human eye without the aid of technology. Attie’s images allow time to seep through layers of reality and coalesce to show sites as containers of experience and history rather than solely deconstructable, malleable surroundings. The original archival image (Fig. 17) – taken from Geisel’s archive and reproduced in Im Scheunenviertel – depicts eight or nine men on a street, all wearing hats and coats.

The caption to this image in Geisel’s book translates to English as “Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) 1933. Sale of etrog (apple of paradise) and lulav (palm branches).” For those unacquainted with traditional Jewish holidays, Sukkot falls on the 15th of Tishrei on a Hebrew calendar – or sometime around September or October on the Gregorian calendar – and celebrates the end of the harvest. Thus, this photograph captures the first Sukkot celebrated by Berlin’s Ostjuden since Hitler became Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. To my knowledge, it is also the only photo used in The Writing on the Wall taken during Hitler’s time as Chancellor. Attie himself says that he specifically chose images taken before 1933, yet one seems to have slipped past his discerning eye.

104 Geisel, Im Scheunenviertel, trans. Sickinger, 97.
105 Unfortunately, I did not identify this particular archival image until a while after I interviewed Attie, so I do not feel that I can speculate as to how he mistakenly
The archival image (Fig. 17) is rife with historical significance and insight into the persistence of public celebration of Jewish holidays in Berlin just after Hitler became Chancellor. However, Attie only appropriates the far left portion of the original image, thus obscuring details that enable legibility of the archival photograph. Although Attie does technically depict a man holding etrog and lulav, the conversion of image to projection obscures these details, as the long stalk of lulav he holds fades into the lines of the wooden doors they are projected onto. If Attie had chosen to reveal the rest of the image, viewers who are acquainted with traditional Jewish holidays would immediately recognize the scene as one of preparation for Sukkot.

The archival image depicts a community coming together to celebrate a deeply culturally and religiously important holiday. While the men on the left and in the center of the photograph focus on procuring the lulav and etrog, two men on the right engage in conversation. This stands as a testament to the strength of the community of Ostjuden, as gathering to talk on the street is a sign of trust, cordiality, and desire to connect with other human beings. Attie chose not to depict this very humanizing interaction for a reason that has yet to be revealed. He may or may not have intentionally chosen to exclude a subtle but inherently violent detail included in the image: half of a white Jewish star drawn on the bottom left corner

chose this image when he intended to appropriate images of Ostjuden taken before Hitler became Chancellor.
of a store window, just barely visible on the far right boundary of the archival photograph.

This image depicts the brief moment in Hitler’s reign where German Ostjuden were ostracized yet still able to carry out the traditions necessary to retaining their cultural and religious identity. Crystallized in time, this photograph captures the impossible reality of Jewish street life in a swiftly growing Nazi state. The small, almost unassuming Jewish star in the corner of the store window foreshadows the violent reality that these observant Jews were destined to face. It is inscribed onto the building itself, yet only partially within the frame, as if it is just beginning to emerge.

**Materiality, Projection, & Resonance**

Attie’s visual preservation of his site-specific temporal series makes durable an otherwise ephemeral work. The transformation of the archival photographs from their found state to appropriation, subsequent conversion to projection, and final durability through Attie’s photographs of the series take the original images through three generations of physical transformation. The endurance of the archival images is uncontested, as they remained intact and legible for ~90 years. The ephemerality of projection stripped the archival images of their materiality by enlarging and displacing them from their original material context while converting them to intangible light, color, and photons projected onto a building.
When I asked about the intentionality of this process of reshaping temporality and materiality of these images, Attie confided that he doesn’t “see ephemeral and enduring as being a binary [or as]…an inherent contradiction.”

While Attie intervened in the physical embodiment of the original archival images by projecting them onto architectural façades, he felt driven – as a photographer – to create resonant, aesthetically compelling art photographs of them. Attie’s images enable the site-specific series to visually and temporally endure in the public eye despite his refusal of any sort of categorical materiality, or material composition that can be easily identified and categorized.

Not only does Attie refuse to acknowledge any sort of material/ephemeral binary, he doesn’t “make a clear separation between the past and the present or future…the past is always present.” When we spoke, Attie described his conception of temporality as “a felt, lived experience.” This firmly held and clearly internalized vision of timelessness is reflected in Attie’s work, particularly Writing on the Wall. By superimposing images of the past onto the present, the contemporary absence of Jewish identity is forcibly recalled. The figures in the archival images almost appear as if they are emerging from or “stepping out of a third dimension” as the architectural elements in the photographs align nearly perfectly with those of the existing architecture. The Jews depicted in the archival images exist in neither the past nor the present – they endure in an enigmatic,

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106 Attie & Landau, Interview.
107 Ibid.
indefinable temporality of remembrance and loss that Attie accesses by creating

*The Writing on the Wall.*

**Site-Specific Physical Memories & Stolpersteine**

The projections continue to haunt the sites they occupied after Attie turned off his projector by remaining in the memory of those who saw the projections. Attie’s vivid photographs of *The Writing on the Wall* allow the series to endure as well as reach new audiences and transform all viewers into tertiary witnesses of the loss represented by the images. The archival images only affect small portions of the buildings they are projected onto, and none encompass the entire structure. Thus, Attie allows room for the present, and his work only casts “faint shadows” over the physicality of their site.¹⁰⁹ Attie’s projections force the viewer to visually confront the corporeality of unknown but visible victims of the Holocaust.

The 1990s were a powerful moment in time for the proliferation of cultural memory studies, particularly memorials to victims of the Holocaust. In 1993 – the same year that Attie completed his site-specific series in Berlin – Berlin-born artist Gunter Demnig conceived of his *Stolpersteine* project.¹¹⁰ Demnig installed 10 x 10 cm concrete cubes with brass plates inscribed with the names, life and death dates of victims of Nazi Germany. According to the official website, these *Stolpersteine* – translated literally to “stumbling stone” – commemorate “Jews, Sinti, Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, mentally and physically disabled people…

¹⁰⁹ Bernstein, “Making a Memorial Place,” 354.
¹¹⁰ For more information, please refer to the official website of Stolpersteine at http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/.
anyone who was persecuted or murdered by the National Socialists between 1933 – 1945.” Demnig’s inclusion of all victims of Nazism differs from Attie’s intentional remembrance of Ostjuden specifically. Demnig’s Stolpersteine project provides a compelling artistic memorial parallel to Attie’s *Writing on the Wall*, as both commemorate ostracized and murdered victims of the Nazi regime by publically reinserting their existence and presence in front of contemporary buildings that they formerly occupied.

Demnig intentionally places his modest brass memorials in front of the entrance of or under the building number of his chosen location, similar to Attie’s intentional projection of archival images onto the entrances and front façades of buildings. Demnig’s project is ongoing and has become an active memorial, while Attie’s series is crystallized within his photographs and in the memories of those who’ve witnessed them.

Shimon Attie’s *Writing on the Wall* inserts archival photography – irreplaceable historical documents – into creative and immersive works of art in order to confuse and confront viewers’ sense of temporality. His projections of images onto existing facades function as physical memories by compelling viewers to confront a blurry, indistinct past that they were not present for and therefore can never be completely familiar with. Attie’s work aims to prompt an interaction between people and his images separate “from a direct frontal confrontation with

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the historical facts.” Attie’s work focuses on the daily lives—and hardships—of working-class Jewish immigrants before the onset of WWII, yet their ostracization from German society is tangible in the images chosen.

Attie & Bastry, Interview, 4.
Chapter 4: Remembering as Experience:

Cultural Memory Studies &

Re-Thinking How We Construct History

Memory is the raw material of history

– Jacques Le Goff

The way we process information inherently affects how we perceive it, what we believe about it, and how we convey it to others. Striving towards historical objectivity is a valiant ambition but ultimately against the very concept of history, which is necessarily a human construction of the past. Thus, all history is based on human memories of events, often disregarding and obscuring – either intentionally or involuntarily – facts and narratives deemed unsavory or unnecessary by the author’s personal standards. These memories – shaped by authorial choice to reveal and obscure pockets of the past – are perceived as factual when supported with historic evidence imbued with authority and importance by those in power. Cultural memory studies has emerged as a historic field that considers the ways in which memory is connected to an individual or group’s culture, and what influences identity has on perception and remembrance of particular events.

Astrid Erll, contemporary scholar of cultural memory studies, defines cultural memory as

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The sum total of all processes (biological, medial, social)… involved in the interplay of past and present within sociocultural contexts. It finds its specific manifestations in memory culture.\textsuperscript{114}

Erll deems “collective-autobiographical memory” a group’s communal remembrance of a shared past.\textsuperscript{115} For the purpose of this thesis, I have interpreted Erll’s thoughts to define collective cultural memory as the way in which distinct communities experience and remember past culturally traumatic events they were not alive to witness / participate in. Memory as a field of historic study may at first sound questionable to any firm believer in historical facts.

In cultural memory studies, memory is conceived of as just as important a tool with which we may conceive of the past as other evidence that has historically been imbued with higher authority and faithfulness to reality by those in power. Memory is just another way in which humans process the experiences that shape their world, experiences that they may not have been alive for but which nonetheless deeply affect their lives. I will use the concept of cultural memory to consider the theoretical and historical underpinnings of Attie’s The Writing on the Wall: Projections in Berlin’s Jewish Quarter and Walker’s Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated).

Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal argues that cultural memory is enacted through performance rather than endurance and relegation of past events into oblivion. Thus, Attie and Walker’s respective series engage with what Bal believes is the true

\textsuperscript{114} Astrid Erll, Memory in Culture, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 105.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
purpose of cultural memory – they remember and reveal events of immense cultural violence that demand to be remembered. They give a visual platform to the histories that many would rather forget, those that are often too painful – or guilt inducing – to remember. Attie and Walker push through this boundary of discomfort and enact cultural memory through art, prompting remembrance of marginalized, oppressed, racialized individuals whose narratives are often excluded from history.

History as Memory

Conceiving of memory as a historical field challenges the normative view of memories as completely personal recollections of one’s own life. What is the construction of historic evidence – including documents, objects, and visual images – if not an individual’s interpretation and subsequent portrayal of their personal reality? Memory and history are inextricably linked; both derive from personal experience and perspective. Neither qualifies as truth, yet nevertheless both history and memory steadfastly attempt to honestly reconstruct the past. Erll conceives of memories as “versions of the past [which] change with every recall.”116 This harks back to Jacques Le Goff’s quote – mentioned at the beginning of my introduction – on the continuous nature of history.117 Using Le Goff’s understanding of history and memory as context to consider Erll’s concept of cultural memory allows us to comprehend the necessity of multiple, continuous, contemporary interpretations of the past.

116 Erll, Memory in Culture, 8.
117 “History, in general, is never over” – Jacques Le Goff
Postmodernist theory influenced what Erll identifies as the memory paradigm, or the unresolvable conflict of memory as a reflection of either “the ‘past as it really was,’ [or]…the ‘past as a human construct.’”\textsuperscript{118} Attie’s \textit{The Writing on the Wall} and Walker’s \textit{Harper’s Pictorial History} epitomize the postmodernist critical view of the authority of dominant historic narratives by appropriating and displacing archival visual images.

Attie and Walker’s cultural connection to and historic intervention in the recorded narratives of displaced, oppressed, racialized African Americans and Ostjuden is a perfect yet unintentional echo of Erll’s argument that “forgetting is the very condition for remembering.”\textsuperscript{119} Attie, too, believes that “the process of memory and the process of forgetting are inseparable.”\textsuperscript{120} Historic moments and events that have been forgotten or misremembered are incredibly ripe for memorial work. These histories demand active remembrance, which often takes the form of contemporary relatives’ desire and drive to learn more about their past.

The terms memory and experience are symbiotically linked, as experience begets memory, and memory in turn sustains and preserves experience. Examining the relationship between memory and experience from a constructionist perspective allows us to take both at face value rather than distinguishing between “authentic experience” and “intentional reinterpretation.”\textsuperscript{121} Rather, the process of remembering is charged

\textsuperscript{118} Erll, \textit{Memory in Culture}, 5.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{120} Attie, Interview by Irit Bastry, 6.
\textsuperscript{121} Erll, \textit{Memory in Culture}, 111.
with its own value as a lens with which experience is mediated. In the case of culturally traumatic experiences shared by multiple members of a cultural group, events individually or collectively reinterpreted as memory challenge the dominant historic interpretations and better serve the needs of the group in the present and future.

Trauma and literature scholar, Cathy Caruth, describes the dialectic nature of trauma and its embodiment in human experience as an enigma of survival:

> It is only by recognizing traumatic experience as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience.\(^{122}\)

By this definition, survivors of cultural trauma are just as important a result of said trauma as those who lost their lives. The dichotomy between destruction and survival serves as a parallel for forgetting and remembering any given event or experience. These periods of intense cultural trauma are recalled through the stories of those who were victims of the tide of violence as well as the memories of those who remain.

**Memory as History**

The lived experiences of African Americans during the Civil War as well as of Ostjuden in the early to mid 20th century are culturally specific periods of racialized violence that have largely been excluded from dominant histories because in most cases the diminished resources and platforms of members of these historically oppressed and racialized communities hindered them from constructing their own

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Chapter 4: Cultural Memory Studies

This work is not simple, and “in processing our experience of reality, forgetting is the rule and remembering the exception.”\(^{124}\) Forgetting includes omitting or excluding certain narratives because they do not easily fit into manageable historic categories. Furthermore, forgetting has been used historically to assert that events are in *the past* and thus no longer affect the present and certainly will not impact the future. Thus, remembering cannot simply be underplayed as an act which most humans are capable of. Rather, it is a mobilizing force, which disseminates individuals’ experiences to others, reverberating as others share their memories.

Ultimately, these individual memories consolidate to become a collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs – a 20\(^{th}\) century French philosopher and sociologist who first described the concept of collective memory – mused on the codependence of collective and individual memory. He believed that “it is only through individual acts of memory that the collective memory can be observed, since ‘each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory.’”\(^{125}\) Memories are distinguished and individualized based on their viewpoint, their biases, or the “position people assume based on their socialization and cultural influences.”\(^{126}\) While this seems obvious because memories are the products of an individual’s processing of their lived

\(^{123}\) This is not to say that oral histories, artwork, songs, and other cultural forms of remembrance and tradition passed along through generations are not valid forms of historical evidence. However, in the Western-European and North American conception of history, it often takes the form of writing backed up with documentary evidence, which was highly unavailable to Ostjuden in the early 20\(^{th}\) century and Africans brought to North America before, during, and after the American Civil War.


\(^{125}\) Ibid., 16.

\(^{126}\) Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 16.
experience, the same acknowledgement of perspective should be applied to the
construction of history. This is where cultural memory meets collective memory; the
historical ambition to reconstruct the past is echoed in the human desire to internally
revisit events deemed important enough to remember.

Some may argue that it is impossible to link generations through memories, as
later offspring have not experienced events themselves but rather heard stories of the
past through family members. Cultural memory and feminist scholar Marianne
Hirsch’s concept of postmemory explains the phenomenon of a later generation’s
memory of culturally traumatic events which they were not temporally connected to.

Hirsch defines postmemory as

The relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma
to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they ‘remember’
only through stories and images with which they grew up, but that are
so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own
right.  

For my purposes, I extend Hirsch’s definition of postmemory to encompass all those
whose lives are inscribed by their ancestors’ experiences of past violence, not limiting it
to individuals who were first generation descendants of victims of racial violence.

Individuals of Jewish descent are inherently scarred by the trauma of the Holocaust

\[127\] Marianne Hirsch, “Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and
Public Fantasy,” in Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present, ed. Mieke Bal,
Johnathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England,
1999), 8.
just as African Americans’ lived experiences are shaped by their cultural connection to
the trans-Atlantic slave trade as well as the American Civil War.

In a 2004 interview, Attie shared his childhood postmemorial experiences; “as a
child I was told many stories about people that I never knew… I remember having the
feeling of having lost something that I never had.”128 This feeling of loss was
transmitted through indirect memorial of the trauma endured by Jews before, during,
and after the Holocaust. Thus, his work is not only meant to stimulate remembrance of
those who were lost to the evils of racist ideology but to introduce new ways of
experiencing history and collective memory by merging archival visual sources with
innovative art technologies, materials, and ideas. Said in his own words; “I am
interested in trying to expand the layers of fabric through which we experience
things… Simply because something is not visible it doesn’t mean that it is not there.”129
Attie’s work echoes his ambition to create a multi-sensory approach to recalling and
experiencing memory as history.

Attie and Walker do not attempt to re-create the culturally violent periods their
series focus on, but instead try to reach a deeper understanding of what occurred by
visually reconstructing and remembering nameless individuals who exist in a space
between reality and imagination. Hirsch cautions artists engaging with postmemory
against allowing spectators a vision of the past “that makes distances disappear,

128 Attie & Bastry, Interview, 4.
129 Ibid.
creating...too easy an access to the past.” The materiality of Attie and Walker’s artworks disrupt Hirsch’s concern of “easy access.” Walker’s black silhouettes convey an essence of Blackness without portraying individual identities. Thus, they function as anonymous specters of past and present. Attie’s images are spectral in a different way as they are photographed projections which seem to fit into their sites yet are also noticeably disconnected.

Attie chose his images specifically with the intent to reveal a forgotten community of Ostjuden living in the Scheunenviertel. In doing so, his series fulfills Hirsch’s thoughts on photography and memory:

Photographic images are stubborn survivors of death. We receive them, uncompromisingly, in the present tense. Inasmuch as they are instruments of memory, then, they expose its resolute but multilayered presentness.

Hirsch’s concept of photography as received “in the present” allows us to consider the multi-faceted temporal possibilities of images and their relationship to history. Attie’s appropriated images represent now deceased Ostjuden, but Attie’s re-contextualization – in the form of his site-specific projections – and preservation of these images allows them to take on a new, enduring a-temporal existence in the constantly unfolding present.

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131 Ibid.
The Materiality of Memory

Cultural memory manifests in various material and immaterial forms, often crossing between the two as if spatiality and temporality were non-existent. Attie and Walker use archival visual sources that construct their viewers’ memories of the events depicted by the images, yet both artists thwart immediate legibility and factuality by reframing the archival images, rendering them unreal yet tinged with evidentiary, spectral historic significance. Attie’s projections of monochromatic archival images onto eerily similar architectural facades demonstrate his fantastical reinterpretation of how we visually construct historic reality. Walker’s violent and racialized silhouettes flit across historic engravings, both engaging with and obstructing the narratives depicted in the engravings, causing the viewer to question the reality of the silhouettes as well as the archival image beneath them.

These artists intervene in archival visual sources by using them to reconstruct the past through the lens of cultural memory rather than to promote normative historical narratives. They do not strive towards complete factuality or believability, but embrace the uncertain, fictional nature of human construction of the past. The tension between the original archival images and the artists’ finished artworks is tangible. Aleida Assman, cultural memory scholar, distinguishes memory from the archive. The former is “actively circulated memory that keeps the past present as the canon and the passively stored memory that preserves the past past as the archive.” Thus, memory is a fundamentally continuous process while archival memory is static.

132 Erll, Memory in Culture, 51.
and unchanging. Attie and Walker empower archival visual sources to disrupt this normative categorization – as well as many others such as racialization and stereotype – by removing them from their original context within the historical archive, by altering re-contextualizing them.

Attie and Walker’s respective series also complicate and engage with the visual politics of racialization and stereotypes. Erll’s concept of collective-procedural memory examines how memory and racialization are connected. Erll defines this concept as

The implicit, non-intentional side of the explicit forms of collective memory… It refers to ways of dealing with the past which are not conscious or capable of becoming conscious on the social level. As collective phenomena, however, acts of procedural memory are always tied to symbolic forms of expression, media, or patterns of social behavior. 133

The emphasis placed on the steadfastly unconscious nature of collective-procedural memory is useful in the context of racialization. The implicit biases encoded within how we “read” an individual’s exterior function as collective memory that is pervasive yet coded in everyday interactions.

Attie and Walker’s appropriated archival visual images were created – either through photography or engraving – by human beings. Thus, they are not infallible

133 Erll, Memory in Culture, 107.
representations of reality but rather “offer constructions of the past.” On the reliability of media, Erll argues that

Media are not simply neutral carriers of information about the past.

What they appear to encode – versions of past events and persons, cultural values and norms, concepts of collective identity – they are in fact first creating.

Media are inherently tinged with individual perspective because, just like history, they are a product of human creation. Attie and Walker’s appropriation of archival media to use as part of their own artistic medium reveals their engagement in a self-conscious artistic practice. They are aware of and wish to acknowledge the constructed nature of their work as well as the histories they confront and intervene in.

Conclusion

Attie and Walker are set apart from other artists also engaging with archival visual sources to intervene in dominant historical narratives by their willingness to delve into the unknowable side of history. They embrace the necessary suspense of disbelief and fictional potential of these historic periods, as culturally traumatic events cannot be accurately represented by pure historic and factual data.

Attie and Walker demonstrate the value of contemporary intervention in and regeneration of archival historical evidence. Their series expand past the boundaries of art objects and become part of the histories they draw upon for source material. Just

\[134\] Erll, Memory in Culture, 114.

\[135\] Ibid.
like the visual materials they appropriate, their series will endure in the historic consciousness, open to interpretation by viewers. These series have changed and will only continue to evolve over time. Society will change, viewers themselves will grow old, and new viewers will come into the world. These changes will affect how humankind “remembers” the histories that Attie and Walker intervene in, finding parallels to events that have yet to happen in our lifetime.
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I’ve gone through quite a few advisors in my time at Wesleyan as an Art History and History double major. Clare Grace, my first Art History major advisor, fostered in me a deep appreciation for appropriation art and site-specificity, without which I would not have discovered the work of Kara Walker and Shimon Attie. Clare Rogan, my first Art History thesis advisor, helped guide my initial thesis topic, solidify my ideas, and set the groundwork for my research. I am supremely lucky to have had the opportunity to work with both of them as well as with Jennifer Tucker and Peter Mark, my final History and Art History thesis advisors.

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Fig. 1: Kara Walker, *Confederate Prisoners Being Conducted from Jonesborough to Atlanta*, 2005, Offset Lithography/Silkscreen.

Fig. 2: *Confederate Prisoners Being Conducted from Jonesborough to Atlanta*, (In *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War*. By Guernsey, Alfred H., and Henry M. Alden. Chicago: Star Publishing, 1866)
Fig. 3: Kara Walker, *Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta*, 2005, Offset Lithography/Silkscreen.

Fig. 4: *Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta* (In *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War*. By Guernsey, Alfred H., and Henry M. Alden. Chicago: Star Publishing, 1866)
Fig. 5: Kara Walker, *Alabama Loyalists Greeting the Federal Gun-Boats*, 2005, Offset Lithography/Silkscreen.

Fig. 7: Kara Walker, *Deadbrook After the Battle of Ezra’s Church*, 2005, Offset Lithography/Silkscreen.
Fig. 8: Kara Walker, *Buzzard’s Roost Pass*, 2005, Offset Lithography/Silkscreen.
Fig. 9: Glenn Ligon, First print in the Runaways series, 1993, lithograph, 16 x 12 in

AN AWAY, Glenn. Medium height, 5’3”, male. Closely-cut hair, almost shaved. Mild looking, with oval shaped, black-rimmed glasses that are somewhat conservative. Thinly-striped black-and-white short-sleeved T-shirt, blue jeans. Silver watch and African-looking bracelet on arm. His face is somewhat wider on bottom near the jaw. Full-lipped. He’s black. Very warm and sincere, mild-mannered and laughs often.
Fig. 10: Shimon Attie, Joachimstrasse/corner of Auguststrasse: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Resident, 1931, Berlin, 1992, color photograph and on-location installation.
Fig. 11: Shimon Attie, *Linienstrasse 137: Slide Projection of Police Raid on Former Jewish Residents, 1920, Berlin, 1992*, color photograph and on-location installation.

Fig. 12: *Februar 1920* (In *Im Scheunenviertel: Bilder, Texte, und Dokumente*. By Eike Geisel. Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1981, 69.)
Fig. 14: Shimon Attie, *Mulackstrasse 37: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Residents, ca. 1932, Berlin, 1992*, color photograph and on-location installation.
Fig. 15: Shimon Attie, Joachimstrasse 11a: Slide Projection of Former Jewish Café with Patrons, 1933, Berlin 1992, color photograph and on-location installation.
Fig. 16: Contemporary Google street view of Joachimstrasse 11a (Image captured October 2008 by Google, screen shot taken by Lily Landau, © Google).

Fig. 17: Sukkoth (Laubhütten-fest) 1933. (In Im Scheunenviertel: Bilder, Texte, und Dokumente. By Eike Geisel. Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1981, 97)
Fig. 18: Gunter Demnig, Stolpersteine of Wilhelm & Martha Levy, (© Gunter Demnig)
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Chapter 1:


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Chapter 3:


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