

Amos Morris-Reich, *Race and Photography. Racial Photography as Scientific Evidence, 1876–1980*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2016, xiv + 280 pp., paperback, 32,50 \$, also available as an e-book.

How to depict ›race‹, how to see ›race‹? Generating an image of the ›Other‹ is at the heart of demarcational processes and crucial to the creation of identity during the 18th and 19th century. Initially, these images had to rely on combinations of drawings and textual descriptions; with the expansion of the racial sciences in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the scientists increasingly drew on photographic representations of their subjects of investigation (p. 6).

The volume at hand, ›Race and Photography. Racial Photography as Scientific Evidence, 1876–1980‹ by Amos Morris-Reich, unearths the roots of photography as an important medium used in the study of ›race‹ in Weimar and Nazi Germany.¹ Understanding ›race‹ as the ›most important category of reactionary response to modernity‹ (p. 7), this volume is ›intended as a provocation in the face of a history that has become culturally and politically fixed‹ – it sheds light on the ›most prominent features and main purposes of scientific racial photography‹ (p. 1) and ›read[s] the corpus of racist material from ›within‹‹ (p. 28).

By way of introduction, Morris-Reich provides a theoretical outline of the development of racial photography and its epistemological history. At the heart of the utilization of photography for racial measurement and the depiction of ›race‹ lies the assumption of ›photography as a realist medium‹, ›as a reproduction of reality‹ (p. 4). Instead of the common ›traditional criticism‹ which, according to Morris-Reich, ›constitutes a superficial, weak, and inadequate stance‹, he takes the today ›dubious and racist pseudoscientists‹ at face-value and seeks to analytically disassemble them ›from within their respective discourses, assumptions, beliefs, use of scientific evidence, and argumentation‹ (p. vii).

Of the five main chapters, two examine in processual historical perspective the evidential characteristics of racial photography from 1876 to 1918 and the development from photography as a means of measurement to one of representation from 1880 to 1937, two discuss the methodical approaches and practical implementations of racial photography by the examples of two race scholars (Hans F. K. Günther and Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß), and the last chapter relates the techniques and methods developed in Germany to racial photography in Palestine.

Morris-Reich convincingly demonstrates how the alleged ›authenticity‹ was shaped by ideology and ›creat[ed]‹ by the media of the time. Moreover, his well-informed findings make obvious how the initial search for authenticity coincided with attempts in the identification of characteristic ›special types‹ (p. 5), which, as an aside, were accessible for the public as living exhibits in human zoos, at world fairs and colonial exhibitions, or in ›exotic‹ travel films.

Nevertheless, seeing ›race‹ and ›racial difference‹ was not an innate ability. In the notion of the racial scientists, it was a learned skill: familiarity with the ›type‹ improved its recognition (p. 53). To view the unviewable, seeing became ›a constitutive activity‹ (p. 153) and was especially essential in the case of Jews whose ›failure to manifest a basic part of the type ... is in fact essential to the type‹ (p. 160). This breakdown in perceptibility, the alleged Jewish ›failure to meet [their] own racial gestalt‹ (p. 161) and the presence of ›invisible, hidden difference‹ (p. 163), was ontologically resolved by the visual decoding of the ›Jewish gaze‹. ›[T]o see is to establish or set meaning‹ (p. 165), as such, this study not only underlines the constitutive process that is part of racism – learning to see differences in ›reality‹ which were described in theory – but it also minutely examines the lines of argumentation which

¹ Nota bene, the title's timeframe is deceptively generous. While Morris-Reich does indeed locate the continuation of a ›physical-anthropological and photographic tradition‹ in a 1980 textbook (p. 50), this is, however, a statistical outlier. The volume's analytical mainstay are the decades up to the 1940s.

claimed that the Jews were as such unidentifiable or used a means of camouflage to blend in with the mainstream ›Germanic‹ population. Beside the olfactory characteristic, famously described by Hans F.K. Günther, racial writers of the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany considered ›Jewish eyes‹ one of the most reliable indicators of racial particularity and thus circumstantially assigned markers of difference which, in turn, were ›evidenced‹ in the visual depiction of Jewish persons.

While Morris-Reich's breakdown of the methods and objectives of racial photography highlights that the concepts of ›race‹ and ›racial differences‹ were far less deterministic than the theoretical deliberations of the time made them seem and that phenotypical features the racial scientist identified were oftentimes substituted with metaphysical or transcendental characteristics, another underlying strand of discourse is the role aesthetics played in the discursive shaping of the ›racial Other‹ (p. 65). As a background noise present in the conceptualization of ›race‹ since its earliest stages, (racist) body aesthetics affected not only the perception of racialized women but also alleged to have found the culmination of beauty and intellect in the corporeality of Greek statues (p. 185).

Racism involves the drawing of boundaries; this book is a fine example of how this was accomplished by the use of photography – initially as a medium of measurement and later as an educational device for broader parts of the mainstream society. Morris-Reich's findings provide more evidence on the fact that scientific racism involved attempts to illustrate scientifically deliberations which had been theoretically reasoned beforehand: as a progress from suspicions of cultural inferiority that were allegedly lo-catable as physical differences and bodily characteristics.

The absence of a bibliography is to be regretted. Also very lamentable is the lack of a conclusion in which the observations presented during this very erudite and meticulous study are brought together. This could have allowed for a conclusive subsumption of the aggregated material, in particular regarding one of the main issues raised, that ›race‹ – allegedly already at the »verge of collapse« at the time it was »›discovered‹« – could become »form and content« of the racial writers' »response« to the »disintegration of traditional forms of social, community, family, and natural life« (p. 8).

Altogether, however, Morris-Reich's investigation of the interconnections between ›race‹, photography, and visual perception is a highly inspiring read that painstakingly educes the manifold ways in which visual media and ideology informed and affected each other.

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