Martschukat, Jürgen; Niedermeier, Silvan (Hrsg.): *Violence and Visibility in Modern History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013. ISBN: 978-1-137-37868-2; XIII, 305 S.

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Given the ubiquity of images of violence throughout history as well as in contemporary news media, it is surprising that the relationship between violence and its (in)visibility within the public sphere has only recently become the focus of scholarly inquiry. Jürgen Martschukat's and Silvan Niedermeier's collection of essays on „Violence and Visibility in Modern History" is one of the first publications that addresses the issue from a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective. The volume assembles case studies from the US and Germany that consider different media that render violence visible – from nineteenth-century collections of court cases via photography to the TV miniseries „Holocaust" or contemporary Civil War reenactments – as well as different kinds of violence, which the volume's two parts categorize broadly as „Visibilities of Crime, Policing, and Punishment" and „Visibilities of Warfare".

Martschukat and Niedermeier offer an excellent introduction to this rich material that no one interested in the interrelationship between violence and visibility should be able to ignore: theory-driven yet refreshingly lucid and concise, it systematizes forms, functions, and contexts of the in/visibility of violence in modern German and American history. The editors read modern practices of making violence public – and of shielding it from public scrutiny – as deeply embedded in Enlightenment thought and politics. Through a subtle re-appraisal of Norbert Elias' „The Civilizing Process", they demonstrate how post-Enlightenment Western societies developed ways to think of themselves as advanced and civilized, a process which did not entail the abolishment of practices perceived as barbaric, but rather their concealment. The legitimacy of violence in modern society, in other words, does not depend on its minimization and arguments about its political expediency, but in fact on the management of its visibility. In/visibility thus emerges as the crucial category through which to understand and scrutinize the persistence of state violence. The editors consider „three dimensions" that shape violence's visibility: „spatiality, media, and power" (p. 13). Spatial arrangements – such as the punishment of criminals inside the prison rather than in the public square – govern scopic in/access to violence; mediated representations of violence depend on technologies of visualization and distribution; power structures determine which forms of violence are made visible or invisible through such spatial arrangements and media representations. When violence becomes visible, then, three main functions stand out: violence's visibility can be managed to reaffirm and legitimize the use of violence, it can serve as a touchstone for critique, and it can, perversely, also generate pleasure, a function which Karen Halttunen has famously dubbed the „pornography of pain" (p. 3).

With reference to this analytical matrix, the essays insightfully explore the variations and ambiguities in the management of violence's in/visibility that are specific to their case. Each of the twelve essays is fascinating in its own right and would merit a longer discussion. Instead, however, I would like to point to two conceptual questions that arise from the conversation within the volume. These questions, rather than detracting from the central argument about violence and visibility that the volume puts forward, productively point to directions which further research into the emerging field of violence and visibility may be able to take.

Question No. 1: When we speak of „visible" violence, do we mean a visualization of violence, do we mean a public re/presentation of and a discourse on violence, or both? – Martschukat and Niedermeier anchor their introduction by a consideration of the photographs of torture taken in Abu Ghraib prison in 2004. Hence the editors, for the most part, take the term „visibility" to mean visual representation. However, in a brief paragraph they also suggest that visibility, as an analytical tool, should be understood as more than the phenomenological „being-

visible" (p. 5): it also refers to an event's discursive presence in the public sphere. The contributors use „visibility" in both of these senses. Martha Hodes's excellent article is an example of how visibility can be understood as discursive, verbal presence: she shows how police aggression in the 1900 New York City Race Riot became rendered (almost) invisible in the archives due to the collusion of the city officials' attempts to rewrite history and what Hodes terms the „power of indifference". Thomas Weitin similarly treats discursive methods of rendering the pre-modern violent extortion of confessions invisible in the nineteenth-century legal casebook „The New Pitaval". For other contributors, visibility presupposes visual representation. Michael Wildt, for instance, discusses the function of the public display of photographs of „race defilers" in pre-war Nazi Germany, and Petra Bopp analyzes Wehrmacht soldiers' private photographs of the war. Yet another group of essays is interested in how verbal and visual discourses of violence work hand in hand. Bruce Dorsey suggests how visual and verbal scandalizations of violent crime may serve to suppress the visibility of violence as an everyday given of American life; Silvan Niedermeier traces how the FBI employed photographic evidence – visualization – and legal testimony – verbal documentation – in order to counter police torture in the South in the 1940s and 1950s.

In the face of these different uses of „visibility" in the volume, one might argue that the concept might not be useful after all. The choir of contributions, however, suggests otherwise: what it shows is that „visibility" offers an arena to compare these very different ways of managing the public presence of violence. Related concepts, for instance Michel-Rolph Trouillot's description of rendering historical facts invisible as a „silencing of the past" (p. 74), which Martha Hodes cites, or the simple notion of „visualization" do not afford this wide angle to grasp the range of cultural practices that make violence publicly known and unknown. Moreover, as all contributions evince, „visibility" allows for a scrutiny of the power structures that enable or suppress violence's public presence. An agenda for future investigations may be to parse „visibil-

ity" more explicitly as visual and verbal presence and, moreover, to explore the ways they are „intertwined", as Martschukat and Niedermeier suggest they are (p. 5). What arises from the choir of contributions, too, is the insight that visualization certainly never goes entirely without verbalization, or if it does, it becomes detached from its referent. In Susan Sontag's words, which Jan Taubitz quotes in his analysis of the narrative frames of historic photographs in the NBC miniseries „Holocaust": „The contribution of photography [to make a dent in public opinion] always follows the naming of an event." (p. 208)

Question No. 2: Focusing on visibility as visualization, what is an image of violence, or how can we describe the imagery of violence? – Given that images of violence without a narrative context lose their political and moral function or can be imbued with any such function, one might wonder whether images of violence without a narrative context may even be recognized as such. A still image cannot show action, it cannot label perpetrator and victim, it cannot identify cause or result. In other words, it cannot show violence but, as Annette Jael Lehmann writes in her essay on stereoscopic photographs of the American Civil War, only „segmented and fragmented representations of violent events" (p. 160). Images of violence that are referenced in this volume, however, bear striking similarities even if they are from different historical periods and sides of the Atlantic: images of victory, images of the instruments of punishment, torture, and war, images of pain, or images of bodies. And most of these would immediately be recognizable as images of violence. As specific as historic events are, as unique as the suffering from violent actions is in every individual case, as ambiguously as visualizations of violence may function, „Violence and Visibility in Modern History" suggests that there are powerful conventions at work that shape our Western imagery of violence. While this is no surprise, a systematic look at the origins of these conventions and at how the imagery interacts with framing narratives, may serve as a way to approach the patterns of power that violence and its representations are rooted in.

Martschukat's and Niedermeier's volume

suggests directions for the field of violence and visibility studies in numerous other ways. Featuring only one essay on film (Amy Louise Wood's complex contextualization of early lynching films, 1895–1905) and one on the function of photographs within television (Jan Taubitz's essay on „Holocaust"), „Violence and Visibility in Modern History" calls for considerations of the differences between still and moving images of violence; including essays on victory parades (Sebastian Jobs) and historical reenactments (Dora Apel), the volume suggests an expansive understanding of visibility that includes performance and embodiment; considering reenacted, in other words imagined, violent scenarios (Wood and Apel), it also challenges future research to consider the interplay of documentary and fictional modes of the visibility of violence – opening the field, for instance, towards digitally generated images, such as simulations for military purposes and computer games. As importantly, however, Martschukat's and Niedermeier's volume considers different forms of violence and different forms of visibility of different national and historical origins comparatively, and thus offers a first systematic framework to think through issues in violence and visibility.

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