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View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture

title:

"Product Not Available in Pre-War Quantities – but Quality Remains the Same": Remarks on Advertisements as Historical Sources

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source:

View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture 25 (2019)

URL:

https://www.pismowidok.org/en/archive/2019/25-present-history/notes-on-advertising

doi:

https://doi.org/10.36854/widok/2019.25.2060

publisher:

Widok. Foundation for Visual Culture

affiliation:

SWPS University

University of Warsaw

keywords:

visual history; advertisement; post WW2 Germany

abstract:

The article focuses on advertisements as visual and historical sources. The material comes from the German press that appeared immediately after the end of the Second World War. During this time, all kinds of products were scarce. In comparison to this, colorful advertisements of luxury products are more than noteworthy. What do these images tell us about the early post-war years in Germany? The author argues that advertisements are a medium that shapes social norms. Rather than reflecting the historical realities advertisements construct them. From an aesthetical and cultural point of view, advertisements gave thus a sense of continuity between the pre- and post-war years. The author suggests therefore, that the advertisements should not be treated as a source for economic history. They are, however, important for studying social developments that occurred in the past.

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"Product Not Available in Pre-War Quantities – but Quality Remains the Same": Remarks on Advertisements as Historical Sources

On the back page of the March 1946 edition of the East German fortnightly magazine *Die Frau von Heute* [*Woman Today*], the food producer Deubel of Leipzig took out a full-page advert (fig. 1). The colorful illustration depicts a woman leaning over a kitchen table replete with food products. The slogan reads: "While shopping, the housewife [*Hausfrau*] prefers Deubel products." The noun "housewife" is printed in an elegant red font – in a similar way to the brand name. The slim, blond woman is wearing a blue dress with a snow-white apron, and is presenting biscuits, rusks, flavorings, and baking powder. Her hand is pointing both to the products and outside the frame of the picture, and is embellished with a red bracelet. There is a white, pantry-style cupboard behind her with a dark jug on top. The kitchen is tiled in sky-blue.

Fig. 1. A full-page advert for Deubel's food products: "While shopping, the housewife [*Hausfrau*] prefers Deubel products." Source: *Die Frau von Heute* 1946, no 1

Let us consider the context of this image and its appearance in the East German iconosphere. *Die Frau von Heute* came out under the auspices of the press department of the Demokratischer Frauenbund [The Democratic Association of Women], an organization that operated in the aftermath of WWII in the Soviet-occupied zone and was democratic in name only. The front page of the same issue featured a full-bodied, cheerful woman working as a railway crossing guard.

With a railwayman's cap on her head, she fully embodied the socialist ideal of the working woman. Immediately after the war, there was a shortage of paper – it was hard to come by even for publishers collaborating with the occupying powers. In the spring of 1946, colorful women's magazines and especially full-page ads were rarely seen.

Most German cities suffered considerable levels of destruction during the war, and living conditions during the winter of 1946 were awful. Witness reports are full of stories of ruined houses, provisional living quarters organized in cramped and damp cellars, infectious diseases and malnutrition. For example, the Swedish reporter Stig Dagerman wrote in 1946 that:

> Doctors who talk to foreign interviewers about the eating habits of these families say that what they boil up in their pans is indescribable. [...] The meat which they come across in one way or another, or the dirty vegetables which they find God knows where..."[1]

Buying direct from farmers had been banned, as had the storing of provisions. Food in cities was mostly only available on the black market, where money was poor currency – the most sought-after products, such as flour, potatoes, and butter, were bartered in exchange for furniture, jewelry, and American cigarettes.[2]

During the initial post-war years, Germans received rationing cards for food. When the first editions of *Die Frau von Heute* were published, the majority of Leipzig's inhabitants were placed in one of the two lowest rationing categories: 43% had to survive on Group V rationing cards, and 19% on Group IV cards. In practice, this meant they consumed no more than 1,000 calories a day, and on the best days could get 250 grams of bread, 20 grams of meat, 7 grams of fat, 15 grams of additional vegetables, and 15 grams of sugar per person.[3]

The select few who were granted the top, Group I cards (including the hardest-working laborers and former leaders of anti-fascist organizations) received around double the aforementioned ration. Everyone was also entitled to 30 grams of jam, 17.85 grams of white cheese, and 400 grams of potatoes daily.[4] However, the supply of products could not even keep up with these rations.[5] Potatoes and white cheese were especially scarce.

Perhaps biscuits, rusks, and ingredients for cakes were occasionally available, but they were definitely not on the daily menu. If we read the recipes of women's magazines of the time, we see that baking was only for special occasions. Deubel's advert, however, was constructed as if it presented very ordinary products: it recalls motifs familiar from the pre-war period, when famous brands like Dr. Oetker, Maggi, and Persil used images of women in domestic settings, proudly presenting their purchases, white laundry, and pristine dishes.[6] Indeed, the marketing ploy of presenting the figure of the happy housewife was to be further pursued in the 1950s, where we encounter it, for example, in the campaigns of the Rama company.[7] In times of relative prosperity, washing powder or basic foodstuffs were readily available, but in the second half of the 1940s these ads functioned in a time of shortages. "Shopping" was a considerable effort; in fact, you were a "satisfied customer" when you were able to obtain anything at all – preferences for particular brands paled into insignificance.

This advertisement is in keeping with paradigms not only in terms of content but also in its artwork – the blue-eyed blonde in a smart kitchen could easily have featured in the Nazi press. The only giveaway that this is from the period just after the war is the selection of products – ones that are easily preserved and stored.

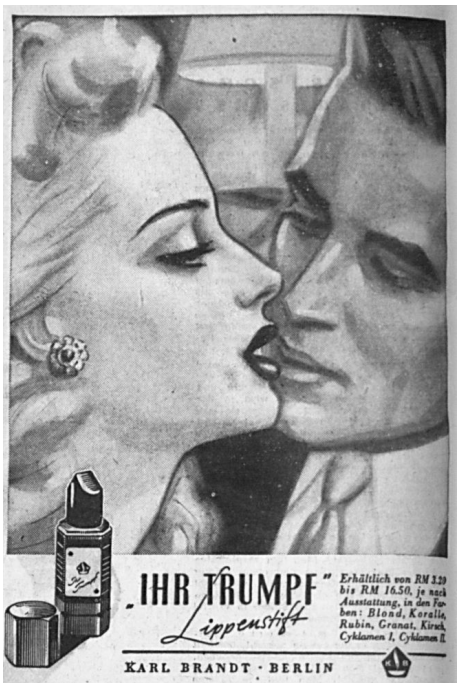

Fig. 2. An advert for Ihr Trumpf lipstick. Source: *Sie*, September 14, 1947

At the same time, this ad and others like it anticipated the future, making a promise of coming sufficiency in a middle-class home. This image anticipated, shaped, and co-authored the post-war social orders that developed in various ways after the proclamation of the two German states in 1949. With all the socialist slogans of gender equality, no one in the GDR disputed that it was the woman who should take care of the home and kitchen.[8] Therefore, the message in the advertising is not opposed to the policies of the Democratic Association of Women. On the contrary, the railway crossing guard from the front page and the housewife from the back page complement each other and reveal the social roles expected of women, whatever difficulties they might face in their daily lives. The appearance of a commercial, conservative image in a magazine controlled by the Soviet occupying forces can also be explained by the institutional context: unlike other media such as the press or photography, advertising was not subject to censorship. In the Western-occupied zones, the situation was the same: there were no regulations governing the advertising sector. Thus, taking this case as our point of departure, let us consider the broader question of the place of advertising in historical research.

The agency of images from a historical perspective

Today, there is no longer any need to justify the use of visual material in historical research; nevertheless, the vast majority of academic publications do not include illustrations, and this is not only for pragmatic reasons such as printing costs and copyright. Historians, on the whole, are still somewhat wary when it comes to visual sources; indeed, it is a challenge to define what visual history is. Dorota Skotarczak and Piotr Witek have taken up this challenge in Poland. Skotarczak suggests an unusually broad conception, whereby visual history is "an interdisciplinary sub-branch of research concerned with the analysis of (audio-)visual representations in a historical context."[9] On the other hand, Witek devotes considerable attention to visual history as a research method and a way of structuring discourses about the past. He has been inspired, on the one hand, by Robert Rosenstone's thinking on the similarity of history and film, and on the other hand has pursued Hayden White's concept of "historiophoty."[10] In both cases, photography and film take center stage, with other visual media being treated somewhat marginally.

In international publications, the status of visual history is equally ambiguous. In the much-discussed 1991 volume *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke, *visual history* is mentioned alongside approaches such as women's history, oral history, environmental history, and microhistory. However, the author of the article on visual history, Ivan Gaskell, struggled to define the borderline between this subject and the history of art.[11]

In a new volume under the editorship of Burke and Mark Tamm, again discussing contemporary approaches to history, the visual is the only area to be debated a second time. However, this time it is under the rubric of the history of visual culture.[12]

Reacting to this conceptual disorder, Daniela Bleichmar and Vanessa R. Schwartz have recently proposed narrowing the category of visual history so as to include only historical representations of the past, such as illustrated chronicles, historical painting, or photographs and films recording key events.[13] The questions they take up, however, are not so much concerned with the value of images for documentation as their significance in the process of shaping awareness of the past. Visual sources make it easier to attain a historical perspective on how awareness of the past is shaped. Historical awareness thereby emerges as something that develops in a continuous process over time – it is not a matter of a series of discrete events. Bleichmar and Schwartz's examples come from early modern and recent times; the oldest is from the 15th century and the most recent from 2017. This broad approach is quite novel in the English-speaking world, where the term *visual history* has hitherto appeared mainly in the context of the collection and dissemination of visual historical evidence, such as the collections of photography or recordings of interviews associated with the Visual History Archive of the Shoah Foundation. In effect, visual history has become a domain closely tied to research into 20th-century totalitarianism and crimes against humanity.

Therefore, in spite of the proposals of Burke or Bleichmar and Schwartz, visual history has focused on the 20th century, with theoretical thought dominated by work on photography and film.[14] This trend is evident, regardless of whether we define visual history as a method of approaching past attitudes about history, as a means of structuring historiographical discourse, or as a research subject covering the iconosphere of the past.[15] The overrepresentation of photography and film in

current research is understandable in view of the impact these media have had on 20th-century cultural history. The curse of these media – at least in the context of our efforts to clarify theoretical discourse – is their mimetic and indexical nature. Photography and film are often reduced to playing the role of illustrations of or evidence for the veracity of statements from other sources. Critical reflection on the question of photography and film as historical sources – one that takes into consideration the context of the production, publication, and reception of images – is a young discipline and is also connected to the evolution of research into the Holocaust and the Second World War. Examples of this critical reflection include the detailed analysis of the Lili Jacob album from Auschwitz, discussions surrounding the photograph of the "grave robbers of Treblinka" which begins the book *Złote żniwa* [*Golden Harvest*] by Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, or the multi-layered history of the propaganda photographs of Wehrmacht soldiers breaking through Polish border barriers in September 1939.[16] The core of these discussions is nevertheless the question of historical "truth" reduced to the evaluation of facts laid out in front of the camera lens. Which transport of Jews to Auschwitz is pictured in Lili Jacob's album? Who are the people posing for the camera with human skulls in the village of Wólka Okrąglik? When was the fake scene of the border crossing destruction enacted in Kolibki?

Fig. 3. Poster warning against rickets, Soviet occupation zone, 1947. Caption: „Rickets. Clinics for mothers." Source: Bundesarchiv Bildarchiv

In Germany, the question of the authenticity of photographs brought about one of the greatest crises in the politics of memory. In the mid-1990s, the Hamburg Institut für Sozialforschung [Institute for Social Research] had begun an exhibition on Wehrmacht crimes when it transpired that a few of the photographs were in fact of Soviet and not German victims. The exhibition was closed, to be opened again – corrections included – in 2001. As a result of this situation, the careful interpretation and verification of visual sources became a matter of state interest. Public debate accompanying the exhibition accelerated changes in the perception of the role of photography in historical research: photography was no longer just for illustration or forensic evidence, but had become a legitimate part of the research process. While Polish historiography discussions centered around categories of "truth" and "truthfulness," in Germany the basic concept became that of "authenticity" and its construction.[17] Instead of analyzing representation here in terms of the relationship of signifier and signified, we focus rather on the elements of representation which cause the image to be perceived as more or less authentic. Authenticity is not a binary category here, and refers above all to mechanisms that create ideas about the past, which we are inclined to deem historical.

Visual media that bear a less mimetic relationship to history have traditionally been accorded a subordinate role. Election campaign posters have been treated as an additional element in studies of political history; postage stamps and banknotes are

sometimes accorded the role of official state communications[18] (as well as being used as artistic or commercial images).[19] Advertisements – to return to our topic – most often appear as examples in work on economic history. For instance, Witold Kula[20] gave examples of ads in his work. Advertisements in academic work usually serve to show the existence of a variety of products in a specific historical moment, or to illustrate marketing campaign strategies. The image is here reduced to the role of illustration, on the margins of debate. Stylistic and typographic aspects are also sometimes discussed.[21] When the focus of attention is on the history of the market, consumption, or everyday life we do see advertisements, announcements, or the logos of well-known brands. It is no coincidence that neon signs and murals are today an essential element of commercial museums of communism – both in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries. These signs are slowly losing their niche status (where they were merely a decorative element, a curiosity; where the visitor was supposed to recall "Oh, yes, we also had signs like that") and becoming the subject of a historical narrative in their own right. They are no longer a mere motif that you talk *about* – they themselves have begun to speak.

These trends concerning the presence of history in the public sphere go together with the visual turn that is drawing attention toward the active role of images, and freeing us from a conception of images that limits them to being mere "mirror" representations of past societies. In other words, we no longer need to continue pointless debates about what a given image represents, but can ask much more interesting questions instead: what did it *do*? This applies to every kind of image – not only those of past events.

This shift is the result of a belief in the causal agency of visual culture, a conviction that has grown both due to the American tradition of research into the visual (cf. W. J. T. Mitchell's famous question *What do pictures really want?*) and because of European image studies. Horst Bredekamp, a representative of the third generation of the school shaped by the thought of Aby Warburg, popularized the French concepts of *acte iconique* and *l'image est acte*, developed as analogies to speech acts. Invoking the earlier concept of speech acts, Bredekamp further developed the concept of *image acts*, emphasizing that images do not just represent, but above all *act*.[22] German historian Gerhard Paul bases the following remarks on that theory:

> Images are not only representations, even less mere mirror-images of something that has happened; they do not reflect history in a passive manner but contribute to shaping it, sometimes even producing it [...] images are more than media that – using their aesthetic potential – convey or create meaning; images possess above all the capacity for producing realities.[23]

In analyzing the mechanisms by which images have created realities in the 20th century, Paul goes beyond photography and film, taking into consideration a multiplicity of media: posters and leaflets, labels, and advertisements. After all, the primary function of advertisements is to persuade, and their messages are directed toward the future. Their purpose is to incline the recipient to take certain decisions, which on the face of it have a political or commercial character, but further along the line will affect views and lifestyles. In this longer perspective, the relationship of these images to the "truth" loses significance, while their "authenticity" remains important. The latter is defined by a complex of relations between the representation and the conceptions it both creates and recreates.

In the same way, the advertisement – a medium closely tied to the history of modernity – is not only a source for researchers in economic history, but material for the analysis of social transformation and discourses on modernization.[24] The presence of advertising in non-capitalist economies such as the Polish People's Republic or the GDR allows us to reflect on the conceptions of life functioning in non-market conditions.

Paradoxes of advertisements in post-war Germany

In our attempt to understand the point of promoting scarcely available biscuits in the anti-capitalist magazine *Die Frau von Heute*, we should take a closer look at the place of advertising in post-war Germany. The simplest approach might seem to be to turn to the few publications dedicated to the subject, work that should shed light on our topic. However, these publications treat advertisements as providing useful depictions of their subject matter, but not as fully fledged historical sources – ads are positioned within the framework of the history of art, the history of design, or media history. Furthermore, there turns out to be a striking lack of examples for the period from the end of the Second World War to the formation of the two Germans states in 1949.[25] One might get the impression that, around 1944, advertising disappeared completely from Germany, only to reappear at the beginning of the 1950s in the Federal Republic of Germany. The author of the most extensive study on the subject, Michael Kriegeskorte, even writes that, in the period from 1945 to 1948, advertising was almost entirely restricted to political propaganda.[26] But even the most cursory glance at the press appearing in the four occupation zones at the time contradicts this thesis. Despite the paper shortages, economic crisis, currency crisis, and feeble demand and supply of products in the destroyed country following the war, all newspapers printed advertisements, and this included

the official press of the Allies. The Polish press exhibited similar paradoxes, but only from the mid-1950s on; as Judyta Perczak notes, there were almost no advertisements in Poland from the end of the war until the thaw of 1956. Perczak rightly emphasizes that public announcements in a socialist world were supposed to play an ideological role and not a market role[27]: the goal was not to increase sales, but to improve the image of the state and society. The situation in post-war Germany was slightly different. The Allies controlled all four occupation zones, with only one being governed by the Soviets. The ambivalent situation under discussion here is therefore that of the role of advertising following military defeat and in circumstances of extreme poverty and shortages – and not the role of advertising in a non-capitalist economy.

In the second half of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, access to the press in all the occupation zones in Germany was limited. The dailies were not actually published every day. At first, they would come out two or three times a week, with around four to six pages per issue. In circumstances like these, ads were a rarity, but a year later they were omnipresent. During the first post-war Christmas, the press mainly published articles with advice on how to *make* presents; subsequent years were full of suggestions of what to *buy*. The winter of 1946/1947 was one of the coldest of the century, and in many areas the limitation of supplies was worse than it had been in 1945, but nevertheless the press created the illusion of normalcy. Besides minor ads for local services like stitching or mechanical repairs, the majority of advertised products were simply unobtainable for readers.

Maria Höhn, a researcher into everyday life in post-war Germany, gave her impressions on reading the first editions of *Der Spiegel* from 1946 and 1947. There were whole-page ads for champagne, with models posing in long fur coats. Besides that, each edition contained fashion and gossip columns, all giving the reader the impression that the magazine had been

released under normal circumstances, rather than in a ruined Germany.[28] If we look at the weekly from the perspective of economic principles, we would say that, since advertisements were being printed, there must have been products, and since there was supply, there must have been demand. But in a post-war economy, these principles did not hold. Champagne was available legally in military barracks for Allied officers, and fur coats were traded on the black market. The clients for the coats were often American and British soldiers, who did not read the German magazines. We can of course assume that luxury items were (as per today) aimed at the small minority of wealthy customers – those who had managed to hold onto their fortunes or who had become rich by trading on the black market – yet the disturbed structures of supply and demand in a post-war reality require us to seek explanations elsewhere. As well as champagne, press ads promoted the application of creams, lipstick, hair dyes, and perfumes. The texts of the ads often referred to the challenges of everyday life. Advertisers would assure the reader that their cream would care for hard-working hands; lipstick would beautify a tired face (fig. 2); hair dye would camouflage the graying caused by stress; and perfumes would take care of you in a period when a shower was an unobtainable luxury. Since producers did not have any problem selling whatever goods they had, how then can we interpret these images? Supply was in any case limited, and consumers acquired everything they were able to – if not for themselves, then for exchange.

In the face of the inadequacy of economic explanations, we should accept that the capital generated by advertising in post-war Germany was of a social rather than an economic kind.

Magda Szcześniak has described similar phenomena with reference to the Polish post-1989 transition in her book *Normy widzialności* [*Norms of Visibility*], the difference in Poland being that it was not only a matter of legitimizing new gender structures but also (perhaps above all) of installing neoliberalism as the dominant economic model, which would then spread its impact into other spheres of life.[29] In Germany under reconstruction, advertisements redeveloped (i.e. brought back) normative models that had been lost in the war – norms according to which a beautiful, fragrant woman with a flawless complexion both looks for and after men. This narrative also addressed a demographic imbalance caused by wartime losses: in large towns, within the age group of 20–40, there were 140 women for every 100 men – among whom were many disabled veterans.[30] In smaller towns and in the countryside this problem was less pronounced, but the press still continually reminded readers about the "Frauenüberschuss" [excess of women]. In both the Soviet- and Western-occupied zones, women were convinced that they needed to compete for a partner.

At the beginning of 1948, ads for Wella hair dye (fig. 4) (still on sale today) appeared in both *Die Frau von Heute* and the weekly *Sie* [*She*], which was released in the American occupation zone. This example also shows us the limitations of analyzing post-war German advertisements by dividing them into the corresponding occupation zones.

Fig. 4. An ad for Wella hair dye. Source: *Die Frau von Heute* 1948, no 7

First of all, the same advertisements were printed for the press in the West- and East-German sectors. Secondly, up until the currency reform of June 1948 the German market was a common one, with free movement between the zones. The campaign for the Wella dyes in the various zones was also the result of the post-war history of the company. Once the owners had been dispossessed of their company by the Soviet occupation authorities, the firm moved from Thüringen to Hessen. Therefore, their advert served two purposes: it encouraged customers to buy their products and also showed that the company was still in operation – important information in the face of the relocation and limited access to information.

The star of the Wella ad is a woman seated in an armchair, watched by a man standing above her. The woman is slim and is wearing a light-colored, below-the-knee dress, the neckline of which emphasizes her breasts. In those years, the fashion pages of women's magazines featured similar outfits. Of course, the figure of a man looking at a woman is nothing new in the advertising of cosmetic products. The arrangement places the woman in the position of being twice observed: by the man in the picture and by us, the recipients of the advertisement. We observe the act of watching a woman. The caption under the illustration emphasizes that men desire young women:

> Men pay attention to that. "Unfortunately," you will say. But women with gray hair look ten years older, even if they are young at heart. Can we blame them for dying their hair with Wella-Percol lacquer? Though it is not available in the same amounts as before the war, it has kept the same quality.

This text is in many ways typical of the advertising sector of the time. It reinforces the patriarchal message of the illustration, where the man is standing above the woman, especially with the first, most visible, sentence of the caption, which implies that she must subordinate herself to his expectations.

Slogans about "young hearts" were also popular then – it was often written that too much work and household chores would lead to poor physical condition and premature aging. The reference to limited product supply is also typical; the ad takes us forward into the future, preparing its customers for the time when they will be able to buy freely, but for now their minds are being prepared, instructed as to how they should look and act in front of men.

Nutritional products for children were another equally interesting group of advertised products (fig. 5). Only mothers could get rationing cards for milk powder, but it was a product desired by others as a substitute for then-unavailable dairy products. Milk powder was given as an alternative ingredient in recipes for cakes and pastries instead of regular milk or cream – just as wheat flour was replaced, for example, by acorn flour. The choice of any given brand was also illusory in this case – getting any powdered milk at all was difficult; no one attempted to obtain a particular company's product. Advertisers did not, however, suggest alternative uses for powdered milk, presumably to avoid accusations of abusing the rationing regulations and to avoid reminding readers of the persistent scarcity of goods. Instead of reminding us that even milk was in short supply, advertisements offered positive images of happy mothers and well-fed infants (fig. 5 and 6); they stressed the nutritional value of particular

Fig. 5. An advertisement for Hipp baby food. Caption: „Soooo big on Hipp nutrients." Source: *Der Regenbogen* 1946, no 7.

products, as well as informing the public of their high calorie content. Companies like Hipp or Mondamim also reminded "customers" of their long business histories.

The rhetoric described here is based on a few, fixed, key elements. Firstly, in both the Soviet- and Western-occupied zones, the conservative status quo is emphasized – one in which a woman who wants to seduce a man is obliged to satisfy the reigning canons of beauty and look after house and children. In the face of the anomie of post-war German society and the necessity of renegotiating the social contract in almost every aspect of life, this declaration is not to be taken for granted. In those stormy times, opinions were voiced on the need for radical social change. Political activists claimed that since women were in the majority in this dilapidated social structure and the burden of rebuilding the country lay on their shoulders, it was they who should take responsibility for real social transformation – especially in view of the fact that men had been compromised by their political involvement in Nazism.[31] In direct opposition to these kinds of demands, advertisements highlighting mothers feeding their children, housewives proud of their shopping, and elegant husband-hunting ladies were a clear declaration that pre-existing social norms were to be upheld.

Furthermore, the advertisements of famous pre-war companies (Hipp, Mondamim, Dr. Oetker, Persil, Wella, and many others) invoked the traditions of German industry. They conveyed a clear message that those brands, which had constituted the identity of the German economy – both in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich – were still in existence and were undergoing a phase of redevelopment. This tendency was stronger in the Western-occupied zones than the Soviet zone, but since the nationalization process was only completed in the 1950s, magazines in the eastern districts of Berlin, Leipzig, or Dresden also included ads for private companies. It is hard to exclude the possibility that this was part of a more or less deliberate

ideological strategy: uncensored images of Western products (to repeat, unavailable at that time in any case) published in the Soviet-occupied zone presented the West as a place where you could eat your fill, wash, and be fragrant. However, I should state that I have not found any evidence that this was part of a clear and straightforwardly expressed policy of the Allies. Besides, in the first two years after the war, few expected the escalation of the Cold War and the closure of borders. It was only the introduction of separate currencies in 1948 that provided a clear signal of the deepening division of the country. The intermingling of the advertising market in the German press of 1946–1948 bears witness to the dynamism and multidirectional nature of the changes, including attempts to prepare for various outcomes, only some of which came to pass. The East German readers of *Die Frau von Heute* could not, in the end, hide their graying hair with Wella dye – when it finally became widely available, they had no deutschmarks to pay for it.

A third element worth paying attention to is the biopolitics which is particularly evident when private advertising is seen in the context of the messaging prepared by public institutions on health. Advertisements with images of chubby infants appeared in "conversation" with official warnings about hunger, infectious diseases, and rickets presented on posters published by the sanitation services (fig. 3). The Central Health Administration [Zentralverwaltung für das Gesundheitswesen] was especially active in the Soviet-occupied zone. In cooperation with the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum in Dresden, they organized campaigns, printing hundreds of thousands of posters that were put up in every part of East Germany. These showed children deformed by rickets or threatened with emaciation from dysentery or typhoid. In the Western-occupied zones, similar campaigns were organized at a local level, their intensity depending on the initiative of the corresponding local authorities. The world that could be seen in advertisements contrasted

sharply with these threatening images, but at the same time they complemented each other. Together, they constituted an iconosphere with a consistent message: those who follow the official recommendations (respect for hygiene, children consuming the recommended number of calories, visits to the doctor at the first sign of illness, etc.) could hope to lead the life that the ads presented: around a full table, with a well-fed infant, and by the side of a fragrant lady.

Were images of housewives and happy mothers with babies dangerously reminiscent of Nazi iconography, rather than a form of escapism? Did they not suggest a flight from the present moment to memories of the past or daydreams of the future? In the post-war press it was not rare to see reprints of ads from the 1930s or early 1940s. The producers of Velveeta cheese and Camelia sanitary towels promoted their products with the same images they had used in the Nazi press. The aforementioned advertisement for nutritional brand Hipp comes from the 1930s (fig. 5). Other post-war advertisements were probably also designed by pre-war designers – after all, Germany's unconditional surrender did not suddenly produce a new generation of designers or copywriters. The fact that the same people continued to work in advertising would explain the numerous similarities between printed ads before and after the war. But we should remain cautious in our hypotheses, as we know little about the preparation of specific campaigns – contributors' names are unavailable without searching in the

Il. 6. An ad for Hansi rusks and porridges. Source: *Die Frau von Heute* 1946, no 7

archives of those few companies which do still exist. In view of the clear visual references to Third Reich motifs and the potential continuation of staff at the companies, contents related to biopolitics take on a particular significance. This advertising, it turns out, was not only a technique for influencing future consumer behavior, but also provided continuity with the – albeit officially denounced – Nazi regime.

Conclusion

What do the advertisements we have discussed tell us? They are certainly not an eye-witness account of the situation of the post-war German market or proof of the availability of the brands being advertised – as we have seen, the products being advertised were unobtainable anyway. The ads invoke the aesthetics of a bygone era, and make promises about the distant future. At the time, they offered the notion of a tranquil and affluent life among complete families – light-years away from the socio-demographic realities following the war. We see again in this context the significance of the causal agency of images and how advertising impacts discourses about "normal" homes and "normal" families, invoking conservative paradigms. The careful study of advertisements opens up the possibility of historicizing reflection on the creation of social norms. In advertisements, we observe Gerhard Paul's conception in microcosm, wherein visual history is seen as a field to be researched in order to understand the mechanisms that construct realities.

Since previous discussions about visual history have concentrated on the recreation and imitation of the past and on providing evidence about it, advertisements did not seem a particularly interesting starting point for investigation. In the search for media that might bring out fragments of a bygone reality, we have naturally been drawn to images representing events from the past. From that perspective, images conjured up

by an ad agency of a housewife lauding her biscuits or of women happy with their dyed hair are of marginal interest. It is only when we take on the lessons of the visual turn about the agency of images – present both in English-speaking visual culture studies and in German image studies [*Bildwissenschaften*] – that we take an interest in a more diverse set of visual representations. The advertisement for the Deubel company presents a situation which probably never took place, but this doesn't mean that the image itself is inauthentic. Its relationship to the conceptual realm and to discourse is important – not only its relationship to facts. To fully appreciate this image's meaning, we need to immerse ourselves in the context in which it functioned – a world which had its own media, consumer behavior, and ideas.

1 Stig Dagerman, *German Autumn*, transl. Robin Fulton Macpherson (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2011), 7.

2 Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

3 Rainer Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft. Versorgungskampf und Vergleichsmentalität: Leipzig, München und Köln nach dem Kriege* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1991), 100.

4 Ibid., 101.

5 Ibid.

6 See also: Werner Faulstich, *Die Mediengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 2012), 199–200; *Plakativ! Produktwerbung im Plakat 1885–1965*, ed. Yasmin Doosry (Ostfildern: Cantz, 2009).

7 *1945 bis 1995. 50 Jahre Werbung in Deutschland*, eds. Joachim Kellner, Ullrich Kurth, and Werner Lippert (Ingelheim: Westermann Kommunikation, 1995), 53; Michael Wildt, "Die Zeichen des Geschmacks," *Geschichtswerkstatt* no. 12 (1987), 43–48.

8 Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

9 Dorota Skotarczak, *Historia wizualna* [*Visual History*] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2012), 10.

10 See, inter alia: Piotr Witek, "Metodologiczne problemy historii wizualnej" [Methodological Problems of Visual History], *Res Historica* no. 37 (2014), https://journals.umcs.pl/rh/article/view/245 (accessed February 8, 2020); Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past* (Cambridge MA: HUP, 1998); Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty," *The American Historical Review* vol. 93, no. 5 (1988).

11 Ivan Gaskell, "Visual History," in: *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

12 Gil Bartholoyens, "History of Visual Culture," in: *Debating New Approaches to History*, eds. Marek Tamm and Peter Burke (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

13 Daniela Bleichmar and Vanessa R. Schwartz, "Visual History: The Past in Pictures," *Representations* no. 1 (2019).

14 In the Polish literature, see for example: *Film i historia* [*Film and History*], ed. Iwona Kurz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa UW, 2008); Dorota Skotarczak, *Historia wizualna...*; *Foto-Historia. Fotografia w przedstawianiu rzeczywistości* [*Visual History...; Photo-History: Photography in the Presentation of Reality*], ed. Violetta Julkowska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2012).

15 Witek, "Metodologiczne problemy historii wizualnej," 161–162.

16 See: The Auschwitz Album, www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/lili-jacob.asp (accessed August 22, 2019); Marcin Kącki, "Powiększenie. Nowe oblicze znanego zdjecia" [Blow-Up: New Aspects of a Famous Photograph], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 13, 2011, https://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,9241381,Powiekszenie__Nowe_oblicze_znanego_zdjecia.html (accessed February 5, 2020). The history of the photograph of the border crossing has been carefully described in: Gerhard Paul, "Der Schlagbaum. Von der Inszenierung zur globalen Ikone des Zweiten Weltkrieges," in: idem, *BilderMACHT. Studien zur Visual History des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013).

17 Achim Saupe, "Authenticity. Version 3.0," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, April 12, 2016, http://docupedia.de/zg/saupe_authentizitaet_v3_en_2016 (accessed August 22, 2019).

18 See for example: Sheila A. Brennan, *Stamping American Memory: Collectors, Citizens, and the Post* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018); Katharina Klotz, *Das politische Plakat SBZ/DDR 1945–1963. Zur politischen Ikonographie der sozialistischen Sichtagitation* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2006); *Neue Staaten – Neue Bilder? Visuelle Kultur im Dienst staatlicher Selbstdarstellung in Zentral- und Osteuropa seit 1918*, eds. Arnold Bartezky, Marina Dmitreva, and Stefan Troebst (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005).

19 Piotr Piotrowski, "Retoryka banknotu. Przyczynek do badań kultury wizualnej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego" [The Rhetoric of a Banknote: A Contribution to Visual Culture Research on the Inter-War Period], *Artium Quaestiones* no. 2 (1983).

20 Witold Kula, *The Problems and Methods of Economic History*, trans. Simon Szreter (London: Routledge, 2017).

21 A review of Polish literature on this subject is provided by Agnieszka Janiak-Jasińska in the article "Zmagania historyka z reklamą: artykuły spożywcze w ogłoszeniach reklamowych początku XX wieku" [The Struggles of a Historian with Advertising: Food Products in Advertising at the Beginning of the 20th Century], *Przegląd Historyczny* no. 4 (2011), http://bazhum.pl/bib/article/282726/ (accessed February 8, 2020).

22 Horst Bredekamp, *Image Acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, trans. Elizabeth Clegg (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018).

23 Gerhard Paul, "Visual History, Version: 3.0," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, March 13, 2014, http://docupedia.de/zg/paul_visual_history_v3_de_2014 (accessed August 22, 2019).

24 In the Polish literature, see: Janiak-Jasińska, "Zmagania historyka z reklamą."

25 See, inter alia: Michael Kriegskorte, *100 Jahre Werbung im Wandel* (Köln: Dumont, 1995); idem, *Werbung in Deutschland 1945–1965. Die Nachkriegszeit im Spiegel ihrer Anzeigen* (Köln: Dumont, 1992); *Plakativ!*, op. cit.

26 Kriegskorte, *100 Jahre Werbung im Wandel*, 8.

27 Judyta E. Perczak, *Polska reklama prasowa w latach 1945–1989. O reklamie, której nie było?* [*Advertising in the Polish Press, 1945-1989: On Advertising That Wasn't There?*] (Warsaw: Elipsa, 2010).

28 Maria Höhn, "Frau im Haus, Girl im Spiegel: Discourse on Women in the Interregnum Period of 1945–1949 and the Question of German Identity," *Central European History* no.1 (1993), 85.

29 Magda Szcześniak, *Normy widzialności. Tożsamość w czasach transformacji* [*Norms of Visibility: Identity in Times of Transformation*] (Warsaw: Fundacja Bęc Zmiana – Instytut Kultury Polskiej UW, 2016). See also: Magda Szcześniak, "Weak Images of the Middle Class," trans. Patrick Trompiz, *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 11 (2015), https://www.pismowidok.org/en/archive/2015/11-capitalist-realism.-transformations-of-polish-visual-culture/weak-images-of-the-middle-class (accessed August 22, 2019).

30 *Berlin in Zahlen 1948–1949* (Berlin: Hauptamt für Statistik, 1950), 24.

31 Annette Kuhn, "Die stille Kulturrevolution der Frau. Versuch einer Deutung der Frauenöffentlichkeit (1945–1947)," in: *Kulturpolitik im besetzten Deutschland 1949–1949*, ed. Gabriele Clemens (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 88.

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