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Summaries

Christian Gerlach

Images of Hunger: Observations about Photography and Literature

Drawing from a variety of cases around the world, the paper describes the iconography of the photography of starvation since the late nineteenth century. There are a number of more or less constant – and increasingly criticized – elements which have been influenced by practices of aid campaigns, traditions of Christian charity and (neo-)colonialism. Over time, there were also a number of changes concerning clothing, geographical settings, pictorial arrangements, gender and age of the famine victims portrayed. Through a comparison with representations of starvation in fictional prose, this contribution also highlights limitations inherent to the medium of photography in depicting starvation. Above all, photographs usually make starving people appear as helpless innocent victims with little agency or personality.

Lukas Zürcher

“The Bread of Life”. Biblical Imagery and Mediatisation of Hunger in Africa (1900–1970)

Before 1960, Africa had not been widely associated with hunger. Particularly in missionary records hunger was not a dominant issue. However, the Africans were very much portrayed as hungry for the word of God and the Gospel. In the 1960s, such missionary concepts underwent fundamental changes. This contribution argues that these changes went along with a new construction of African neediness, which moved away from the lack of spiritual food for the soul to the lack of food to be able to physically survive. Christian imagery facilitated the shift of the construction of the one neediness to the other.

Maria Meier

“Where the Hardship is the Biggest ...”. The Supply Crisis in Switzerland during the First World War as Reflected in Contemporary Cartoons

This paper examines the media’s portrayal of the supply crisis in Switzerland during the First World War based on cartoons in three Swiss satirical magazines. Thus, the study firstly develops a new approach in the history of perception of the supply crisis, which has so far been little researched. Secondly, it provides an insight into the media’s portrayal of hunger in a modern society in crisis. The subject of nutrition dominated the satirical writings and cartoons from the crisis year of 1917 onwards.

The analysis illustrates the diversity and change in perception of the supply crisis and the patterns of interpretation contained therein. As is reflected in the cartoons, the experience of hunger was understood as part of a 'Swiss war sacrifice' and displayed in a larger context of inflation, shortages and general misery, but also of abundance, waste and profiteering.

Hines Mabika

The Famine in the Press of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital: Archaeology of the Mediatisation of Alimentary Crises in Africa in the Twentieth Century?

In late 1924, a famine occurred in Central and Northern Gabon. Neither the administration nor the colonial press paid attention. The following year, the consequences were felt up in the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambarene. The Hospital periodical – *Lambarene News* – issued several articles on the so-called disaster in French, German, Dutch or Swedish. How did private media deal with that famine at a time when African famines still had very little media coverage? This paper discusses the concept of media in that African context, presents the hospital periodical and offers an analysis of this context and the media coverage of that early twentieth century African famine. By focusing both on the media and on the media coverage of an African famine, this paper points out invariants or continuities about the use of media as an information vehicle as well as a 'propaganda' tool.

Valérie Gorin

"Millions of children in deadly peril": Save the Children's Use of Photographs of Starving Children during the Interwar Period

This article shows how a visual 'humanitarian narrative' of suffering became more widely used since 1919 in the context of famine in central Europe, through the modernisation of communication means by the first modern humanitarian organisations, in particular the Save the Children Fund. The roots of this narrative lie in the trends of scientific, medical, social and atrocities photography, which developed at the end of the nineteenth century and represented an aesthetic of suffering, especially by depicting naked bodies. The development of nutritional science also related to the representation of diseases linked to famine. At the same time, through images of impending death, it increased compassionate commitment from the public. These pictures posed challenges concerning ethical boundaries while at the same time providing realistic evidence on the context of famines. They also underlined the moral and political dimensions of the mobilizing appeals of humanitarian organisations in the 1920s.

Heike Wieters

The Fight against Hunger and Consumer Society. The CARE-Package in the Context of Mass Consumerism and “New Charity” Concepts of the Post-war Years

This article analyses the ascent and transformation of the humanitarian NGO CARE from a temporary post-war relief endeavour to Europe into a humanitarian NGO delivering food aid to the so-called developing countries. It places CARE's original best-selling item, the CARE-package, into the context of the American post-war consumer society and analyses CARE's marketing strategies and its choice of advertising images. In addition, the text shows how, by the late 1940s, the NGO changed not only its geographical focus and structure of revenues but also the 'products' it offered and the strategies it used to sell charitable engagement to its American donors.

Angela Müller

“India Needs Bread”. Werner Bischof's Photographs from Bihar (1951) – Politics and Iconization

Using the example of a well-known series of pictures from the Northern Indian province of Bihar taken in 1951 by the Swiss photographer Werner Bischof, this paper examines the path taken by a set of photographs to become an internationally acclaimed photo report. The examination of the conditions of production of the photographs and the changing context of reception reveal a shift in representations of the need for help, from a 'Western' point of view. Initially the photo series was embedded in the political atmosphere of the Cold War and was published in the American magazine Life as an expression of the relationship of the United States with India. Subsequently individual pictures detached themselves from the original context of the 1950s and established themselves in renowned exhibitions and donation campaigns as universally valid motives of hunger.

Felix Rauh

Carcasses in the Desert Sand. About the Visualisation of Hunger in the Sahel Zone 1973/74

The representation of life in the Sahara changed with the hunger crises that hit the Sahel in the 1970s. Tales of nomadic romanticism were replaced by a narrative of drought and famine. Photographs of dead animals on parched ground were emblematic of this change. Aid agencies more frequently used this type of picture to illustrate the Sahel famine than they used images of hunger victims.

This paper explores the reasons for the successful career of this drought motif that continued to be used even when hunger was no longer primarily explained by lack of water but rather by distribution problems.

The contribution shows that images of cadavers lying in the desert sand were particularly well suited to be integrated into stories of successful relief operations with which aid agencies justified their existence and chased after donations.