

PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/116066>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2021-06-16 and may be subject to change.



Dutch Face-ism. Portrait Photography and *Völkisch* Nationalism in the Netherlands

Remco Ensel

NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies
Herengracht 380, 1016 CJ Amsterdam, The Netherlands
r.ensel@niod.knaw.nl

Abstract

This article takes its cue from an essay by Gerhard Richter on Walter Benjamin and the fascist aestheticization of politics. It examines the portrait photography of Dutch photographer W.F. Van Heemskerck Düker, who was a true believer in the ideology of a Greater Germany. He published a number of illustrated books on the Dutch Heimat and worked together with German photographers Erna Lendvai-Dircksen and Erich Retzlaff. When considering what type of photography was best suited to capture the photographic aesthetics of the fascist nation, the article argues that within the paradigm of the Greater German Heimat we find not so much a form of anthropometric photography, as exemplified by the work of Hans F.K. Günther, as a genre of Heimat portraits that was better equipped to satisfy the need to unify two crucial structural oppositions in fascist ideology, namely mass versus individuality, and physical appearance versus inner soul.

Keywords

fascism; fascist photography; The Netherlands; fascist culture; W.F. Van Heemskerck Düker; folklore; National-Socialism; Westforschung

Introduction

This article examines the portrait photography of Dutch photographer W.F. Van Heemskerck Düker and addresses the meaning of the portrait in fascist visual culture. Van Heemskerck Düker started in the 1930s as an aspiring but unknown photographer. His great opportunity came during the first years of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, when he succeeded in becoming the head of the Photo and Film Department of the Dutch SS, and in publishing

* This article was translated from Dutch by Han van der Vegt.

several illustrated books on the Dutch *Heimat* within a period of just three years. Van Heemskerck Düker provided articles and illustrations on folklore and archeology for the periodical *Hamer* [Hammer] of the *Volksche Werkge-meenschap* (akin to the *Deutsches Ahnenerbe*).¹ In the last years of the war, he compiled two illustrated photo books on Dutch folk culture, which remained unpublished. He also collaborated with Dutch photographer and editor Nico de Haas, and with German photographers Erna Lendvai-Dirksen and Erich Retzlaff. He was known among archaeologists as an excellent photographer of museum artifacts.

In examining Van Heemskerck Düker's portrait photography, I wish to clarify an aspect of the visual culture and the aesthetics of fascist politics that, in my view, deserves more attention.² In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin presented a plausible scenario for the effects of the technological reproducibility of art.³ Aside from his observations about the demise of the uniqueness of the work of art, Benjamin argued that in bringing the image to the masses, photographic reproduction altered the political meaning of the image, and especially the photographic image. In an interesting article on Benjamin's understanding of fascist visual culture, Gerhard Richter foregrounds an intriguing observation, tucked away in the margins of the Artwork essay, about the face of fascism. In this 'often-neglected footnote,' Benjamin points out how in screenings of fascist display, '*sieht die Masse sich selbst ins Gesicht*' [the mass saw itself mimetically reflected] mediated by the technology of the camera.⁴ Benjamin, writing about German *Faschismus*, was particularly concerned with the strategy of presenting the masses with the alluring image of a consolidated national identity by means of mass media technologies. Accordingly, every monumental individual portrait by Leni Riefenstahl, Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, and (in the Netherlands) W.F. Van Heemskerck Düker could be seen as the embodiment of the idealized national community. The observer sees a portrait and recognizes a fellow countryman, and thus himself. The reproduction of these portraits facilitates identification and seduces the viewer into believing that he is part of the biographical narrative of the nation.⁵ This 'fascist scenario of seduction and persuasion that is

¹ The initiative for the journal *Hamer* came from Hans Schneider of the *Ahnenerbe* [Ancestral Heritage]. Barbara Henkes, *Uit liefde voor het volk. Volkskundigen op zoek naar de Nederlandse identiteit, 1918–1948* (Amsterdam: Atheneum–Polak & Van Genneep, 2005), 227.

² But see Thomas Friedrich, ed., *Menschenbild und Volksgesicht. Positionen zur Porträtfotografie im Nationalsozialismus* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005).

³ Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. In: *Gesammelte Geschriften* (Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1980), vol. I, 471–508, vol. III, 982–1063.

⁴ On 'face-ism' and Benjamin, see Gerhard Richter, 'Face-Off,' *Monatshefte* 90, no. 4 (1998): 411–44, 431 ('face-ists').

⁵ See on the biography of the modern nation, 'as with modern persons, so it is with nations' in which birth, death, and resurrection are linked in a structured narrative, Benedict Anderson,

fueled by the mimetic drives of mirroring, identification, and narcissistic reproduction' is successful when the viewer is simultaneously observing his own face and that of the nation.⁶

In this respect, particularly the *Heimat* portrait, as I coined the genre, helps to overcome two crucial structural oppositions in fascist ideology, that is, mass versus individuality, and the physical appearance versus the inner soul. George L. Mosse more or less alluded to the need for such an overarching solution when, in his introduction to *The Genesis of Fascism*, he discussed the 'urge' of fascism to 'recapture' 'the whole man:' 'Indeed, both fascism and expressionism share the urge to recapture the "whole man" who seemed atomized and alienated by society, and both attempt to reassert individuality by looking inwards, towards instinct or the soul...'⁷ In capturing the outward appearance, Van Heemskerck Düker and his colleagues believed they had pinned down the inner soul of the Germanic *Volk* and its brother nation, the Dutch people. I will elaborate on the mirror effect of 'face-ism' as a cultural strategy by focusing on the Dutch photographer whose books are stock references in the historiography of National Socialism in the Netherlands. Till now, neither his person nor his work has been considered properly.

Touring the Dutch *Heimat* in 1943

In the spring of 1943, photographer Willem Frederik van Heemskerck Düker settled on Heelsumsche Weg in Bennekom in the heart of the Netherlands.⁸ For someone interested in the cultural activities in the field of 'Folk Culture' and 'Rural Art,' this was an obvious location: Bennekom is located centrally in the Netherlands, near the agricultural area 'de Kraats' (where Van Heemskerck Düker immediately started to photograph), close to the archive for traditional attire in Spakenburg-Bunschoten, and not too far from the folkloric enclave of

Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 36. On nation and narration, see Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), especially Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: narrating the nation,' 1–7 and Homi K. Bhabha, 'Dissemination. Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation,' 291–322. On nationalism and visual culture, Michael R. Orwicz, 'Nationalism and Representation in Theory,' in *Nationalism and French Visual Culture. 1870–1914*, ed. June Hargrove and Neil McWilliam (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), 17–35.

⁶) Richter, 'Face-Off,' 418–19.

⁷) George L. Mosse, 'Introduction: The Genesis of Fascism,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 1 (1966): 14–26, 15.

⁸) Research was conducted in the archives of *Nederlands Fotomuseum* [Dutch Photo Museum], *NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust-en Genocidestudies* [NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies], *Nationaal Archief* [the National Archives of the Netherlands], and *Nederlands Openluchtmuseum* [Dutch Open-air Museum].

Hierden. From 1943 on, the photographer worked on a project that would occupy him for the last two and a half years of the German Occupation of the Netherlands (1940–45). From his operating base, Van Heemskerck Düker photographed Bennekom in May 1943; in June and July, he ventured across the Kraats to capture farms, agricultural activities, and especially the people living and working there of old. In the second week of August, he made a tour across Walcheren in the southwest, paying special attention to Arnemuiden and Westkapelle. Back in the Veluwe, it was now the turn of the triad Spakenburg–Bunschoten–Eemsbrugge, and a day later Drenthe (Olst, Havelte, and Giethoorn) in the north. So he went on, across Friesland, the isle of Terschelling, and the villages bordering the former Zuiderzee. On August 26, he was on Urk, and a day later, in Volendam and on Marken. In September, he returned to Bennekom. Thus, the photographer concluded a tour along the canon of Dutch folk culture, retracing the steps of many a colleague from the Netherlands and abroad during the interwar years. What drove Van Heemskerck Düker to revisit these predictable, not to say overworked, locations? What was the Netherlands that he wished to capture with his Leica?

Van Heemskerck Düker was born in 1910 as the only child to a family of pharmacists. His interest in photography, popular culture, and National Socialism ran parallel with his study in Agriculture (Forestry and Cattle Breeding) at Wageningen University. By the time he graduated in 1939, aged 29, as an agricultural engineer—a title he would consistently mention in all his publications and advertisements—he had been a member of the *Nationale Jeugdstorm* [National Youth Storm] for one year, a member of the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland* [NSB; National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands] for eight years, and active as a photographer of the relics of rural popular culture in the Netherlands for at least six years.⁹ He had been building, since his student days according to his own record, a collection of symbols displayed on farms and other objects. In 1941, ‘Our first emblems photographer’ claimed to own six thousand photos of such ‘rune signs,’ ‘sun symbols,’ and ‘life trees’ depicted on house fronts, milk bucket racks, door posts, and samplers.¹⁰ In that year, the ‘life signs’ or symbols of a vigorous folk culture took central stage in the exhibition *Eeuwig levende tekens* [Eternally-living signs], the film of the same name, and the photo book *Zinnebeelden in Nederland* [Emblems in the Netherlands].¹¹

⁹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Justitie: Centraal Archief van de Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR), 1945–1952 (1983), nummer toegang 2.09.09, inventarisnummer 28247: 4491/27. National Youth Storm, March 20, 1938, letter registration number 178 NSB.

¹⁰ *De Dordrechtse Courant*, November 22, 1941.

¹¹ Ir. W.F. van Heemskerck Düker and Ir. H.J. van Houten, *Zinnebeelden in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Hamer, 1941).



Figure 1. *Zinnebeelden in Nederland* [Emblems in the Netherlands]; book cover; photography by Van Heemskerck Düker.

After collecting emblems, which he seems to have stopped doing at the beginning of the war, he concentrated on *Heimat* portraits and prehistoric relics, both *in situ* and on display in museums. Several books on archaeology, ethnology, and race featured his photography. In 1942, in collaboration with Frisian nationalist S.J. van der Molen, he published *Friesland–Friezenland* [Friesland, Land of the Frisians], the apogee of his work on *Heimat* culture.¹²

¹²⁾ Ir. W.F. van Heemskerck Düker and P. Felix, *Wat aarde bewaarde: vondsten uit onze vroegste geschiedenis* [What the earth preserved: findings from our earliest history] (Amsterdam: Hamer, 1941) and the catalogue of the exhibition P. Felix and ir. W.F. van Heemskerck Düker, *Wie kent Germanje? Tentoonstelling over 5000 jaar volksche kultuur* [Who knows Germany? Exhibition on 5,000 Years of *Völkisch* Culture] (Amsterdam: Hamer, 1942–43); Ir. W.F. Heemskerck Düker and S.J. van der Molen, *Friesland–Friezenland* (Den Haag: Hamer, 1942).

Van Heemskerck Düker belonged to the ‘Feldmeijer group of the National Socialist Movement that embraced the Greater Germany ideal,’ as he would declare at his postwar trial.¹³ The Nazi invasion in 1940 created appealing opportunities for the members of this splinter group of aficionados of *völkisch* culture. The Feldmeijer group was named after the future head of the Dutch SS, Johan Hendrik (Henk) Feldmeijer, who in 1938 had co-founded the historical circle *Der Vaderen Erfdeel* [Heritage of Our Fathers], which was devoted to Greater Germany ethnic nationalism and anti-Semitism. It was closely linked to the *Deutsches Ahnenerbe*, the SS organization that since 1935 had been propagating a similar research agenda known as the *Westforschung*.¹⁴ The members of the historical circle were reluctant about taking a rigorous scientific approach to Dutch folklore. The photographic members should register living folk cultures, rather than document reenactments or commercial folklore.¹⁵ Van Heemskerck Düker’s collection of emblems were ‘living signs’ articulating *het innerlijk leven* [the inner world], ‘soul,’ and ‘worldview’ of ‘our people.’¹⁶ The same applied to the portraits he would make over the next few years.

The pre-war *völkisch* nationalism of this branch of Dutch National Socialism can be distinguished, but not entirely disassociated, from the popular nationalism of the interwar years. Popular nationalism in the Netherlands arose during the *fin de siècle*. It was based on the assumption of a Dutch people with its own proper nature and culture, not founded so much in tribute to the higher culture of arts and sciences—a focus always accompanied by the call for the elevation of the popular class—as in the praise of the simplicity and timelessness of the Dutch people. After World War I, these popular ideas took on a

¹³ Dutch Photo Museum: Documentation File Van Heemskerck Düker. Interrogation of Van Heemskerck Düker, Political Investigation Department Arnhem, Post Wageningen no ar. 11505, 4491/19, January 20, 1947. These documents are part of the NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28247. On the Feldmeijer group, see N.K.C.A. In ‘t Veld, *De SS en Nederland. Documenten uit SS-archieven, 1933–1945* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), vol. 1. Introduction / documents 1935–42.

¹⁴ *Westforschung*: academic research on the Germanic roots of the Low Countries. Burckhardt Dietz, Helmut Gabel, Ulrich Tiedau, ed., *Griff nach dem Westen. Die ‘Westforschung’ der völkisch-nationalen Wissenschaften zum nordwesteuropäischen Raum (1919–1960)* (Munster: Waxmann, 2003).

¹⁵ The members of the *Volksche Werkgemeenschap* aimed at a revitalization of folklore. Therefore, the capturing of a staged ritual was problematic. In *Hamer* (June 2 and 9, 1942), Nico de Haas disapprovingly remembers that when ‘the last West-Frisian wedding’ had been announced, the municipality had made a great song-and-dance, issuing invitations to photographers and folklorists. On the day itself, a grand decor of palm trees had been erected to cover the mass of photographers from view. From amateur to professional, from ‘simple box’ to 8 mm film camera. In one photograph, we can see how a fully costumed Frisian is photographing the photographers!

¹⁶ On the ‘living signs,’ see Henkes, *Uit liefde voor het volk*, 235; see also the introduction in Van Heemskerck Düker and Van Houten, *Zinnebeelden in Nederland*.

more radical form. In politics, the recently established liberal democracy was under debate. Pleas were heard for a new system, based on the assumption of a ‘popular will’ and the inherently democratic nature of the nation of the Dutch. Popular culture, glorification of the landscape, and the thesis of the trans-border Greater Dutch Nation—which included Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium—were recurring motifs in the public debate.¹⁷

The motivation behind the arising popular nationalism called for the preservation of a Dutch *Heimat*. The nation was presented as an entity that principally transcended state borders, administrative institutions, and formal citizenship. You could sense it in the emotionally felt and historically founded bond between people and territory.¹⁸ The reimagined *Heimat* could respect the state borders, or on the contrary violate them, as it could recognize regional diversity to a larger or lesser extent. For example, the idea of the Greater Netherlands—the *Dietse* ideology and the official line of the Dutch National Socialist Movement—presumed the reality of a Dutch-language cultural area beyond state borders.

Reasserting individuality by looking inward

Photographic practices mirrored two separate paths in the embodiment of the nation. The twentieth century had inherited from the previous century both a materialistic and an idealistic view on man as a member of the nation. Man’s body is the core of materialism and race is the central concept; in idealism his mental powers dominate, with character as the key concept.

Race photography had already been practiced for several decades.¹⁹ Anthropometric photographers had been capturing their sitters in a studio setting at camera level, both *en profil* and *en face*. Although an accurate representation of a single physical exterior was adequate, the wish to make calculations of the common denominator meant that the number of specimens mattered. Race scientists and psychologists such as Egon Freiherr-Von Eickstedt, Ernst Kretschmer, and Ferdinand Clausz in Germany, and Jan de

¹⁷ Ismee Tames, ‘Voorbereid op nieuwe tijden. De Nederlandse discussie over de “ware democratie” tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog,’ in *Moderniteit. Modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914–1940*, ed. Madelon de Keizer and Sophie Tates (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2004), 47–65 and Ismee Tames, *Oorlog, neutraliteit en identiteit in het Nederlandse publieke debat 1914–1918* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 205–53.

¹⁸ For an overview, Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (London: Camden House, 2002).

¹⁹ John H. Lamprey, ‘On a method of measuring the human form, for the use of students in ethnology,’ *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London (1869–1870)* 1, no. 1 (1869): 84–86; for Germany: Rudolf Martin, *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie in systematischer Darstellung* (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1928; first edition 1914).

Vries and S.R. Steinmetz in the Netherlands, made use of this older race photography.²⁰

In Germany, a broad array of strategies was devised to pinpoint what makes a people or a nation unique. For this, the concept of *Volksgeist* was introduced halfway through the nineteenth century. The first generation of users of this concept agreed on the psychological unity of mankind, as they were conscious of the analytical distinction between the individual and the collective. These finer distinctions became lost after the turn of the century. The emphasis increasingly lay on the idea that the individual was completely determined by the collective.²¹ When a people's character (in Dutch: *volkskarakter*) entirely determines the individual, it suffices to examine the mental or bodily traits of one specimen to reconstruct the general features of the collective. Samples could best be found in the countryside, where the process of individualization occurred much more slowly than in the city. The influential nineteenth-century 'anthropogeographer' Friedrich Ratzel wrote in his memoir (a pure product of *Heimat* thought) the following about the farmers in his village of birth: they 'had a natural resemblance to each other [*Ähnlichkeit*] that cannot be attributed to family resemblances [*Familienähnlichkeit*] since the genetic relations can be extremely diverse, also in this small circle.' The common 'attitude' of the farmers derived not from lineage, but from a generations-long bond in culturing the land. The territory was crucial here, and its influence lasted a long time. The villagers who had become city-dwellers could only survive '*weil es noch nicht alle Wurzelverbindung mit dem Heimatdorfe verloren hatte...*' [because not all roots with the native villages had been cut yet].²²

²⁰ Egon Freiherr-Von Eickstedt, *Grundlagen der Rassenpsychologie* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1936); E. Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter: Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten* (Berlin: Springer, Berlin, 1921). The *locus classicus* of German race studies is Hans F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des Deutschen Volkes* (München: Lehmann, 1922) but on race and photography, even more to the point are Hans F.K. Günther, *Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse* (München: Lehmann, 1927), and Ludwig Ferdinand Clausz, *Rasse und Seele: Eine Einführung in den Sinn der leiblichen Gestalt* (München: Lehmann, 1937; third edition), S.R. Steinmetz et al., *De rassen der menschheid: Wording, strijd en toekomst* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1937), and Jan de Vries, ed., *Volk van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1937). For other studies on race in the Netherlands: A.J. van Bork-Feltkamp, *Anthropological research in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: N.V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers-maatschappij, 1938), 1–166. On race and photography: Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics, 1870–1940* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

²¹ On the first *Völker* psychologists, Moritz Lazarus and H. Steinthal, and the change at the turn of the century, see Woodruff D. Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840–1920* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ivan Kalmar, 'The *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal and the Modern Concept of Culture,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 4 (1987): 671–90 and Matti Bunzl, 'Völkerpsychologie and German–Jewish emancipation,' in *Worldly Provincialism. German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, ed. H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 47–85.

²² Friedrich Ratzel, *Glücksinseln und Träume: Gesammelte Aufsätze aus den Grenzboten* (Leipzig: Grünow, 1905), 68–93 ('Mein Dorf').

Something of the *Heimat* had sneaked ‘into’ the people and held them together. Land, body, and mind gradually became linked. A people’s character told the story about the *Heimat* in time and space.

The diachronic study of a people’s character was based on the assumption that practitioners were able to acquire an understanding of the inner world from signs on the surface. A people’s character had to be read, not measured or calculated. *Völkerpsychologen* and folklorists were specialists in semiotics. They claimed to possess an expert ability to read superficial signs that remained incomprehensible to laymen. Just as a graphologist can read someone’s character from his handwriting, a specialist of the *Volk* could deduce character from appearance. It seems to have been a kind of gift of intuition or tacit knowledge that can hardly be formulated in general, scientifically sound terms, because there are no cut-and-dried rules to it.²³

Portrait photography could assist in penetrating the inner core of a people in symbiosis with its surroundings. A two-dimensional portrait of a sitter *en plein air* should disclose the link between mind and body in his familiar surroundings. One picture of a man in his *Heimat* was sufficient. In his significant study *Ghost in the Shell*, Robert A. Sobieszek maintains that ‘talk about the inner personality of the sitter has been noticeably absent from the discourse of photographic portraiture since the 1920s. Instead, the “surface” seems to have been the locus of all that is meaningful.’²⁴ I would argue otherwise. *Heimat* portraiture developed under the influence of German forerunners in the 1920s and the New Photography in the 1930s. The famous photo project of August Sander (1876–1964), *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929), consisted of building a collection of professional full-length portraits. The identity of the model could be deduced from clothes, attributes, and the background against which he or she was placed. Notwithstanding the depiction of the whole body and the addition of identity-determining clothing and attributes, Sander himself thought that the facial expression was crucial. In his opinion, the life story of a person could be read from the face. In the face lay the unique aspect—the aura in Walter Benjamin’s philosophy-of-art terms—of the individual model. According to one compliment, Sander’s portraits of farmers showed that they radiated ‘an inner peace locked against the outside,’ but had ‘human and devilish depths under the surface.’²⁵

²³ Semiotics and the interpretation of clues (‘subtleties impossible to formalize’) to the past in Carlo Ginsburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96–125.

²⁴ Robert A. Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul: Essays on Camera Portraiture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), 131–32.

²⁵ The compliment was given by the painter Jankel Adler as quoted in Gerd Sander, *August Sander* (Brussel: Vereniging voor Tentoonstellingen van het Paleis voor Schone Kunsten 1996), 136.

The photo book *Köpfe des Alltags* [Everyday Heads] (1928–31) by Helmar Lerski (1871–1956) was also influential, especially as regards perspective and lighting. By using a strong lateral light source, the German–American photographer accomplished a sculptural effect in his portraits. The registration of the skin was enhanced by rubbing it with a Vaseline-based ointment. Lerski tried to get as close as possible to the skin of his models, and thus to capture a natural essence, not hemmed in by civilization or conventions. ‘It seemed to me as if I saw inside the man, as if I could make visible the invisible,’ Lerski said in reference to his first photographic experiment.²⁶

These are only two examples of the enduring aspiration among interwar photographers to delve deeper than a camera seems to allow for. Photographers in the Netherlands were similarly engaged in the quest for the human soul. The ambition of the photographer Martien Coppens was to reach beyond the proper likeness for the ‘passport photo customer.’ The photographer should penetrate to the ‘innermost core of a man, to his character;’ he should depict ‘someone’s inner soul by means of a mechanical instrument.’²⁷ This was also the formula to unlock the tangled complex of body and soul as the essence of the national community.

Capturing the Dutch–Germanic *Heimat*

In the 1930s, *Heimat* portrait photography developed its specific subgenre conventions: Open-air photography; single portraits; the employment of sunlight and shadow to capture the surface of the face in as much detail as possible; the frog perspective copied from the Russian cinematography of Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Aleksandr Dovzhenko, and enthusiastically received in the Netherlands; and harsh black-and-white contrasts. Van Heemskerck Düker and his colleague and friend Nico de Haas were among the photographers who employed the international style of the New Photography (shown in photo journals and at the famous Foto ‘37 Exhibition in Amsterdam) and Cinematography for the representation of the *Heimat* of a Greater Germany.

Van Heemskerck Düker’s *Heimat* portrait photography also had precedents in Germany. During the 1930s, Hans Retzlaff (1902–65) captured farm life in the Black Forest on film and color photo (in part for picture postcards). His Saxon portraits also appeared in *Hamer*. Erich Retzlaff (1899–1993) also specialized in folklore photography. A special role was reserved for Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, who was of the same generation as August Sander. Her work was the epitome

²⁶ Helmar Lerski in ‘Helmar Lerski,’ *The Bulletin of the George Eastman House of Photography* 10, no. 2 (February 1961): 6–7.

²⁷ Martien Coppens, *De mensch in de fotografie* (Bloemendaal, Focus, 1946), 16. Martien Coppens had studied in Munich and was an outspoken admirer of Helmar Lerski.

of folk portrait photography. The photo editor of *Hamer*, Nico de Haas, could only discuss her in lyrical terms: ‘noble art’ ... ‘technically effortlessly controlled. Identified, sympathized, dug up from the deepest folk life and true, without the least indication of pose or urban alienness.’ ... ‘Directly captured from real life, with tact and simplicity, inconspicuous and unique and up to now unrivalled.’²⁸ The February 1941 theme issue of *Hamer*, which was devoted to roads, was possibly inspired by her much-praised photo book *Reichsautobahn – Werk und Mensch*, just as the visual doubling applied in this book—a juxtaposition of two contrasting photos together telling a story—was imitated in Dutch photo books.²⁹ Retzlaff and especially Lendvai-Dirksen deviate from the mass images by Leni Riefenstahl. Both belong to the interwar *Heimat* photography in which single portraits serve as a metonym for the people and a metaphor for the *Heimat*.³⁰

Erna Lendvai-Dirksen (1883–1962) started out as an independent photographer during World War I.³¹ In the 1920s, she began a series of regional portraits that gave her an introduction to Nazi circles after 1933, but that can also be considered pioneer work for a much broader shared interest in documentary folklore photography. Nevertheless, once she was actively serving German National Socialism, the character and meaning of her work clearly changed, partly because of the setting of the photos in a new context. Thus, according to her biographer Longolius: ‘In the early 1930s, the captions to most of her photos are still sober and objective, but in the course of time they become more explicitly ideologically colored and increasingly racist.’³² Her idealist search for the people’s character veered toward materialism with race as the ultimate denominator of the collective spirit. One photo historian even states that the work of Lendvai-Dirksen was ‘predestined’ to serve as illustration material for Günther and Clauss’s racial studies,³³ but that is putting it too strongly.

²⁸ Nico de Haas, ‘Met de camera in “Friezenland”’, *Algemeen Nederlandsch Weekblad* 6, 48 (1942) 1456–57.

²⁹ Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, *Reichsautobahn: Mensch und Werk* [The National Highway: Men and Work] (Bayreuth: Gau Verlag, 1937).

³⁰ Sonja Longolius, *Erna Lendvai-Dirksen – Modernes Sehen in Deutschland nach 1933?* Studienarbeit (München: GRIN, 2007), 12. However, as Richter, ‘Face-off’, 420, remarks about Riefenstahl: ‘In her photographic volume documenting the making of *Der Triumph des Willens*, Riefenstahl repeatedly evokes the importance of capturing beautiful, determined German faces that could reflect back to the *Volk* the simulacrum of its own visage.’

³¹ Longolius, *Erna Lendvai-Dirksen*, 4; Maureen Grimm, ‘Leben und Werk,’ in *Menschenbild und Volksgesicht*, ed. Thomas Friedrich (Münster: Lit, 2005), 39–48; Anne Dombrowski and Maria Wronka, ‘Gesichter der Landschaft. Eine Fotografin zwischen “Blut und Boden,”’ in *Ibid.*, 54–67; Katharina Berger, ‘Heimatsuche in Kindergesichte. Porträts von Land und Grossstadtkindern,’ in *Ibid.*, 68–77; Ulrich Hägele, ‘Erna Lendvai-Dirksen und die Ikonografie der völkischen Fotografie,’ in *Ibid.*, 78–98. See also Richter, ‘Face-off’, 421–422 on Lendvai-Dirksen.

³² Longolius, *Erna Lendvai-Dirksen*, 10.

³³ Hägele, ‘Erna Lendvai-Dirksen und die Ikonografie der völkischen Fotografie,’ 88.

As we saw, race science traditionally made use of a different type of race photography. Lendvai-Dircksen rather aimed for (a racialized) folk character: ‘*Wahrhaftigkeit und Mut, Reinheit und unbestechliche Treue haben in diesem Angesicht ihre Heimat gefunden*’ [Truthfulness and courage, purity and incorruptible loyalty have found their home in this face].³⁴

Das Deutsche Volksgesicht [The German Face] grew to be a thirty-volume series of photo books, each of which concentrated on one region. It started out with Schleswig-Holstein, but in the end also encompassed Norway, Flanders, and *Nordseemenschen* [People of the North Sea]. In 1942, the series was renamed *Das Germanische Volksgesicht* [The Germanic Face]. Even before that, she had started to write about the face of the German tribe. Lendvai-Dircksen probably also visited the most southwestern isle of Zeeland (The Netherlands), Walcheren, where she collaborated with Van Heemskerck Düker.³⁵ His pictures of Walcheren appeared in a special issue of *Hamer* and in a dummy for a photo book on Walcheren that never saw the light.³⁶

Lendvai-Dircksen was trained in the tradition of Pictorialism and was more eclectic in her approach than the New Photographers. Even so, De Haas and Van Heemskerck Düker set out to capture Greater Germany from a Dutch perspective with her photos etched on their retinas. De Haas primarily did so as a layout man, editor, and graphic artist for *Hamer*. Van Heemskerck Düker became the photographer who, with his *Friesland–Friezenland*, could rival Lendvai-Dircksen and her photo book on *Nordseemenschen*: ‘A pioneering book for a new age!’ by a photographer who went out ‘as a searcher after the essential, eternal and sound, after the general, valuable, and fundamental.’³⁷ Not only De Haas, but also the most important folkloristics scholar at the time, Jan de Vries, was enthusiastic about the book: ‘Those jaunty boys’ faces, the sturdy youngsters, the grave grown-ups, the level-headed greybeards, they all make you love the Frisian people and imbue you with the awareness of the beautiful source of *Völkisch* strength preserved here.’³⁸ Urban alienation and the strength of the people were opposites here.

³⁴ Berger, ‘Heimatsuche in Kindergesichte,’ 71. See in her own words, ‘Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, Zur Psychologie des Sehens (1931),’ in *Theorie der Fotografie I, 1912–1945*, ed. Wolfgang Kemp (Mösel: Schirmer, 1999), 158–162.

³⁵ Dutch Photo Museum: Documentation file Van Heemskerck Düker. Conversation with Mrs. Atie van Heemskerck Düker, January 8, 1999 [interviewer Flip Bool] and with Mrs. Atie van Heemskerck Düker-Bakker, January 31, 1997.

³⁶ *Zeeuwse pracht in Zeeuwse dracht* [Zealand Splendour in Zealand Attire]. After the war the pictures were published in Elsa van Heusden, *Walcheren zoals het was en weer worden zal* [Walcheren as it was and will once more be] (Den Haag: N.V. Boek en Periodiek, 1949).

³⁷ Nico de Haas, ‘Met de camera in “Friezenland,”’ *De Waag. Algemeen Nederlandsch Weekblad* 6, 48 (December 1942): 8–9.

³⁸ Quoted in Ton Dekker, *De Nederlandse volkskunde. De verwetenschappelijking van een emotionele belangstelling* (Amsterdam: Meertens Instituut, 2002), 221.



Figure 2. Sturdy youngsters in *Friesland–Friezenland*: ‘Of one blood. Boys from Friesland and Eastern Friesland;’ photography by Van Heemskerck Düker.

Not all photos were taken by Van Heemskerck Düker himself. De Haas, Erich and Hans Retzlaff, and Herman Heukels also supplied photos. But it was Van Heemskerck Düker who was responsible for the visual editing, and who in this way created a single coherent visual narrative from his own photos and those of other photographers. For instance, for a ‘blood and soil’ text of *Friesland–Friezenland* (the combination of land and people is already implied in the book title), the instruction ran: ‘Blood and Soil as large as possible and 1/1.’ The portraits of land and people were printed side by side in equal size. The same applied to the East- and West-Frisian boys on pages 156 and 157 (‘Of one blood’). In the instruction, they are linked by a brace ‘as large as possible.’³⁹ Here, Van Heemskerck Düker’s specialism in portrait photography came to the fore.

Friesland–Friezenland is the most explicit photographic representation of the Dutch version of the Greater Germany blood-and-soil ideology. This effect was partly achieved through two visual strategies: First, there is the print of a map representing West Friesland, the province of Friesland, and East Friesland as a single territory. A book about Friesland was well-chosen. Frisian nationalists already claimed an independent language, a history of their own, and a separate ethnic identity. The cultural area of Friesland supposedly included the territory north of Amsterdam (West Friesland) and the province across the

³⁹ NIOD 844: 53, 3 (manuscript *Friesland–Friezenland*) and 4 (list of captions to be added for the photos in *Friesland–Friezenland*). The portraits in *Friesland–Friezenland* were also printed in juxtaposition in *Hamer* 1, 6 (March 1941) under the caption ‘Salt of the Earth.’



Figure 3. Blood and soil in *Friesland–Friezenland*; photography by Van Heemskerck Düker.

German border (Ost Friesland). For exactly the same reasons that folklorists refrained from depicting a Greater Frisian territory, Van Heemkerck Düker chose it for the subject of his *Heimat* photo book: Its representation implied acceptance of the concept of the Germans and the Dutch united in one single Germanic People.

Second, there is the pairing of portrait and landscape photographs, sometimes with a caption about the connection between land and people, and yes, blood and soil, as rhetoric surplus. *Friesland–Friezenland* demonstrates the underlying idea of Van Heemskerck Düker's photographic activities. This idea consists in the recognition of a larger racial and national bond, but suggests—possibly even demands—a specific Dutch identity within that bond. This corresponds with Lendvai-Dircksen's regional series, and with the notion of *Heimat* as an expression of the relationship between region and nation. This explanation of Van Heemkerck Düker's objective also accounts for the photographer's outraged and, from his perspective, righteous defense to the postwar charge that he would have disavowed Dutch culture. According to Van Heemskerck Düker, that this is not correct is clearly shown by 'the titles of some of my works... such as *Zinnebeelden van Nederland* and *Friesland–Friezenland*, the latter work even being a recognition of Frisian culture.'⁴⁰

⁴⁰ NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28247: 4491/1162: 'Uitspraak op basis van zittingen van 23 december 1947 en 24 februari 1948' and the 'Bezwaarschrift.. etc., Arnhem 25 August 1948.'

In 1942, during negotiations for a color photo book (!) on the Netherlands with Metzner Verlag in Berlin, the publisher demanded that emphasis be put on the Netherlands' German character. The book, a collaboration with Erich Retzlaff, would never appear. Despite Van Heemskerck Düker's reservations, *Friesland–Friezenland* can only be read as a defense of Greater Germany nationalism, in favor of cross-border Frisian nationalism, against the 'advancing France'—as included in the manuscript at a final stage—and in favor of face-ism, a fascist nationalism embodied in portraits.⁴¹

Group-individuality: Recapturing the 'Whole Man' atomized by society

'We wish to be and to remain ourselves,' but in order to do that, we 'first have to become ourselves' and 'rediscover our own character and deepest core.' This cryptogram in the periodical *Hamer* assumed that the modern urban subject of the Dutch state was an artificial construct that had overgrown 'our' real, original identity. Rid us of 'systems and theories artificially forced upon us,' pull us up from 'a state of idle passiveness,' and contribute to the 'realization of the dormant powers' lying hidden in our people.⁴² By capturing the idealized other—the people, *het volk*, the *Volksgemeenschap*—we would rediscover our true self. In this way, the search for the embodied nation in portraits found its ultimate expression in the photography of a *Volkskörper* [The Body of the People] in solitary models. The solitary individual finds his true self in the *Volksgemeenschap*, and the community is represented in the exemplary character: the search for a *Heimat* as the search for a group individuality.⁴³

This is what Van Heemskerck Düker had in mind when he embarked on his journey in 1943: an album on the authentic *volk* of the Netherlands with faces that, just like the life signs in *Zinnebeelden van Nederland*, uncovered the 'dormant powers' of the Dutch as a Germanic people. It might have been his magnum opus, but all that remains is a dummy with the provisional title *Volk van ons Lage Land. Een verzameling foto's van het boeren- en vissersvolk uit verschillende streken van ons land* [People of our Low Countries. A collection of photos of farmers and fishermen from different regions of our country].

⁴¹ The manuscript as well as some other notes concerning *Friesland–Friezenland* indicate some small text corrections and retouches (NIOD 844: 53, letters on Friesland–Friezenland, manuscript Friesland–Friezenland with corrections).

⁴² Dr. Johan Theunisz, 'Ten geleide,' *Hamer* 1, no. 1 (October 1940): 1; the following three quotes are from J.H.M. Kapteyn, 'De historische grondslagen eener volksche werkgemeenschap,' Lecture May 3, 1941, Beekbergen. The 'partly changed lecture' is included in galley form in the archive of the Volksche Werkgemeenschap (NIOD 844: 20) The lecture was intended for publication in the journal *Volksche Wacht* [The people's Guard].

⁴³ Blicke, *Heimat*, 75.

In 1945 (after April), the photographer assembled a hefty photo album with captions. It consists of a carefully composed photographic tour along the highlights of the classical faces of the *volkse* Netherlands, with captions and sometimes short lines such as: ‘We Frisians kneel only to God,’ (across two pages) ‘Sober Folk, Sober wishes,’ ‘What the old were wearing, the young are wearing still,’ and ‘Do you know that land, wrested from the sea?’ As is usual in *Heimat* photography, the people depicted remain nameless and anonymous. They are identified by place name or by a legend: ‘farmer’s daughter’ or ‘fisherman.’ The professional titles were of no further importance; they were meant to indicate that we were indeed presented with an authentic ethnic Dutchman or Dutchwoman. The photographer divulges a name only very occasionally: ‘Joost,’ ‘Keessie,’ or ‘Hein the Huizen eelmonger.’ A model is usually presented as a representative of a collective: ‘We Frisians.’ In some cases, the photographer functions as a ventriloquist, giving his models a voice: ‘My life is good,’ the model seems to say.

Aside from captions and cartography, most of Van Heemskerck Düker’s portraits reveal the fascist *Weltanschauung* of strength, monumentalism, ruralism, conservative gender roles (the heroic male and caring mother), racial purity, and an obsession with signs and symbols. Judging from, in particular,

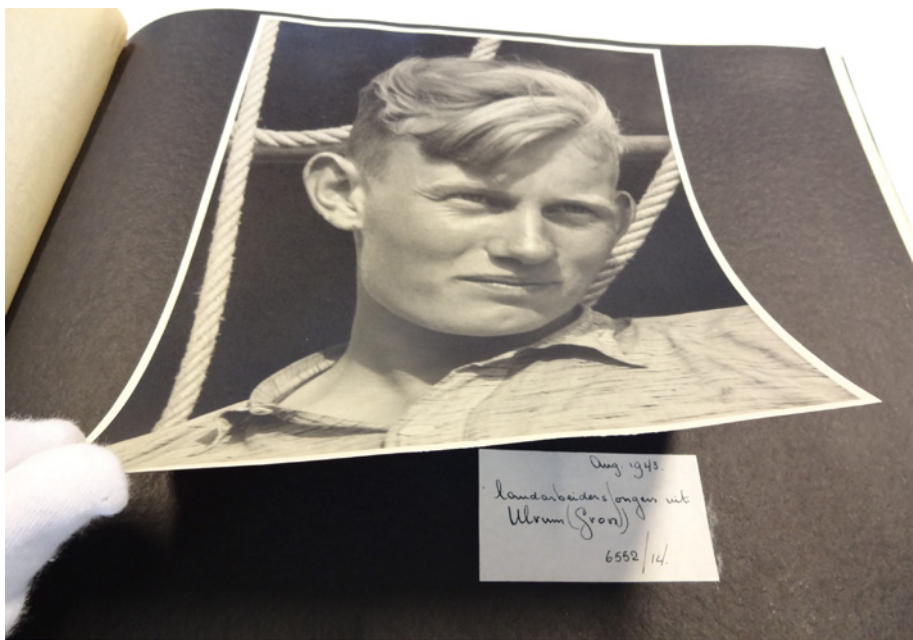


Figure 4. *Volk van ons Lage Land* [People of our Low Countries]; unpublished dummy, Dutch Photo Museum; photography by Van Heemskerck Düker.

Friesland–Friezenland and *Wie kent Germanje*, life was no laughing matter in Greater Germany. Models are sometimes dourly staring into a wide-open space. They are durable, experienced, ethnic, and rural. The light turns the face into a marked landscape that can be read. The photography is accompanied by vocabulary borrowed from both scientific racism and esotericism. This yields hallucinatory, and sometimes harsh, images and bombastic texts.



Figure 5. 'Men of the Nordic race made history, women of the Nordic race shaped and added color to our domestic life;' *Who knows Germany? Exhibition on 5,000 Years of Völkisch Culture*; photography by Van Heemskerck Düker.

Van Heemskerck Düker and, to an even greater extent, Nico de Haas were influenced by the modernist aesthetics of the New Photography with its black-and-white contrasts and diagonal perspectives. De Haas had been involved in the New Photography movement in the 1930s and in socialist labor photography, before turning into a National Socialist overnight.⁴⁴ He successfully applied modernist montage in the layout of *Hamer* to convey the story of the Greater German nation. However, both photographers may have copied the most effective rhetorical strategy, that of visual doubling, from the work of Lendvai-Dirksen.⁴⁵ It was employed in *Friesland–Friezenland* and in the periodical *Hamer*. An extraordinary example of visual doubling is the pair of photos, not taken by Van Heemskerck Düker, in *Hamer*, July 10, 1941, with the blood-and-soil line: ‘The world is the man, that is to say the inheritance of his ancestry.’ Our attention is drawn not so much to the eyes, as to their probing gaze, and not so much to the mouth itself, as to its being closed: ‘a closed mouth, just like the whole character of the Nordic race is introvert by nature.’ Just as with other visual juxtapositions, it remains unclear whether these models had any connection outside the publication. The man was also featured in Van Heemskerck Düker’s similar juxtaposition with a young male model (who later, in *Hamer* of June 1942, was identified as ‘sturdy Staphorst farmer’s son’) in F. van Schoping’s *Wien Neêrlandsch bloed... Het rassenvraagstuk en zijn beteekenis voor Nederland* [He who has Dutch blood... The race question and its importance for the Netherlands].⁴⁶ Here, he is coupled with the woman on the right: Two monumental faces, classic statues of the embodied racial soul, photographed in the same monumental fashion as the prehistoric bell beakers and the symbolic signs accompanying the portraits.

Race matters

Notwithstanding its emphasis on the search for a collective soul, Van Heemskerck Düker’s series of portraits has an undeniable racial undertone. They always imply the ‘whiteness’ of the Dutch and the concept of a despised ‘other’. His admiration for the Germans and his everyday anti-Semitism went hand in hand in his letters and writings.

⁴⁴ Moreover and more general: ‘Die bis dahin führende Rolle Deutschlands in Fotografie... erfuhr mit verboten, Repression und Verfolgung ein abruptes Ende.’ Günther Waibl, ‘Fascistische und nationalsozialistische Fotografie in Vergleich,’ in *Deutsche Photographie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, ed. Klaus Honnef, Rolf Sachsse and Karin Thomas (Köln: Dumont, 1997), 150–161: 158.

⁴⁵ Ulrich Hägele, ‘Photographic Constructions of Rural Magic? Dorothea Lange, Erna Lendvai-Dirksen: Two Careers between Pathos and Propaganda.’ Undated manuscript.

⁴⁶ F. van Schoping, *Wien Neêrlandsch bloed... Het rassenvraagstuk en zijn beteekenis voor Nederland* (Amsterdam: Volk en bodem, 1941).

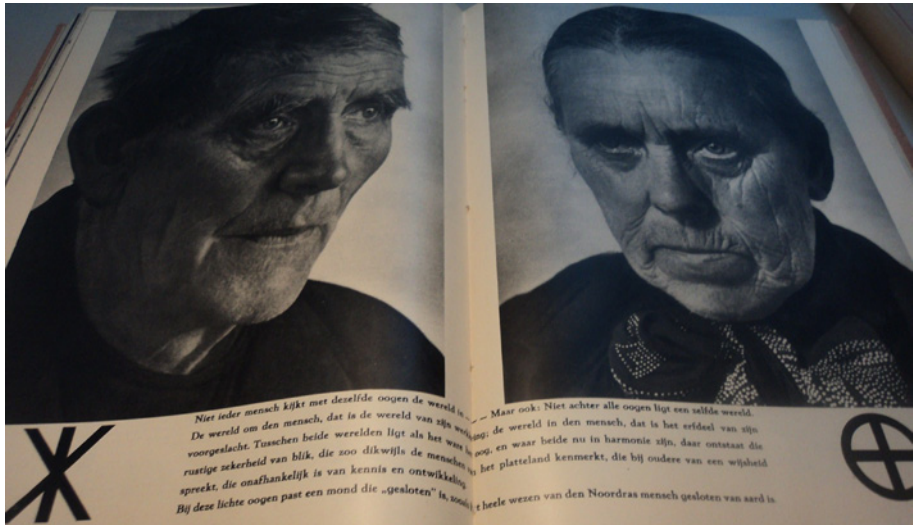


Figure 6. Visual doubling in *Hamer*, July 1941; photography by P. Thijssen.

To some extent, Van Heemskerck Düker's anti-Semitism was fairly common in the pre-war Netherlands, but afterward, it was held against him that he had tried to profit from the persecution by asking for information about vacant 'Jew houses' in Wageningen.⁴⁷ He eventually moved out of a hotel in Wageningen and settled in Bennekom with his family. His preoccupations also went beyond everyday anti-Semitism, as he declared after the war:

I am an idealist and an admirer of Hitler. Even before the war, I was attuned to him through and through. I believe that the inhuman excesses during Hitler's administration resulted from abuses of lower authorities. (...) As to the huge influence that a large number of Israelites exercised in the Dutch press [newspapers and weeklies] and in film, and also in cultural life, I was an opponent of this dominant position.⁴⁸

In addition, his photographic projects were part of the research program known as the *Westforschung*. This interdisciplinary research program united archaeologists, historians, scholars of language and literature, and folklorists. Every discipline could contribute narrative lines from its own expertise to the master narrative about the history and character of the Germanic peoples. Xenophobic tendencies were prevalent in their work and documentation.

⁴⁷ NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv.nr. 2824: 'Uitspraak op basis van zittingen van 23 december 1947 en 24 februari 1948' and 4491/62; Letter from Van Heemskerck Düker to Adj. Dir. Evacuation Office, January 25, 1943.

⁴⁸ Letter Van Heemskerck Düker to his wife, June 16, 1942: NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28247.

The concept behind this science revealed an anti-Semitic worldview.⁴⁹ Elaborating on the epistemology of Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, it was argued that science as a racially oriented endeavor departs from ideologically determined *Voraussetzungen* (empirically unverifiable premises), directing to an ethnic nationalist narrative that simply had to be true.

Van Heemskerck Düker also participated in the *Ostforschung*, the research program that focused on the allegedly essentially German character of the territory east of the Elbe. Lendvai-Dircksen depicted East Poland in *Das Gesicht des deutschen Osten* (1935) as long-lost German territory. For a Dutch *Heimat*, the *Ostforschung* became important from the moment the *Heimat* was Greater Germany, and migration to ‘the Eastland’ became a serious option. During a journey in June 1942 in the company of the German pre-historian P. Felix, Van Heemkerck Düker apparently unquestioningly accepted the forced relocation and persecution of the Jewish Poles for a ‘higher ideal,’ as witnessed by letters to his wife about his experiences in Poland and East Prussia:

For the rest, there is very little sign of the war against the Poles. Nearly everywhere, things are exactly as they used to be. In the former Polish territory, all Poles have been transported to elsewhere and are replaced by ethnic Germans from Bessarabia, Russia, and Hungary. In this way, gradually a uniform people develops. Poles who are ‘racially’ good were allowed to stay and are being ‘Germanized’⁵⁰

This genocidal ‘transfer’ of the Jewish population as a type of social engineering was intended to purify the Greater German territory.

The German Occupation offered immense opportunities to photographers such as De Haas and Van Heemskerck Düker who were willing to renegotiate Dutch identity. It enabled Van Heemskerck Düker, as an early adherent to National Socialism, to achieve a firm position in the study of folklore. After the war, he would characterize his work for *Hamer* as ‘extremely important.’⁵¹

Conclusion

Van Heemskerck Düker’s oeuvre and active correspondence with Dutch and German colleagues and scientists, confirms the importance of visualization in

⁴⁹ Science that is not in the service of ‘a culture’ is ‘a freak, a totally empty entity,’ a modern invention, by ‘Einstein’ and ‘under the direction of another race.’ J.C. Nachenius, ‘Een en ander over het Rasvraagstuk,’ *Volksche Wacht* (theme issue Racial Theory) 7, no. 1–2 (1942): 3–18.

⁵⁰ Letter Van Heemskerck Düker to his wife, June 16, 1942: NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28247.

⁵¹ ‘Ik erken medewerker te zijn geweest van het tijdschrift “Hamer”. Ik meende dat dit werk zeer belangrijk was’ [I acknowledge to have been a collaborator of the journal *Hamer*. I felt that this

fascist political culture as shown in recent studies.⁵² As such, this article on an iconic Dutch photographer was influenced by the cultural turn in fascism studies. As has been argued by Mosse, Griffin, and Eatwell, fascism thrives on the appropriation of the concept of the popular mass, the organization of mass politics, and the input of symbols that appeal to ‘all those considered to be authentic members of the national community.’⁵³ German and Dutch National Socialism and fascism share family resemblances in their visual narrative of national regeneration. Key were tropes of dominance and supremacy (as opposed to subjugation), the deceit of ruralism to distract from the statist modernist project, and a profuse and fetishist use of signs and symbols in the public sphere. Fascist regimes invested in mass media and technologies to impart their vision to a mass audience. Photography—maybe even more so in Germany and Holland than in, for example, Italy—supplied the visual material by means of which these visions could persuade and take root. Images could also be used as source material or argument in a debate. Through photos, elusive ideological positions could coalesce into accessible, materialized shapes and faces. The illustrated magazine *Hamer* was set up, with consecutive Flemish and German versions, to realize this objective. The intended result was a visual literacy on an unprecedented scale.⁵⁴ It seems an ironic commentary on the prediction made by Lazlo Moholy-Nagy in 1927—modernistically shunning the use of capitals—that he who remained unskilled in photography, was doomed to become ‘*der analfabet der zukunft*’ [the illiterate of the future]: ‘...*die fotografie wird in der nächsten periode ein unterrichtsfach wie heute das a b c und einmaleins sein*’ [over the next period, photography will be a school subject, as the ABCs and the multiplication tables are now]. Walter Benjamin, among others, approvingly quoted Moholy-Nagy’s analogy of future image illiteracy.⁵⁵

work was extremely important] NL–HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging, 2.09.09, inv. nr. 28247, 4491/62: ‘Tribunaal voor het arrondissement Arnhem (zitting 23 december 1947).’

⁵² Claudia Lazarro and Roger J. Crum, ed., *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2. See also Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁵³ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca, London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Quotation in Roger Griffin, ‘Studying Fascism in a Postfascist Age: From New Consensus to New Wave?’ *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 1 (2012): 1–17, 6; Roger Eatwell, ‘Ideology, Propaganda, Violence and the Rise of Fascism,’ in *Rethinking the nature of fascism: comparative perspectives*, ed. António Costa Pinto (London: Palgrave, 2011), 165–84.

⁵⁴ Paraphrasing Lazarro and Crum, *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, 2.

⁵⁵ Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, ‘Diskussionsbeitrag zu Kállais Artikel “Malerei und Fotografie,”’ *i 10* (1927–29): 233–35. Walter Benjamin, ‘New things about plants: A review of Karl Blossfeldt,

The portrait literally gave fascism a face. It also conjured up the chimera that the spectator had been given a face, a voice, and a medium of expression. It fostered the illusion of an organic community without differentiation or heterogeneity. The image of the nation was transmitted as a self-image, even when the result was patently absurd: Hitler with his ‘dark hair, small eyes, low brow, broad cheekbones,’ and Goebbels, ‘the conspicuously ugly super-dwarf’ could pass for role models of the Nordic super-race.⁵⁶

Van Heemskerck Düker’s record of faces of an ethnic people and his six thousand pictures of ‘life signs’ demonstrate a fascination with a banal and almost fetishist superficiality. Guided by a ‘rhetoric of presence,’ as Benjamin put it, the body was captured and read for the straightforward message it revealed about the collective body and mind of the nation. Ambivalence and multiple readings were ruled out.⁵⁷ Alternative readings should question the



Figure 7. A portrait by Van Heemskerck Düker on a wall panel in the Open-air Museum, Arnhem, 2012; photography by R. Ensel.

Urformen der Kunst,’ in *Germany. The New Photography, 1927-33: Documents and essays*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 20–22.

⁵⁶ Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 317–18.

⁵⁷ Richter, ‘Face-off,’ 422–23.

effort of taking photographs during wartime, and instead examine how portraits might have been used locally as mnemonic devices and vehicles of self-fashioning. They should ask what faces were left unphotographed, the ‘unusable faces’ of fascist visual culture.⁵⁸ They might stress multivocality and the multiple uses to which images can be put. At a recent exhibition of traditional attire at the Open-air Museum in Arnhem, I happened upon an immense print of a portrait on a large wall panel. The photograph was taken by Van Heemskerck Düker in 1944 in the village of Koudekerke, Walcheren. I could identify the sitter by name, because Van Heemskerck Düker’s annotations give privileged access to the personal and family names of the men and women who served as models for his portrait gallery of eternal types. Hannie Flipse-de Haan was one of his favorite sitters. The curator possibly did not know about the photographer’s archive, maybe he was not after a reading that takes the museum’s collection history into account. A rereading of the portrait might have given the sitter a voice, or have led to a reconsideration of the relationship between the collective and the individual that is involved in making pictures and staging them for an exhibition.

⁵⁸) *Ibid.*, 437.