Pictures present "an important instrument in memory cultures." As "they prevent the sidelining of certain historical events from the collective consciousness," they also "gain the status of historical events" in the globalized media. These observations introduce Susi Frank's anthology on Eastern European visual memory, *Bildformeln: Visuelle Erinnerungskulturen in Osteuropa*, which combines thirteen essays on topics ranging from the storming of the Winter Palace as the iconic image for the 1917 Revolution to the insect metaphor in post-1990 Eastern European discourses.

While we commonly think of history as narrative, it also consists of images, many of which may translate ideas much more powerfully than a reasoned argument or a narrative account. At the same time, however, they may also be more readily manipulated than a factual or argumentative text, as they can be staged or otherwise manipulated; or they can be drawn, painted or sculpted in the first place. Moreover, due to their ambiguity, their discursive framing may decisively shape their interpretation or truth value. These characteristics turn the visual into a powerful public relations tool.

Addressing these problematics, Frank's collection of essays presents a significant contribution to a fast-growing body of scholarship that foregrounds imagistic communication and, accordingly, has been labelled the Visual, or Iconic, Turn. While framing a shift in emphasis from written discourse to the visual as a paradigm change, many of its concepts derive from the 20th century Linguistic Turn, which provides its cue. Following Friedrich Schiller's suggestion that it is "language, which writes and thinks for you," the latter had foregrounded the impact of the medium of language on the message in much the same way in which the Visual Turn examines images by taking into account their medial properties.

As the correspondences between Visual and Linguistic Turn suggest an inter- and transmediality, it is only fitting that Frank enmeshes both the visual and the verbal in her newly coined term, *Bildformeln*, or 'pictorial formulae,' which she boldly announces in the title of the volume. However, instead of placing her terminological innovation into the theoretical framework outlined above, she derives her term from Aby Warburg's description of a *Pathosformel*, a formula of or for pathos, which he understood as an iconographically coded language of emotionally highly charged gestures that, like verbal language, is recognizable because it partakes in a convention and is recoded with usage. In defining her notion of pictorial formulae, Frank abstracts from the psychological charge of the gesture that is part of Warburg's concept and concentrates instead on Warburg's linguistic conceptualization of images. To be sure, Warburg's theory can be understood as a precursor or parallel development to the Linguistic Turn and certainly anticipates the Visual one. Placing her concept of pictorial
formulae more squarely into these critical movements would have given Frank and her collaborators access to a broader and more precise terminology, which in turn would have been conducive to their analyses.

Underscoring the importance of the visual especially to contemporary discourses, Frank's anthology presents examinations of pictures—or rather, pictorial formulae—that have played a critical role in 20th century memory and power politics, and continue to do so in current discourse, not only in Eastern Europe, but also globally, making the collection highly relevant also beyond Slavic or Eastern European Studies.

Of the volume's thirteen chapters, I will highlight just five, although all deserve close attention. Opening the collection with the programmatic "Geschichte wird mit dem Objektiv geschrieben" ("History Is Written with the Lens"), Sylvia Sasse traces the iconic storming of the Winter Palace from its original 1920 theatrical (re)enactment, which used the 1789 storm on the Bastille to model a credible illustration for the 1917 October Revolution as a mass uprising. The theatrical creation of images marks the intersection of history writing and history making. While the actual events had unfolded quite differently, it is the theater performance, as transmitted by photography, that 'made history.' In subsequent editions of the photographs, the visual remnants pointing to the theatricality of performance were eliminated and the restaging of the theatrical event in Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 *Battleship Potemkin* (which, although itself a performance, presents no markers of performance) seemed to confirm the historical narrative.

In the same way, Dmitrij Baltermanc's photographs of the Kerch massacres have been iconicized the world over, but, as David Shneer shows, at the cost of identifying the primary victims as Jewish. In the winter of 1941 and the summer of 1942, the German occupiers had murdered thousands of Jews along with hundreds of Russians, Ukrainians and Tartars at Kerch. Investigating how various discursive contexts render different interpretations of the photographed event, he shows how different media and different verbal designations effect different messages and how different agendas prompted the photographer and respective editors to make different choices as to framing and picture selection. While their choices ensured the wide dissemination of the images—which advanced from national media during wartime to international renown in the post-war period—they also dissimulated the predominantly Jewish victimhood, universalizing the Holocaust (p. 162).

The boy with the raised hands from the Warsaw Ghetto similarly has entered the global visual vernacular. Photographed during raids by an unidentified SS man, it had originally been submitted as evidence for Nazi crimes to the 1945 International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. Since Alain Resnais's 1956 film *Night and Fog* brought the image to worldwide attention, it has become probably the most often reproduced photograph of the Holocaust. Jeremy Hicks questions this extensive reception of the photo, as it is shot from the perpetrator's perspective. In contrast to the boy, an exhumed woman's skull, in a lesser known picture from Drobitsky Yar near Kharkiv, looks directly at the viewer (p. 219). The different perspectives with which the photographs engage the viewer inform their respective messages and may have contributed to the popularity of one and the relative oblivion of the other.
Resnais's *Night and Fog* likewise, popularized footage from Wanda Jakubowska's 1948 feature film *The Last Stage*. An Auschwitz survivor and committed communist, Jakubowska, overcame, as Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska points out, considerable resistance to film her camp experiences in the immediate aftermath of the war. The temporal proximity prompted the subsequent recycling of images from the film as documentary material without acknowledgement of the source (p. 238-239). Without marking them as a *post-factum* reconstruction produced from the perspective of a privileged inmate with a clear political conviction and catering to the sensibilities of shell-shocked post-war audiences, this uncritical reception has continued with Hollywood blockbusters such as Steven Spielberg's 1993 *Schindler's List*, and consequently, shaped the global perception of the Holocaust (p. 237-239, 242, 245). With respect to Jakubowska's images, Saryusz-Wolska speaks of the "vitality of the pictures," which is in tension with their veracity and demands problematization (p. 241-242, 247).

Finally, the flag-hoisting trope, examined by Alexander Schwarz, is not unique to Eastern European contexts, but gains a special contemporary relevance here, as it used to negotiate current disputes in the region. Historically, Schwarz shows, the act has denoted a heroic gesture to stake out claims for the Soviet/Russian empire, from the Reichstag to the North Pole, with highly contrived and manipulated images. In turn, these theatrical (re)enactments were presented as reality (p. 107), a theme Schwarz's contribution shares with Sasse's and other chapters of the anthology.

As the sampling shows, the volume's essays tightly interlink not only geographically and in terms of subject matter, but also thematically. One such theme is authenticity. Constructed, asserted or read into images, accepted as given, ambiguous or deliberately undermined, the immediacy of the connection between a depiction and what it depicts confers political and social currency. How much of that currency is valid? As several, if not most, contributions to the collection highlight, it is dealt as evidence and not only forms the basis of memory but also historiography.

Another overarching topic, which ties in with the supposed veracity or "vitality of the pictures," is affectivity—whether in the sense of Aby Warburg's original *Pathosformula*, in the sense of the viewer's emphatic mimicry of the depicted or in a wider sense, in which images readily invoke an emotional response because they seem to situate the viewer more completely or immediately into a representation. Affect conditions the mind and may circumvent critical and intellectual faculties. Hence, it invites questions as to the underpinnings of societies that employ it as a means of political and social control instead of banking on the Enlightenment ideals of freedom of information and rational choice, which still underlie our understanding of democracy.

A third theme the studies share is the medial intersection, mutual conditioning and significationary co-determination not only of text and image, but also of genre, venue of publication and larger socio-political framework. Depending on their constellation, these contexts may imbue the same image with very different meanings and define the degree of veracity and affect it invokes. It is here, in its use, that we have to look for the visual's political instrumentalization instead of in the image itself, as Frank claims, when she asserts that, citing Horst Bredekamp, it has agency and even subjectivity (which entails, by implication, intent; p. 12).
Missing in the essays are observations regarding the ambiguity of the image, which may give viewers pause and invite them to question any instrumentalizing frameworks, including that of scholarship itself. Is it, for instance, misplaced to see human suffering in the wailing women of Kerch, as Shneer argues? Were these women not suffering terribly? Is it wrong to define the victims of the Kerch mass executions as Soviet citizens? After all, weren't they that also? Visual openness and indeterminacy can also be—and perhaps should be—a provocation for thought.

While the volume presents 'pictorial formulae' used in Eastern European contexts, it contains scant inquiry into the prevalence and specificity of pictorial formulae in Eastern European discourses. From Emir Kusturica's Trabant-eating pig of the 1990s or the 1960s surreal father and son confrontation in Marlen Khutsiev's I Am Twenty to the ubiquitous caged birds of East German film, the visual serves as a code, often as excess, for political communication. Scholarship on Eastern Europe has paid too little attention to these discourses and how they conveyed—and continue to convey—political content in perhaps more profound ways than the often asserted, but rarely proven freedom of information in the West. [1]

In this regard, it seems noteworthy that only two or five of the thirteen contributors to the volume work at institutions in former Eastern Europe, depending on whether the East German institutions in Potsdam, East Berlin and Leipzig are included in the count. The predominance of Western views along with some unselfreflexive, if not outrightly condescending judgments smack of cultural colonialism. Several authors, for instance, critique the Soviet refusal to model helpless victims waiting to be liberated by the next empire, evil or not, completely ignoring the assertion of historical agency at the core of Marxist thinking; without it, there could be no revolution. Marx's dictum, "Philosophers have interpreted the world differently; what counts is to change it," stood at the entrance of the Humboldt University in the Eastern part of Berlin—Susi Frank's home institution—and it still does. Some would argue, rightly so. Eastern European Studies cannot ignore the Eastern European perspective.

Another regrettable feature of the volume is the quality of the images. In some cases, their small size and low resolution renders the discussed details impossible to discern. Their format often withholds what they are supposed to show, turning them into mere tokens of evidence and detracting from the outstanding quality and thought-provoking relevance of the scholarship presented in this volume.

[1] Justin Jampol's regrettably still unpublished dissertation is a significant contribution in this respect (Oxford University, 2011). While the essays in Bildformeln evidence the pervasiveness of visually coded communication in high culture or state propaganda, Jampol has shown how these images were appropriated by broad grassroots movements as opposed to political or artistic elites. In turn, the political punch of this visual discourse was understood in its significance as holding the state accountable for its program and promise by a very broad demographic. The visually remarkable banners of the 1989 revolutions provide a case in point.

Zitierweise:
M.A. Evelyn Preuss: Rezension zu: Susi K. Frank (Hg.): Bildformeln. Visuelle Erinnerungskulturen in Osteuropa,