

trope 32

Tweede Fase 56, 121

U

Ulrich, Hans 60, 65-66, 97, 123, 156

Ut, Nick 24

V

Vercauteren, Frans 10, 65, 123

Vereniging van docenten in Geschiedenis en Staatsinrichting in Nederland
(VGN) 50-51, 57, 65, 172

Verleden van Nederland 113-114

Vermeer, Evert 103, 111-114

verzuiling 55, 58, 60

visual culture studies 18, 36, 40, 110

volkstribuun 100, 106, 114-115, 185

Vos, Chris 22, 108

Vragen aan de Geschiedenis 117-118, 121-124, 155

W

Warburg, Aby 27

Warhol, Andy 34

Warner Marien, Mary 76

Watté, Marcel 22

Wijffes, Huub 108, 187

Wilschut, Arie 10, 49-56, 65-67, 123, 156, 164, 176

Wineburg, Samuel S. 37, 38, 42

World Press Photo 9, 21

Z

Zelizer, Barbie 30, 40, 41, 69

Zeumeren, Arjan van 10, 172

Zoonen, Liesbeth 134-141

SUMMARY

CANONICAL ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHS

THE ROLE OF (PRESS) PHOTOS IN DUTCH HISTORIOGRAPHY

Anyone who flicks through history books about the same topic will often see the similar photographs. On the cover of a book about the war in Vietnam, one will see a photo of a girl fleeing from a napalm bombardment. In a book on the fall of the Berlin wall, a photo will be published of people smashing into the wall and in a chapter about the 9/11 attacks, one can expect a photo of the second plane hitting the World Trade Centre. These types of images are called iconic photographs. This study considers iconic photos as photographs that have been reproduced more than once, that have a special composition, that refer to archetypes and have the potential to be an archetype itself, and that thus represent more than what is being displayed. Although this symbolic meaning is immediately obvious, it may change over time. Since a group of people know these photographs and attribute the same meaning to it, they are part of a 'collective memory'. The above mentioned photographs are examples of global icons. However, iconic photographs also exist at a national level.

This thesis is about Dutch iconic photographs and addresses the following research questions: *Which pictures of people, events or social processes function as iconic photographs in Dutch history textbooks and form the 'canon' of Dutch iconic photographs? What role do these pictures play in Dutch historiography and why do these images serve as icons?* We defined 'iconic photographs' by using three types of criteria referring to the production, distribution and reception of the photos. This study mainly focuses on the production and distribution level. To answer the first research question we examined 411 Dutch history textbooks, published in the period 1970 – 2000. We identified 3.921 photographs and entered these into a database, resulting in a chart with the top ten most-published photographs. These photos are considered to *function* as iconic photographs since it is likely that most pupils on Dutch high schools have seen these photos. However, we do not conclude these photos *are* iconic since we did not directly investigate their reception and memory process.

To study the role of iconic photos in Dutch historiography and, thereby, to answer the second research question, we conducted two case-based studies on the most often published photos. We first focussed on a photo of Dutch socialist politician Pieter Jelles Troelstra giving a speech in which he advocates universal suffrage, 17 September 1912. We analysed the afterlife of the photo to investigate how it was used after its initial publication. We conclude that Troelstra claimed

the photo in order to influence his public representation. Troelstra, being not only a politician but also a journalist, was aware of the role of the media and photography in particular. The photo was published only once after the actual event but a cropped version of the photo was used on a postcard which was distributed in socialist circles. Eventually, Troelstra reused the photo in his autobiography seventeen years later. After his death in 1930, this particular photo was published widely by socialist media, underlining the presumption that Troelstra found this image most suitable to represent himself. He partly succeeded in influencing his representation process. The photo is used on most biographies; a painting refers to the photo, as well as a scene in a Dutch movie on Troelstra and his first wife. When analysing the use of the photo in the history textbooks we found that it is rarely used to illustrate Troelstra's battle for universal suffrage. It mainly illustrates sections about the development in Dutch socialism and Troelstra's failed attempt for a revolution in 1918. After the revolution in Germany, Troelstra envisioned the same uprising in the Netherlands. In two speeches he pleaded for this revolution but did not get the support he expected. As a consequence, his influence as a national politician faded after this failure. In Dutch historiography, Troelstra is mainly remembered for this failed revolution attempt. However, in several history textbooks the photo of his speech in 1912 is also used to illustrate this failed attempt. Therefore, not only textbooks use the picture in a wrong context; we found the same use of the photo in other books, a newspaper article and a Wikipedia lemma.

To understand how textbooks are produced and images are selected we interviewed twelve editors of history textbooks and three picture editors. Inspired by methods of studying gatekeeping practices we found that the editors share the same personal background, mainly write textbooks with colleagues they know through their network, and that they have limited time to search for images. Consequently, they are more likely to reuse images of preceding books, also because their publishing house sometimes requests them to reuse half of the images of books they have already published in order to save on copyright payments. Moreover, the 'flip-value' of a textbook plays an important role when selecting the images. It is assumed that potential buyers do not read the book thoroughly but flip through it and mainly look at the images that should therefore be well-known images that can be recognised by potential customers.

We furthermore conclude that the individual memory of the editors plays a pivotal role in the process of selecting images. Photos are selected only after the topics of the texts are determined. Editors first consult their own memory to come up with suitable images and then search for that particular image in similar

books or their personal archive. In memory studies, these media are considered as cultural memory. However, the personal memory of editors is shaped by their own biography and the cultural memory products they have seen during their life. Furthermore, we consider history textbooks as national history products since they are produced from a scientific approach by professional historians. These terms – individual memory, cultural memory and national history – originate in memory studies and their interplay shows how the personal memory of editors is shaped by the cultural memory and national history products they have seen during their life. At the same time they produce new national history products in which their personal representation of historic events, topics and processes is transferred to next generations, leading to a circular process in which iconic photos are transferred to future cohorts.

When the editors of the textbooks were asked about the most important photo of Pieter Jelles Troelstra, they primarily responded by describing the photo from 1912, but immediately attributed it to his failed attempt of the revolution in 1918. This experiment showed the role of personal memory and how leading insights in historiography are associated with the best-known photo, which, as in this case, often leads to the misuse and incorrect dating of the picture.

The second case study focuses on a photo of the feminist group *Dolle Mina* who protested at a conference for gynaecologists for the right to abortion, 14 March 1970. Before entering the actual conference, they pose for a photographer and show the slogan which was written on their abdomen: 'Boss in own belly'. This photo was published immediately in most Dutch newspapers, which resulted in a lot of attention for Dolle Mina. Right from the start, they organised playful protests in order to gain as much media attention as possible. They informed journalists beforehand of upcoming protests and ensuring the appeal of the visual representation by having the most attractive feminists pose for the photographers. Moreover, just like Troelstra did with his photo, we conclude Dolle Mina claimed the photo of their 1970 protest as well. They published the photo in their own anniversary book in 1975, it was reused on a set of postcards, and a poster was made from a drawing directly referring to the photo. This process of claiming a photo by the parties involved has not yet been considered by scholars in the field of iconic photography. Nevertheless, our study shows this aspect should be taken into account since both Troelstra as well as Dolle Mina claimed the photo by using it themselves. This ensured a higher publication frequency, which is one of the characteristics of iconic photographs.

Despite the growing popularity of the movement in the beginning of the seventies, Dolle Mina slowly fell apart in the years after. Internal disputes, fading

support for the group and competing feminist movements caused Dolle Mina to disappear from the public stage. However, when studying the afterlife of the 1970 photo, we conclude Dolle Mina was very successful in influencing their historiography. When the group is covered in articles or television programs years later, the items are practically always accompanied by the photo of the protest at the conference for gynaecologist in 1970. Furthermore, similar photos refer to that photo. On a picture made in 2007, a girl shows the same text on her belly during a protest in Amsterdam. More striking is a photo of a protest in 2005 on which two girls show the same line on their abdomen. It clearly refers to the Dolle Mina photo of 1970, but the movement had already fallen apart by then. However, this particular photo is used on a website of a Dutch school in an incorrect context since the accompanying caption states the photo illustrates the protests of Dolle Minas. The misuse of the photo indicates the alleged familiarity with the photo of 1970 and its symbolic use.

When analysing the use of the photo in history textbooks we also found that the photo is increasingly being used in a symbolic manner. The photo first appeared in a textbook in 1986 to illustrate the particular protest of 1970. However, halfway through the ninety-nineties the photo is mainly used to illustrate Dolle Mina or the struggle for womens' rights in general, without referring to the 1970 protest. We observe the same trend when interviewing the editors of the textbooks. All of them are familiar with the photo and state it can be used for all sorts of purposes; not only to visualize the protest of Dolle Mina but also to discuss the changing youth culture of the seventies in general, which further indicates the possible symbolic use of the iconic photo.

Since the analysed textbooks cover the period 1970 – 2000, we were not able to take into account the growing digitisation of picture archives since 2000 and the possible influence of the number of online search tools on the search process of editors. However, we did go into this aspect in the third case study on the Canon of the Dutch History, a list of fifty topics reflecting the basic knowledge of Dutch history and culture that should be passed on to future generations of Dutch citizens. The list was introduced in 2007 and was formulated by a committee that was instigated by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. Not only did the committee formulate fifty topics, they also chose images to visualise each theme. The fifty 'icons' function as logos of the topics and are used on a variety of outlets: in the report of the committee, on the accompanying website, and on a wall chart that is suggested to be put in display in classrooms. In our study we focussed on the selection process of these fifty icons. By analysing the different drafts of the wall chart, examining the minutes of the meetings of the

committee and interviewing the most important stakeholders, we were able to identify the secretary of the committee as the most important person to select the images. Despite the availability of digitised databases and search tools, his search process resembles the process of the editors of textbooks. Since the topics were already determined, he also first consulted his personal memory and then used Google to find those images that best resemble the pictures in his mind. Consequently, when we compared the fifty images and their accompanying pictures on the website of the canon with the top ten of most used photos in the analysed textbooks, we found that six photos are also used by the canon committee. We therefore conclude that despite the availability of digitised image databases and tools to effectively search through these collections, the same kinds of photos are reused. This finding further underlines the conclusion of the circular process in which iconic photos are transferred to future generations. While creating national history products, editors consult their individual memory and use cultural memory tools such as books or search engines to find the pictures they have in mind, passing them on to the next generation of editors.

The case study on the Dutch canon indicates it is questionable whether the digitisation of image collections will lead to the use of other types of – and for many unknown – images in books that are aimed at a non-expert audience, like the history textbook. Although it is assumed that the increasing digitization and accessibility of photographic collections make it easier to find pictures, it ignores the question whether there is need for more unknown photographs. Perhaps the desire for and use of iconic photos indicates we need a small number of images that summarize the apparent complex world and that we assume to be known to everybody. This is likely to remain the mystery of the iconic photo. As this study has shown, one can study the afterlife of images, their attributed meaning, how images are found and why choices are made. These outcomes illustrate the relevancy of studying the production, distribution and reception of iconic photographs to gain more insight in their role in historiography.

OVER DE AUTEUR