

## Taking time: Paul Kranzler and the Photography of Slowness

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### Abstract

Theorists of social acceleration have highlighted the tendency of social processes to speed up, both in western societies, and increasingly also in the developing world. In this vein, theorists seeking to differentiate the postmodern from the modern note the disappearance of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or non-simultaneity, and its replacement by a fully-synchronous and quasi-ahistorical present. Through an investigation of contemporary photography in the German-speaking world, and with particular reference to the work of Austrian Paul Kranzler, I question the views advanced by theorists of acceleration and the postmodern. In thematic and formal readings of Kranzler's books *Land of Milk and Honey* (2005) and *Brut* (2010), this article argues that *Ungleichzeitigkeit* remains a fundamental aspect of western societies, and needs to be fully taken into consideration if we are to understand the political economy of time in capitalist late modernity.

**Keywords:** slowness, *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, modernity, resistance, desynchronization, Austria

### I. Introduction: Acceleration, Slowness, *Ungleichzeitigkeit*

The history of photography, as a technology and a process, is a history of increasing speed, in terms of both production (faster films, faster shutters, and improved lenses) and circulation (in terms printing and telegraphy). This history of acceleration has intensified in the digital age. The emergence of digital cameras has collapsed the time necessary for processing and printing and image: the photograph can be viewed instantly on the camera's screen and printed within seconds if necessary. Photo-processing software such as Photoshop means that images can be doctored rapidly and with little skill, in contrast to the painstaking business of manipulating celluloid negatives in the darkroom. Mobile phones can transmit photographs instantaneously and with minimal loss of quality more or less anywhere on the planet, and photo-sharing platforms such as Instagram are designed to promote instantaneous exchange.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, digital images are nothing but volatile packages of binary code that can be easily deleted, as recognised by the developers of Snapchat, a photo-messaging app that combines image manipulation, instant image delivery, and almost instant automatic deletion from both the phones of individual recipients and Snapchat's central servers. It thus encapsulates, in a single application, an accelerated cycle of production, manipulation, transmission, and obsolescence of the image.

Sociologist John Tomlinson sees mobile phone technology as part of what he terms the 'condition of immediacy' that characterizes contemporary society in the West and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Instagram is a **fast, beautiful** and **fun** way to share your life with friends and family' <<http://instagram.com>> [accessed 29 April 2014; emphasis in the original].

increasing parts of the non-western world as well.<sup>2</sup> Among the salient features of this condition are, first, the instantaneity of modern culture, exemplified by rapid delivery and the instant gratification of desires. Second is a new sense of directness or of cultural proximity, in terms of our increasing degree of connectedness with others and the world at large, and an ostensive closing of the gap between desire and fulfilment, here and there, now and later. Thirdly, Tomlinson notes the increasing importance of media and the new modalities of experience they produce. He argues that in the older, mechanical phase of modernity, the gap between desire and satisfaction was something to be overcome through effort, will, planning and regulation, whereas the culture of immediacy assumes that the gap is already closed, thereby tracing a shift in patterns of consumption from an enduring enjoyment of possession to the immediacy of appropriation.<sup>3</sup> And it is easy to see the role of digital photography in effecting this shift.

Tomlinson is one of many commentators who perceive a general trend towards acceleration in all areas of social life.<sup>4</sup> But sociological investigation of the kind he provides can reduce cultural forms such as photography to a narrative of acceleration only by focussing on specific properties of mobile media *technology*. Once we begin to look not at technology but at *images*, such narratives begin to look somewhat less compelling. There are, to be sure, studies of culture that trace the ways in which the arts sought to capture the increasing tempo of social life through formal innovations, choice of subject, performance practice, and so on.<sup>5</sup> But the thematization of acceleration in the arts always exists alongside a countervailing tendency towards an aesthetic of deceleration, as can be seen with exemplary clarity in the work of Germany's most prominent contemporary photographers.

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<sup>2</sup> John Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed: the Coming of Immediacy* (London: Sage, 2007), p. 72 and p. 74. The usage history of the word 'immediacy' shows that it is a relative term and has often been used by writers seeking to characterize earlier phases of modernity. But Tomlinson's general point is clear.

<sup>3</sup> Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, p. 91 and p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the work of sociologist Hartmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), literary critic Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Our Broad Present: Time and Contemporary Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); philosopher Byung-Chul Han, *Duft der Zeit: Ein philosophischer Essay zur Kunst des Verweilens* (Berlin: transcript, 2009), and historian Peter Borscheid, *Das Tempo-Virus: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Beschleunigung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004). For a critical account of current positions in this debate, see Anne Fuchs and J. J. Long, 'Introduction: Faulty Clocks, Human Errors, and the Management of Time in Modernity and Late Modernity', in *Time in German Literature and Culture, 1900–2015*, ed. by Anne Fuchs and J. J. Long (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–17.

<sup>5</sup> See Rosa, *Beschleunigung*, pp. 71–88; Borscheid, *Tempo-Virus*, pp. 301–42; Peter Weibel, *Die Beschleunigung der Bilder: In der Chronokratie* (Bern: Benteli, 1987); and Stephen Kern's influential *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

On the one hand, Andreas Gursky addresses the scale of intercontinental air travel in *Aki-San Japan*, the speed of global financial transactions in *Stock Exchange*, the massive circulation of goods in *99 Cent*, and the frenetic nature of politics in *Bundestag, Bonn*.<sup>6</sup> But his fellow Becher pupils Candida Höfer and Thomas Struth dwell on spaces of stillness, contemplation, and repose. Höfer is well known for her series of museum and library interiors. These are spaces whose implied temporality is one of deceleration; entering into them involves a suspension of the ongoing rush of social and economic life and an immersion in the time of culture and learning.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Höfer's most characteristic images adopt a high camera angle and are devoid of people, which has the effect of foregrounding the formal-aesthetic properties of the spaces and presenting them as objects of contemplation in their own right, rather than as spaces of embodied habitation or circulation. Whether focussing on residential urban streets or downtown business districts of high-rise glass and steel, Struth's photographic world is one of inactivity. Brecht and Benjamin famously attacked photography in the early 1930s for its cognitive poverty and its inability to reveal the increasingly abstract complexities of capitalism. In Struth, though, we see a celebration of this very quality. The abstract nature and nigh-on unfathomable complexity of the high-speed financial transactions activated within the business districts of the world's metropolitan centres are irrelevant to Struth's project, which concentrates instead on the monumental surfaces of commercial architecture as a potential space for contemplation. The aesthetic experience that Struth's images evoke is, paradoxically, enabled by the accelerated economic activity that finances the very spaces from which Struth snatches his moments of arrest, stasis, repose. For Brecht, writing in the 1930s, photographs of the edifices of capitalism were functionally useless from a revolutionary point of view, and photography in general was incapable of exposing the abstract machinery of the capitalist system.<sup>8</sup> If, however, we understand the workings of advanced capitalism in terms of the temporal regime it both demands and creates, the politics of Struth's photography, with its demand for contemplation, may not be as regressive or suspicious as Brecht feared.

This article is concerned with the photography of slowness, but from a slightly different perspective. Central to my discussion is the concept of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, or the

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<sup>6</sup> See the illuminating discussion of this latter work in Michael Diers, *Fotografie Film Video: Beiträge zu einer kritischen Theorie des Bildes* (Hamburg: Philo & Philo Fine Arts, 2006), pp. 209–38.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the aesthetic structuring of time, see Aleida Assmann, 'How Long Does The Present Last? Severn Approaches to a Fleeting Phenomenon', in *Time in German Literature and Culture*, pp. 39–53 (esp. pp. 46–8).

<sup>8</sup> Bertolt Brecht, 'Der Dreigroschenprozeß: Ein soziologisches Experiment', in *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. by Werner Hecht et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), vol. 21, 448–514 (p. 469).

simultaneous existence of phenomena that seem to belong to different temporalities or periods. The term *Ungleichzeitigkeit* originates in the work of art historian Wilhelm Pinder, but it is in Ernst Bloch's *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* that *Ungleichzeitigkeit* finds its most influential elaboration.<sup>9</sup> Bloch applies the term to two related but distinct phenomena. The first is the simultaneous existence within a society of archaic and ultra-modern relations of production. The second is the discrepancy between the 'base' and 'superstructure' of classic Marxism. 'Superstructure' here may consist of modes of consciousness or cultural production that are perceived to be *ungleichzeitig* or non-synchronous with the current stage of economic development.<sup>10</sup>

While Bloch's concern was to understand the appeal of Fascism, *Ungleichzeitigkeit* has had a long afterlife in cultural analysis. Fredric Jameson, for example, sees it as the defining difference between the modern and the postmodern. Towards the end of his 1991 book *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, he explicitly invokes Bloch and argues that:

modern art [...] drew its power and its possibilities from being a backwater and an archaic holdover within a modernizing economy: it glorified, celebrated, and dramatized older forms of individual production which the new mode of production was elsewhere on the point of displacing and blotting out. Aesthetic production then offered the Utopian vision of a more human production generally; and in the world of the monopoly stage of capitalism it exercised a fascination by way of the image it offered of a Utopian transformation of human life. [...] Modernism [...] is the aesthetic as sheer autonomy, as the satisfactions of handicraft transfigured.<sup>11</sup>

Jameson's examples are Joyce constructing a cosmos in his Parisian apartment beholden unto no-one, and Kafka's *Der Proceß*, which dramatizes a resistance of old feudal structures to the forces of modernization. On the basis of these two, he argues that modernism is *ungleichzeitig* because it is the last bastion of non-alienated labour and of cultural forms in which the unevenness of development can be thematized. In the postmodern, he argues, any sense of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* has simply been swept away:

Ours is a more homogeneously modernized condition; we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities. Everything has

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<sup>9</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit: Erweiterte Ausgabe*, in *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* was first published in late 1934 (with a date of 1935), and a revised edition issued in 1962. The 1962 edition is reprinted in *Gesamtausgabe*. For a genealogy of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* that explores Bloch's unacknowledged debt to Pinder, see Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 104–36.

<sup>10</sup> Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, pp. 104–16.

<sup>11</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 307.

reached the same hour on the great clock of development or rationalization (at least from the perspective of the ‘West’).

[...]

One way of telling the story of the transition from the modern to the postmodern lies then in showing how at length modernization triumphs and wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished along with the traditional countryside and traditional agriculture. (Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 310, 311)

Both sociologically and from the perspective of cultural criticism, however, this appears far too totalizing and undifferentiated a view. In particular, the notion that ‘we’ are no longer ‘encumbered’ or ‘embarrassed’ by nonsimultaneity is a formulation that deserves further investigation.

As though in a pre-emptive riposte (*Ungleichzeitigkeit* affects cultural theory, too...), Helga Nowotny writes in her 1989 book *Eigenzeit* of the ‘Illusion der Gleichzeitigkeit’. In a wide-ranging discussion, she identifies the geopolitical, economic, and technological forces that led to the creation of a sense of synchronicity – exemplified for her in images of Japanese and American stock-brokers, each with three telephones, desperately trying to minimise the damage after the stock-market crash in autumn 1987.<sup>12</sup> Thirty years later, it is perhaps the introduction of corporate time that signals the current high-water mark of global simultaneity. But a sense of *Gleichzeitigkeit* operates alongside other temporalities. I am interested less in the ‘subjective time’ that was of particular interest to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century psychologists, philosophers and writers, or the desire for control over one’s own ‘Lokalzeiten’ that Nowotny addresses,<sup>13</sup> than in what might be termed the political economy of non-simultaneity. Jameson’s parenthesis, above, points to a key aspect of this: he notes that his comments apply only from a ‘western’ perspective. The nature of this western perspective has been widely discussed, for example in Johannes Fabian’s celebrated critique of anthropology. Fabian argues that anthropology as a discipline is predicated on the ‘denial of coevalness’: the discipline structures time in a way that isolates cultures spatially and views each as temporally discontinuous with the others.<sup>14</sup> In so doing, anthropology replicates and legitimizes a more general systematic tendency for the West to maroon non-western societies in a time that is eternally prior and inferior to western modernity: if historical time is conceived only in terms of western progress, then those who stand outside this time-scheme must be, by their very nature, a-historical. This view of time divides the

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<sup>12</sup> Helga Nowotny, *Eigenzeit: Entstehung und Strukturierung eines Zeitgefühls* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Nowotny, *Eigenzeit*, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 36–69.

world into progressive ‘western’ cultures, and backward ‘non-western’ cultures, and implicitly legitimizes the process whereby the backward is made to become progressive through colonization and globalization. The distancing that characterizes anthropology is not only a precursor to discrimination

There is more to it than this, though, for such temporal differentiation is replicated *within* western societies themselves. Referring to the unemployed and to the peculiar, suspended temporality they inhabit, for example, Nowotny argues that ‘die Langsamen sind die sozial Zurückgelassenen’.<sup>15</sup> This very formulation, however, reinforces the normative assumption that speed is a default and desirable condition. In the analysis that follows, I explore two different photographic approaches to *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, one of which bears out Nowotny’s pronouncement, the other of which suggests a more positive aspect to slowness. In conclusion, I then revisit the questions of the embarrassment and encumbrance of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* that Jameson appears so summarily to dismiss.

Paul Kranzler is a prize-winning Austrian photographer, who divides his time between Austria and Leipzig but has undertaken extended working visits to Los Angeles, New York, and London.<sup>16</sup> He studied at masters level with Joachim Brohm at the Leipzig Academy of Fine Arts, and Brohm’s influence can be found in Kranzler’s fascination with the everyday, the inconspicuous, and the hidden, aesthetically unappealing aspects of the urban environment. The striking difference between Brohm and Kranzler, though, is the latter’s profound interest in people. His work is consistently concerned with the vernacular social practices and accompanying material culture through which everyday temporality is structured and made manifest.

Kranzler’s 2010 book *Brut* documents, in colour and monochrome images, everyday life in the Upper Austrian city of Linz and its agricultural hinterland, and combines landscapes and cityscapes with a variety of portraits showing people as rest, work, and leisure, as well as photographs of domestic interiors. A striking photograph from the latter category is a close-up of the right-hand corner of a television screen, showing a conspicuously pixelated logo of the ‘Heimatkanal’, a 24-hour digital television channel specialising in Heimat films, folk music programmes, and family serials.<sup>17</sup> According to Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, a multi-faceted movement concerned with the preservation and celebration of *Heimat* – the

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<sup>15</sup> Nowotny, *Eigenzeit*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> <<http://www.paulkranzler.com/page/vita>> [accessed 27 April 2016].

<sup>17</sup> Paul Kranzler, *Brut* (Salzburg: Fotohof Edition, 2010), p. 114

*Heimatbewegung* – came into being at the very moment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when rural traditions were perceived as threatened by modernity and all that it brings with it: urbanism, artificiality, serial production of commodities, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, otherness, and the faceless mass.<sup>18</sup> Over a century later, what are we then to make of a television channel devoted to the promulgation of *Heimat*-related content, but reliant for its commercial survival on the most up-to-date cable and satellite broadcasting technology and a system of private subscriptions (though Sky packages, for example)? Is Jameson's dystopia of postmodern temporal synchronization, in which everything authentic, natural, and traditional – *Heimat* itself – has been co-opted by the time of capital and turned into a permanently available and (for a price) instantly accessible televisual commodity? This single image certainly suggests as much, but a reading of Kranzler's book in its entirety reveals temporal complexities that are not reducible to a condition of immediacy or the triumph of *Gleichzeitigkeit*.

Like many contemporary photobooks, Kranzler's approach to his subject is fundamentally ethnographic. One assumption fundamental to ethnography is the notion that the world can be divided into cultures, each of which has a specific character and can be mapped onto the physical territory that belongs to the people whose culture it is.<sup>19</sup> Knowledge of cultures thus defined then becomes a question of mediating between insiders and outsiders, or, more specifically, of allowing the outsider to become a temporary insider. The key way in which this happens in western ethnography is 'participant observation', according to which the investigator becomes a kind of 'outside insider', as an authority who can immerse him- or herself in another culture while remaining sufficiently detached to subject it to an analysis, interpretation or explanation that is not available to that culture's participants. According to Kranzler's own account of *Brut*, many of the people featured in the book are relatives, friends, and friends of relatives who live in various small towns in Upper Austria.<sup>20</sup> The photographer's personal proximity to his subject appears to promise some kind of privileged access or authenticity of representation, while his own life as an internationally

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 2. In a more recent study, Linda Shortt interrogates the ongoing value of *Heimat* as a useful concept for understanding contemporary representations of belonging in Germanic culture, and concludes that it is not in itself sufficiently extensible to account for the broad semantics of belonging in contemporary German culture. Linda Shortt, *German Narratives of Belonging: Writing Generation and Place in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Legenda 2014). Similarly, my analysis of temporality in Kranzler's *Brut* suggests that the binaries underpinning *Heimat* discourse are partially destabilized but not invalidated by the dialectical interaction of modernity and tradition.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture*, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Kranzler, *Brut*, caption insert, p. 9.

active photographer distances him from the communities he photographs and constitutes him as, precisely, an outside insider.

In a short accompanying text entitled ‘Owa Owaösterreich: Eine Reise ins Klischee’, the Austrian poet and dramatist Franzobel provides a mini-ethnography of the region and its people: they drink lots of schnapps and are obsessed with food and eating; they are canny businessmen; they are resistant to change and yet open to new technology and avant-garde art. Upper Austria, Franzobel notes, is a very wealthy province, and its capital, Linz, is the only European city apart from Frankfurt that has more jobs than it has inhabitants. At the same time, the main street in Linz is still called Landstraße, and the people of Linz suffer from a persistent identity crisis because of the speed with which what was once a provincial backwater became a major city. Franzobel’s text, then, addresses a form of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* in which tradition persists alongside the new in unsettling ways, and this is carried through in Kranzler’s images.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it is thematized in the first of three frontispieces, which shows Linz from an elevated perspective and acts as a kind of establishing shot. Taken from the tower of Kleinmünchen Church, its foreground is dominated by large gardens and a variety of dwellings with pitched, tiled roofs, while the background shows a lateral sprawl of white, flat-roofed, post-war tenement blocks. The very topography of Linz is *ungleichzeitig*.

I noted earlier on that ethnography constitutes its object of study as trapped in a time that is eternally both prior and inferior to the time of western modernity. The encounter with the West, however, introduces historical time into societies that are seen as primitive, which has the effect of placing non-western others in what James Clifford calls ‘a present-becoming-past’. The temporal structure of the ‘present becoming past’ emerges as the central concern of Kranzler’s work, with the difference that the temporal and geographical confrontation in Kranzler is not between East and West, but between the rural Austrian provinces on the one hand, and processes of globalization and standardization on the other.

Kranzler’s Upper Austria is caught in several time-warps. In some images, the vestiges of a putatively archaic rural time regime live on, indexed by the tending of livestock and the gathering of wood for heat (pp. 48, 51, 52, 111, 59). These exist in sharp contrast to images whose temporality is that of the global present. A young man sits cross-legged on the sofa of his living room that is furnished in an international sub-minimalist Ikea style (p. 81): the walls are white, the floors polished parquet, the furniture sparse and unfussy, with a

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Owa Owaösterreich: Eine Reise ins Klischee’, in Kranzler, *Brut*, caption insert, p. 7. Franzobel also notes the high suicide rate, and the long and ongoing history of far-right political groups (Hitler grew up in Linz, and the region is home to active neo-Nazis). These uncomfortable facts complicate the text, and call into question its own claim to be a journey into cliché.



tubular metal sofa-bed, a chrome-and-glass coffee table, and a simple bookcase partially hidden by full-length, plain grey curtains. There is nothing provincial or Austrian about it.<sup>22</sup> As in other photographs, the Ikea interior foregrounds the infiltration of the home by global brands that are not just goods but self-referential advertisements for themselves. Elsewhere, for example, Coca-Cola bottles occupy a prominent position (pp. 17, 136), and in the first of these two images a branded Rebel T-shirt is also on display (p. 17). New models of car are parked on a lot that in front of a block of flats whose entire elevation is occupied by an enormous illuminated advertisement for Pez peppermints. The advertisement features the company's trademark Pez girl in bellhop's uniform, but beneath – and outside the internal frame – it also includes the word 'PEZ' superimposed on a globe (p. 93): an emblem of the global commerce that also sustains the automotive industry whose products are visible here.<sup>23</sup> A modern motocross bike (p. 54), a functionally dressed man posing in front of a display of tyres and alloy wheels (p. 106), and recognisably twenty-first-century clothing (p. 33, 133) indicate the permeation of provincial time by the present of late capitalism and its accelerating cycles of consumption.

*Ungleichzeitigkeit* is thus encoded in the contrast between images of agriculture on the one hand, and the products of the contemporary global economy on the other. But Kranzler's images are more complex than this simple opposition implies. For even in the photographs of agricultural life, time is layered and plural. Cattle and lambs are hand-reared on a small scale; the processes are far removed from the industrial production of livestock now employed widely in the West. But the animals are also penned and tethered in order to make feeding more manageable and to increase the efficiency of farm working. And what might seem the most natural of times – the period of gestation between conception and birth – is shown to be something that can be planned and regulated: in one photograph, a boy holding a large and clearly very wriggly cat stands in front of a galvanized steel door. To the door is affixed a large, hand-written chart detailing the dates on which the farm's cows were inseminated (p. 49). It is a world in which pens, paper and duct tape rather than computer spreadsheets are still used for record-keeping and livestock husbandry, in which cow sheds are basic and fodder is still distributed with a pitch-fork (see p. 52), but it is also a world in which supposedly natural time is actively managed for purposes of economic gain.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Ikea style' is no idle metaphor: a 'Jokkmokk' chair is visible in the lower right corner, and the television sits on a 'Lack' side table centre left. While it is difficult to say with certainty, the sofa is also probably from Ikea's 'Murbo' range or similar.

<sup>23</sup> The advertisement is more complex, however: the Pez girl is a retro image that harks back to 1950s, evoking nostalgia in order to sell a product not because it is new, but because it is long-established.

At the same time, domestic interiors are not all as temporally homogeneous as the Ikea living room described above. Indeed, *Brut* as a whole suggests that there is a distinct time of provincial domesticity, beginning in the Fifties and getting stuck at some point in the 1970s. Many images of domestic interiors – some with their inhabitants – show clothing, appliances, and decor that reflect the taste of the seventies and the decades that preceded them (pp. 12, 14, 15, 37, 41, 43, 67, 69, 70, 71, 79). These objects do more than index a particular moment in the history of taste; they also connote specific forms of sociability that unfolded according to their own temporality.

This is no more apparent than in two images that W. J. T. Mitchell would term ‘meta-pictures’: images that reflect on the nature of images.<sup>24</sup> One shows a man watching television. The other shows a large screen on which an image can be seen, presumably emanating from a slide projector [p. 43; fig. 1].<sup>25</sup> As photographs of technically produced images, the television and the slideshow self-reflexively dramatize the ability of the technical media to make present that which is absent and to bring distant times and places into the now of the domestic interior: a skiing scene or San Francisco Bay appear in the centre of someone’s living room. Furthermore, domestic slide projection and television came into being more or less synchronously in the immediate post-war period, but each fulfilled a distinctly different function. The individualized mode of reception of television is demonstrated in Kranzler’s image of an elderly man watching a skiing programme in his cluttered but well-appointed living room (p. 41).<sup>26</sup> The slideshow, on the other hand, implicitly thematizes collective viewing practices that are predicated on the infrequency of intercontinental travel, and the concomitant expectation that others beyond the immediate kinship group would be willing to spend their leisure time viewing the photographic mementoes of such a trip. In some respects, slideshows were the social networking sites of their time, involving the visual and verbal presentation of events or moments from one’s own life for consumption by others. But Facebook images circulate in cyberspace, can be uploaded instantaneously (from the very spot at which the vacation picture is taken, even) and are viewed privately. This private viewing means that the person updating their ‘status’ has no control over the attention accorded to the image. Feedback, furthermore, is limited to the ability to click on a ‘like’

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<sup>24</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell. *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 35–82. The metapicture is defined in pragmatic rather than formal terms: ‘Any picture that is used to reflect on the nature of pictures is a metapicture’ (p. 57).

<sup>25</sup> There is also a photograph of a projector, which exists at least in a thematic, if not directly causal, relationship to the screen image (p. 79).

<sup>26</sup> While television does sustain communal viewing practices, this is conventionally restricted to the nuclear family.

button or to write a comment; the potential for genuine exchange is limited.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, slideshow is a social ritual of viewing that unfolds slowly and communally. Conventionally, slideshows are accompanied by a verbal commentary by the projectionist in which there is also space for questions and interjections from the viewers. This highlights the role of orality and embodied presence in the act of viewing. Seeing, and speaking about the things that are seen, facilitate the expression and experience, over time, of a community of reception, which in turn consolidates social bonds. As a metapicture, then, Kranzler's slideshow alerts us less to what photographs might depict than to the work they perform in structuring the time of social life.

The projection of the Golden Gate Bridge is not only photograph-within-a-photograph; many images of domestic spaces include portraits of family members and show that rooms within the home are also sites of memory and memorialization, saturated with the familial past. More telling, perhaps, are the various virgins and crucifixes that adorn the living rooms and bedrooms depicted in Kranzler's work. These artefacts testify to the enduring presence of sacred time within an increasingly secular West. Johannes Fabian argues that 'decisive steps towards modernity, those that permitted the emergence of anthropological discourse, must be sought, not in the invention of a linear conception, but in a succession of attempts to secularize Judeo-Christian Time by generalizing and universalizing it'.<sup>28</sup> By using 'Judeo-Christian Time' as shorthand for linearity and opposing it to pagan cyclicity, however, Fabian elides the cyclical aspects of Judeo-Christian conceptions of time. For embedded within the linear temporality that structures both sacred history (the series of events that befalls the chosen people) and eschatology (the progress towards the *eschaton* that will put an end to human time), is cyclical time. The liturgical calendar in general, and particularly the recurring anniversaries of the birth and death of Christ (commemorated by virgins and crucifixes), provide a ritual structure by means of which divine time is made recurrently manifest.<sup>29</sup> Kranzler's interiors, then, testify to a density and multi-layeredness of domestic time that persists even as the eternal present of the postmodern threatens to encroach.

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<sup>27</sup> There is more to it even than this. Because one's Facebook friends tend to be drawn from a variety of social and professional circles (many of whom may not know each other), comments have a tendency to involve communication between the commenter and the person posting the image, a form of communication which, though publicly visible, is nevertheless largely private and comprehensible only to a sub-set of any set of Facebook friends. As a consequence, Facebook and similar sites have an atomising effect, and exclude even as they appear to include.

<sup>28</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> On Christian time as cyclicity-within-linearity, see Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Harmondsworth: Arkana, 1989).

Up to this point, I have dwelt on the objects and spaces represented within Kranzler's photographs. But my reading of the temporality of his images is predicated on the technical aspects of the photographs themselves and of the book as a cultural form. Central to the rhetoric of photographic documentary is deep focus: while a shallow depth of field foregrounds a specific plane and renders everything behind and in front of it blurred, deep focus allows all objects to be equally clear, irrespective of their distance from the focal plane. With few exceptions, Kranzler's images are of this latter type, enabling full visual access to the spaces he depicts and making visible the co-presence within that space of objects that betoken wildly different temporalities. The collection of photographs within a book allows Kranzler to do several things. First, he can make a quantitative argument: *Ungleichzeitigkeit* is not an oddity but a pervasive quality of the society he depicts. Second, he can develop a comparative argument that shows temporal layering not merely within the spaces of provincial Austria but between them.

As a photo-ethnographer Kranzler thematizes *Ungleichzeitigkeit* within the society he photographs, rather than between that society and its presumed other. Kranzler's project suggests that societies that may appear less advanced possess their own temporal complexity that is reducible neither to eternal backwardness nor to colonization by the forces of late or post-modernity. The metaphors that dominate a certain strand of contemporary sociological thought about time – 'scripts of immediacy', 'rasender Stillstand', 'the tyranny of the moment', 'timeless time', the 'runaway world' – are problematic in that they imply that the West has reached some kind of terminal condition of late-capitalist ahistoricity. They may have value as characterizations of general tendencies, but these tendencies do not have equal purchase everywhere, nor do they displace older temporalities without remainder. I referred earlier to ethnographic discourse as situating its object within a 'present becoming past'. Kranzler's project shows that the key term here is 'becoming': his work emphasizes process, whose end is neither foreseeable nor in sight. It has certainly not yet arrived. We are, it seems, still *in* history.

### ***Land of Milk and Honey***

The discernment of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* within rather than between cultures also dominates Kranzler's ironically titled 2005 book *Land of Milk and Honey*.<sup>30</sup> While *Brut* roves across Upper Austria, *Land of Milk and Honey* focuses on the city of Linz. Cities are archetypal sites of acceleration in terms of the circulation of traffic, goods, people, information, and capital.

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<sup>30</sup> Kranzler, *Land of Milk and Honey* (Salzburg: Fotohof Edition, 2005).

The foundational text here is, of course, Simmel's 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben' in which he contrasts the steady rhythm of rural life with the speed of the modern metropolis, and describes the metropolitan self as overloaded with fractured sense-impressions that succeed each other in sharp discontinuity.<sup>31</sup> While this tradition of writing about the city can be traced through the writings of, for example, Sergei Eisenstein, Benjamin, Moholy-Nagy, and Gyorgy Kepes, it should be noted that Simmel is a phenomenologist of the urban, not an empiricist; as Lynda Nead has shown, different temporalities can actually be sought *within* the urban itself.<sup>32</sup>

*Land of Milk and Honey* explores precisely this through a depiction of the lives of Toni and Aloisia, two elderly pensioners in Linz. Linz changed from a small regional centre to Austria's third-largest city quite recently, the population increasing from 83,000 in 1900 to 270,000 today. Kranzler is interested in people living on the margins of this new metropolis, and he dissects their existence with quasi-forensic attention to detail. Like *Brut*, *Land of Milk and Honey* relies for its realization on participant observation: it is the result of a two-year period of residence in Linz, Kranzler renting a room in an apartment block whose other residents he got to know after a year of living in the same building. This temporary immersion in another milieu, a short-term proximity, allows Kranzler to both participate in and visually analyse the lives of the people he depicts.<sup>33</sup>

Once again deploying deep focus, Kranzler foregrounds interior spaces: his subjects' existence is almost entirely circumscribed by the walls of their apartments. Furthermore, Toni and Aloisia's rooms are cluttered and squalid, impeding movement even within the confined spaces of their living quarters. The most frequently-photographed objects are bottles of Kipfer Urtyp beer (both full and empty), and Memphis cigarettes, together with large quantities of associated packaging that has been discarded but not removed, suggesting less speed of consumption than repetition without variation within a monotonous, unchanging routine. It is, moreover, significant that Kipfer Urtyp and Memphis are recognisably Austrian products. While *Brut* portrays the Austrian provinces as being encroached upon by ubiquitous global brands, Toni and Aloisia's world is characterized by the persistence of the local. This is reinforced by the framing and sequencing of the images, which prevent any attempt to

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<sup>31</sup> Georg Simmel, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7: *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901–1908 Band 1*, ed. by Rudiger Kramme, Angela Rammstedt and Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 116–31.

<sup>32</sup> Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Screen: Painting, Photography, Film c. 1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 109–11.

<sup>33</sup> Kranzler, *Land of Milk and Honey*, p. 121. In Kranzler's short text, he meticulously records the dates of moving in, first meeting, moving out, and completion of his project.

cognitively map the represented space – we cannot, as viewers, reconstruct the ground-plan of the apartments, we do not know always whose flat we are in, it is impossible to establish relationships between the various rooms. The cumulative effect is to create an impression of entrapment. Rather than the rapid circulation that is deemed to be the main characteristic of the modern metropolis, Kranzler offers spaces that are multiply confined: they are enclosed by their own four walls, they are full of junk, they depict patterns of consumption based on repetition rather than change and purely local circulation of foodstuffs, and they do not add up, at a purely representational level, to spaces that can be mentally reconstructed, let alone imaginatively inhabited or ‘walked through’ by the viewer. They are spaces saturated with slowness.

There are numerous objects that signify the persistence of the past into the present, such as outmoded furniture and décor, and antiquated visual technologies, including a Siemens Bildmeister television from the 1970s (p. 82), and an old polaroid camera (p. 90). Two images are presented in a particularly telling juxtaposition: on the verso page, Aloisia sits on the edge of a bed, raked sunlight from the right illuminating the arm that she holds across her body, with her right hand on her left thigh. She appears to be watching the television, whose plastic, rectangular form can be discerned behind the unidentifiable blurred objects in the foreground (p. 80). On the recto is a black and white image of a television – possibly the same one – showing a young woman reclining, almost naked, on a bed whose head-board is almost identical to one in Aloisia’s flat [**Fig. 2a and 2b**]. Whether or not Aloisia was watching this particular broadcast at the time the shutter was pressed, the contrast between a fantasy image of youthful female sexuality and an unglamourized image of old-age decrepitude implies a narrative of ageing, loneliness, and impoverishment. The images contrast, too, with the photograph of slideshow paraphernalia in *Brut*, where outmoded technology betokened the survival of collective sociability. By the same token, the old polaroid camera, lying amid the detritus of the pensioners’ lives, has lost the social function it once had, which was the rapid supply of snapshots for preservation and circulation in the family album. The polaroid age has disappeared, but nothing in Toni and Aloisia’s world has replaced it.

There are, in fact, numerous objects visible in Kranzler’s photographs that ostensibly signify an accelerated lifestyle but actually connote something rather different: a Sony Walkman (p. 54), discarded takeaway cartons (p. 41), packet noodle soup (p. 64), bottled mushrooms (p. 67). But the Walkman is old and taped together, and in an age of mp3 players is already obsolete. Along with the other things it signifies not speed but poverty, not a

persistence of the old despite the encroachment of the new, but the sheer absence and inaccessibility of the new.

## Conclusion

‘Die Geschichte’, writes Bloch in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, ‘ist kein einlinig vorschreitendes Wesen, worin der Kapitalismus etwas [*sic.*], als letzte Stufe, alle früheren aufgehoben hätte; sondern sie ist ein *vielrhythmisches und vielräumiges, mit genug unbewältigten und noch keineswegs ausgehobenen, aufgehobenen Winkeln*’.<sup>34</sup> Kranzler’s work suggests that we could easily substitute ‘der Spätkapitalismus’ or ‘die Postmoderne’ for ‘der Kapitalismus’ without compromising the power of Bloch’s words. Bloch’s metaphors are telling. The notion of the polyrhythmic suggests that history is characterized by fundamental desynchronization: layered temporalities whose cycles are out of phase. In describing history also as multi-spatial, Bloch begins metaphorically but soon becomes far more literal: ‘Vielräumigkeit’ is not only a way of talking about non-linear time, but of talking about real space and the tendency of hidden corners to harbour ostensibly outmoded economic and ideological formations.<sup>35</sup> It is precisely by excavating (*ausheben*) such hidden corners, the ‘Winkel’ of Linz and its hinterland, that Kranzler is able to make visible the multiple forms of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* that persist within twenty-first-century western societies. His is an aesthetics of the remnant and the remainder, and it reminds us powerfully that culture does not have to align itself with the imperative to acceleration that is a dominant aspect of industrialized societies.

Kranzler also reminds us, however, that *Gleichzeitigkeit* is not a uniform concept in itself, and can take on multiple political valencies. By emphasising the essential slowness of Aloisia and Toni’s lives in *Land of Milk and Honey*, Kranzler does three things. First, he implicitly criticizes the notion that enclaves of slowness necessarily offer emancipatory respite from social acceleration – or an ‘oasis amid the hostile desert of the Land of Milk and Honey’, as the photographer himself puts it (p. 121). Instead, he shows that such enclaves can be enforced – not coercively, but by the structures of working patterns and welfare provision – in ways that are as oppressive as the culture of speed itself. Second, and following on from this, he shows that speed’s effects on social subjects are not evenly distributed, in two senses: we are not all equally caught up in regimes of speed in terms of workplace discipline, patterns of consumption, and so on, but conversely, we do not all have equal access to the

<sup>34</sup> Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, pp. 68–9.

<sup>35</sup> Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, p. 69.

technologies that facilitate social acceleration. Thirdly, he shows that despite our increasing reliance on such technologies, speed's limits are nevertheless to a large extent conditioned by the capacities of the human body. Once that body starts to decline, there are certain forms of speed that are no longer available to it. Narratives of speed, it turns out, would do well to consider the effects of poverty and aging, and to place the body at the centre of any investigation of social acceleration.<sup>36</sup>

*Brut*, on the other hand, is a more properly dialectical work. Kranzler presents a far less pessimistic form of slowness, out of which arises a sense of resistance to social acceleration. This is not a question of celebrating self-conscious resistance to global capitalism on the part of politically engaged individuals or organized collectives, but rather of the sheer intractable power of material culture and the social practices in which it is embedded. The way in which people furnish and live out their lives, suggests Kranzler, enjoys a degree of permanence that cannot simply be swept aside by the onward rush of modernity, its global brands, hectic tempo, and drive towards ever-greater efficiency. Upper Austria may not be at the vanguard of capitalism, but neither are its inhabitants 'zurückgelassen'. They inhabit a world in a process of transition, where slower temporalities continue to be carried over into the now.

As we saw in the introduction to this article, Jameson writes that 'we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities'. Coming from a committed dialectician, it is an odd formulation that is rhetorically highly unstable. It is possible that Jameson is ironically adopting the persona of the triumphant capitalist, a 'we' that celebrates the waning of history and the reign of synchronicity. For such a persona, any niches, the 'Winkel' of Bloch's account, would represent an ideological embarrassment that exposes capitalism's failures. But Jameson at no point undercuts his claim that non-simultaneity has now been effectively abolished, in which case is he the one who no longer feels embarrassed by non-simultaneity? Perhaps that is truly how things look from the Los Angeles to which Jameson devotes so much attention in his *Postmodernism* book. At any event, the slippage between literalness and irony seems unresolvable. What Kranzler suggests, however, is that non-simultaneity is still prevalent even in the West. More than that, though, certain forms of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* are no cause for embarrassment (as shown in *Brut*), but certain forms are (as in *Land of Milk and Honey*). The embarrassment of non-

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<sup>36</sup> Accounts of speed and the body tend to concentrate on the achievements of athletes and the ideological proximity of rationalized sport to industrial work discipline. See e.g. Borscheid, *Tempo-Virus*, p. 181 and Erik K. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletics, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially pp. 99–133.



synchronicity in this latter book is twofold. Many of the pictures expose the most intimate aspects of the subjects' lives, including soiled underwear (p. 37), moments of clear distress (p. 45), expectoration (p. 50), and false teeth (p. 97). The ideal viewer, then, is made to feel embarrassed in a personal-affective register by these acts of intrusion which reveal aspects of life that are generally concealed. Beyond this, however, *Land of Milk and Honey* invites a kind of political embarrassment: how can we – Jameson's 'we' – allow this to happen in the allegedly prosperous West? As with many forms of photographic documentary, the challenge is to secure the transition from an individual affective response to a political response.

Without a political response, Kranzler suggests, *Ungleichzeitigkeit* will prevail in its negative as well as positive aspects. Social disadvantage will continue to manifest itself in abandonment within a prior temporality. Such is the dystopian flip-side of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*.

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