

**SELF-EXPRESSION AND PROFESSION:
FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS' SELF-PORTRAITS IN BERLIN 1929-1933**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first in-depth study of female photographers' images of themselves, with their cameras, working in Weimar Berlin. A focus on three self-portraits by women at the heart of the so-called 'New Photography', will allow insight into the importance of the self-portrait genre for female photographers, who sought to establish themselves in this rapidly developing field. The photographers Lotte Jacobi (1896-1990), Eva Besnyö (1910-2003) and Marianne Breslauer (1909-2001) have diverse photographic oeuvres yet each produced an occupational self-portrait whilst in Berlin between 1929 and 1933.

It is argued in this thesis that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer asserted their professionalism in these foci self-portraits, which was particularly important due to the restrictions that still existed regarding working women. A professional image was even more significant due to the illustrated press associating photography with leisure when the camera was in the hand of a woman. It is also argued in this thesis that whilst photography still maintained an association with perceived reality for many in Weimar Germany, the self-portraits in this study do not present an objective and realistic representation of the photographer, but rather a complex construction of identity that is performed rather than revealed.

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INTRODUCTION

The camera, a tool of self-investigation and professional realisation, appears frequently in the photographic self-portraits of female photographers working in Germany during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). Scholars in recent years have identified that the self-portrait was popular for female photographers across Europe,¹ but there has been no study of the frequent inclusion of the camera and its significance. This thesis will therefore discuss the importance of female photographers' self-portraits, and what they can reveal about female professionals in Weimar Germany, through examining three photographers: Lotte Jacobi (1896-1990),² Eva Besnyö (1910-2003)³ and Marianne Breslauer (1909-2001). Each photographer posed before the mirror, camera in hand, to take a self-portrait (figs 1-3). It is these self-portraits that form the corpus of work upon which this thesis focuses. Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer repeatedly engaged in self-representation (figs 4-8), but this thesis focuses specifically on self-portraits that were taken in Berlin during the later Weimar years (1929-1933). By doing so, this thesis will examine the specific social context that encouraged female photographers to produce self-portraits. Although there is no evidence to suggest that these foci photographers knew of each other, or their photographic practice, their self-portraits compositionally

¹ Tirza Latimer, 'Women and photography', Oxford Art Online, 2006, www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2022250, accessed February 2012; Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mülhens-Molderings, 'Mirrors, Masks and Spaces: Self-portraits by Women Photographers in the Twenties and Thirties' in Gladys Fabre, *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat*, exhibition catalogue, held at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2004, published in Barcelona, 2004, 320-325.

² Full name: Johanna Alexandra 'Lotte' Jacobi. Although Lotte Jacobi was born a decade earlier than Besnyö and Breslauer all three photographers completed their training and began their photographic careers in the late twenties and early thirties.

³ Eva Besnyö's name is sometimes spelt Eva Besnyő, but this thesis will use the more common spelling of Besnyö.

contain the same key elements: the camera, the use of the mirror and the photographers' body. The self-portraits were all taken at pivotal moments in the photographers' careers and therefore convey professionalism through including high-end equipment. However, each self-representation also points towards the complexities of self-portrait photography and the construction of (female) identity. These three images have been chosen because they not only demonstrate similar approaches to the self-portrait, but they also reveal tensions in relation to the position female photographers occupied at this time.

Jacobi inherited a family photography business and the use of a large plate-backed camera in her self-portrait signals traditionalism (fig.1). Despite this tradition, Jacobi engaged with the latest photographic developments by publishing in newly established women's magazines and taking commercial portraits of celebrities. Besnyö, of Hungarian birth, moved to Berlin to establish herself as a photographer with no history of photography in her family. Her 1931 self-portrait notably marks the start of her career (fig.2). Whilst also publishing images in the illustrated press, Besnyö had a keen interest in the so-called 'New Photography' of the late twenties and early thirties, typified in her self-portrait through the unusual angle from which the photograph is taken. Breslauer's self-portrait (fig.3) on the one hand points towards photographic professionalism through the inclusion of her high-end single-lens reflex (SLR) camera, tripod and cord release, but on the other, her pose identifies with magazine culture and fashion plates. Breslauer's semi-exposure of her body creates an unusual combination of professionalism and eroticism. The three self-portraits raise important research questions in relation to the

historical context in which Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were operating. What do these self-portraits tell us about female professional photographers in Weimar Berlin and how they negotiated their positions in the public realm? In what ways can the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer be considered as critical responses to the growing mass media? How did these foci photographers engage with identity and in what ways might this relate to how other contemporaneous female photographers were experimenting with self-representation? In examining such questions, I will demonstrate how the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are significant for our understanding of female creativity in the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, this thesis will point towards wider examples of female photographers engaging in self-representation across Europe.

Until now, scholars have not explored the complexities of female photographers' self-portraits during the Weimar Republic. Existing literature on the historiography of Western photography often constructs a metanarrative for the medium, covering the 150-year history of photography across Europe and America. Notable studies of this type include Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (1972).⁴ Whilst subsequent studies such as Naomi Rosenblum's *History of Women Photographers* (1994) introduced the important contributions women have made to photography, her scholarship recuperated 'women's histories' into this metanarrative.⁵ There have been a few exhibitions and essays that have acknowledged the importance of the self-portrait for photographers (male or female). Erika Billeter's catalogue for the touring exhibition *The Self-Portrait in the Age of Photography* (1985) argued that the self-portrait was a leitmotiv for photographers,

⁴ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: 1839 to the Present Day*, London, 1972.

⁵ Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, Paris, London and New York, 1994.

which was paramount for postmodern interrogations of identity.⁶ The catalogue's text is minimal and the main essay focuses on body art,⁷ thus neglecting most images in the exhibition, which included Jacobi's 1929 self-portrait and a self-portrait by Breslauer (1929) (fig.4). Furthermore, a grouping of photographers' self-portraits with their cameras, including Germaine Krull, Ilse Bing and Ergy Landau, (figs 9-11), is likewise met with no discussion. Whilst Billeter's exhibition did not tour England, James Lingwood's exhibition in the following year (1986), *Staging the Self: Self-portrait Photography 1840s-1980s*, was displayed at the National Portrait Gallery.⁸ The catalogue offers more critical analysis of the self-portraits, compared to Billeter's, and focuses on identity and selfhood.⁹ Susan Butler's essay in the catalogue is an important contribution to studies on female photographers' self-portraits, examining the self-representation of photographers from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century.¹⁰ Butler examines constructions of identity through looking at female roles and stereotypes, performance, play, parody and costumes in the work of the photographers Frances Benjamin Johnston, Alice Austen, Florence Henri, Anne Noggle, Judy Dater and Susan Hiller. However, as the essay covers such a broad time span across Europe and America, there is little discussion of specific social developments, such as the position of female professionals, and the impact this had on their respective self-portraits.

⁶ Erika Billeter, 'The Exhibition' in Billeter (ed.), *Self-Portrait in the Age of Photography: Photographers reflecting their own image*, Birgit Rommel and Catherine Schelbert (trans.), exhibition catalogue, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, 1985 and other venues, Bern, 1985, 7 and 10.

⁷ Roger Marcel Mayou, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Work of Art: Body Art or Permanence and Continuity in the Self-Portrait' in Billeter (ed.), *Self-Portrait in the Age of Photography*, exhibition catalogue, Bern, 1985, 13-20.

⁸ Erika Billeter provided considerable assistance to the exhibition.

⁹ James Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self: Self-portrait Photography 1840s-1980s*, exhibition catalogue, National Portrait Gallery, London, 1987 and other venues, Frome and London, 1986.

¹⁰ Susan Butler, 'So How Do I Look? Women Before and Behind the Camera', in Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self*, exhibition catalogue, Frome and London, 1986, 51-59.

The 1994 exhibition *Fotografieren hiess teilnehmen: Fotografinnen der Weimarer Republik* (Museum Folkwang, Essen) is the only extensive study of female photographers from this period. In the exhibition catalogue, Ute Eskildsen introduces photographers across a variety of styles including New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), New Vision (Neues Sehen) and advertising photography.¹¹ An essay in the catalogue by Monika Faber, 'Selbstfoto', raises the significance of the genre of self-portraiture for women in a similar way to Butler's aforementioned essay.¹² Faber discusses a mixture of German, French and Hungarian photographers including the work of Ergy Landau, Marianne Brandt, Florence Henri and Otokar Lenhart across the inter-war period up to 1941; the essay therefore lacks the focus on Weimar photographers that the narrow exhibition focus misleadingly suggests. Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mühlens-Molderings have produced a more recent essay on female photographers' self-portraits from the inter-war years in the exhibition catalogue *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat* in 2004.¹³ This essay brings together self-portraits by European and American female photographers across the inter-war period, such as Imogen Cunningham, Ilse Bing, Claude Cahun and Germaine Krull, as well as mentioning Breslauer and Jacobi. However, like Faber's essay, there is no in-depth consideration of location-specific social developments regarding attitudes towards, and uses of, photography or indeed women's relationship with the medium. Nonetheless,

¹¹ Ute Eskildsen, *Fotografieren hiess teilnehmen: Fotografinnen der Weimarer Republik*, exhibition catalogue, Museum Folkwang, Essen, 1994-1995 and other venues, Düsseldorf, 1994.

¹² Monika Faber, 'Selbstfoto' in *Ibid.*

¹³ Molderings and Mühlens-Molderings, 'Mirrors, Masks and Spaces' in Fabre, *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat*, exhibition catalogue, Barcelona, 2004, 320-325.

Molderings and Mühlens-Molderings' essay is significant in highlighting the growing research in this area.

Indeed, since 2010, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer have each been the focus of large-scale exhibitions and wider recognition.¹⁴ Breslauer was the focus of a touring exhibition from 2010-2011,¹⁵ accompanied by the first detailed catalogue on the photographer from an art historical perspective¹⁶ and the publication of her memoirs.¹⁷ The exhibition received a large volume of press reviews, demonstrating the increased interest in Breslauer, and the catalogue was translated into English at the touring venue of Amsterdam.¹⁸ Similarly, there has been an increased recognition of Besnyö's work. Whilst a 1995 exhibition catalogue stated that for Besnyö, 'little, if any, information is available',¹⁹ she has since received her first retrospective outside of Amsterdam (her place of death) at the Berlinische Galerie in 2011, for which a detailed exhibition catalogue (partially translated into English) was produced.²⁰ Until now, it remains Jacobi's work that has commanded the most scholarly attention (compared to Besnyö and Breslauer), perhaps due to the

¹⁴ Eva Besnyö exhibition, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, 2012 and other venues; Marianne Breslauer exhibition, Fotostiftung Schweiz, Zurich, and other venues 2010-2011; Lotte Jacobi exhibition, Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Köln, 2012-2013.

¹⁵ The exhibition was displayed at the Fotostiftung Schweiz, Zurich; the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, and the Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, 2010-2011.

¹⁶ There have been two previous publications dedicated to Breslauer, published in 1979 and 1989, which both present a collection of her key images with very little accompanying text: Anonymous, *Retrospektive Fotografie: Marianne Breslauer*, Bielefeld and Düsseldorf, 1979; Anonymous, *Marianne Breslauer: Photographien 1927-1937*, exhibition catalogue, held at Nationalgalerie in Berlin, 1989 published in Berlin, 1989.

¹⁷ Marianne Feilchenfeldt Breslauer, *Bilder meines Lebens: Erinnerungen*, Wädenswil, 2009.

¹⁸ Meeting between Sophie Rycroft and Bernadette van Woerkom, Curator of Photography at the Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, 29 August 2011.

¹⁹ Ian Jeffrey, *German Photography of the 1930s*, exhibition catalogue, held at Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank, London, 1995-1996, Royal Photographic Society, Bath, 1996, published in London, 1995, 13.

²⁰ Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö: Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam*, Paul Aston and Steven Lindberg (trans), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum and the Berlinischen Galerie, Berlin, 2011-2012, Berlin, 2011. The exhibition also toured to Jeu de Paume, Paris.

large volume of images she published contemporaneously in magazines. Notable monographs include Kelly Wise's (1978)²¹ and Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat's (1998).²² However, the focus of both publications remains on Jacobi's portraits of celebrities and dancers. Indeed, although Wise's monograph includes Jacobi's self-portrait on the front cover, it is surprisingly not mentioned in the textual analysis.²³ Interest in Jacobi is still growing and more recently there has been a solo exhibition of her work at the Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Köln (2012-2013).

Marion Beckers' and Elisabeth Moortgat's research has been particularly important to this thesis, as they have published a catalogue on each of the foci photographers, which are an excellent source of biographical information. However, the biographical focus and monograph format restrict the important positioning of each photographer's work alongside their contemporaries, which would enable conclusions as to how their work might be understood in the wider context of other female photographers. Beckers and Moortgat were involved in all three recent exhibitions for Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, and therefore the scholarship on these three photographers has largely been shaped by their curatorial interpretations. Furthermore, there are very few publications on Weimar female photographers available for Anglophone scholars. Dorothy Rowe's forthcoming book *Weimar Women: Photography and Modernity* will bring German female photographers to the attention of English-speaking audiences for the first time. The

²¹ Kelly Wise (ed.), *Lotte Jacobi*, Massachusetts, 1978.

²² Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi, Berlin, New York*, Karen Margolis, Kevin Michael Madden and Taryn Toro (trans), exhibition catalogue, held at Das Verborgene Museum, Berlin, 1997, (English edition) published in Berlin, 1998.

²³ Wise (ed.), *Lotte Jacobi*, Massachusetts, 1978.

research in this thesis is therefore timely due to the increase in exhibitions and publications on Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer in the last few years, emphasising the growing interest and awareness of the importance of female photographers in Germany, to which this research will contribute.

Whilst previous literature on Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer has largely been restricted to monographs, this thesis will examine their work alongside contemporaneous photographers. The concentration on 'only' three self-portraits is fruitful as the tensions revealed in the work of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer will act as visual case studies that prove symptomatic of the wider negotiations women were making in the professional photographic sphere. This thesis will therefore provide a comprehensive analysis of female photographers who were active in what I will argue was a 'cultural hub' of photographic developments.

In contrast to previous studies on self-portrait photography that have considered a wide time-span and multiple locations, this research will foreground how historical and social developments such as the illustrated press and new camera models impacted on both photography and women. I demonstrate that despite the economic depression from 1929, many forms of photography still flourished. There has been, and still is, a tendency by scholars to shape the period of the Weimar Republic 'neatly' according to its early, middle and late years.²⁴ Scholars therefore tend to focus on the so-called 'golden

²⁴ For example, Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, Princeton and Oxford, 2007.

twenties' of economic stability as the cultural 'highpoint' of the Republic,²⁵ which risks overlooking the creativity of the later years. As Shearer West recognises, the 'pre-Hitler years' (1929-1933) 'are rarely seen as artistically distinct, as most manifestations of culture were overwhelmed or pushed aside by political confusion.'²⁶ Conversely, this thesis will demonstrate that there was maintained cultural productivity particularly in relation to photography during these years.²⁷

The arguments in this thesis are shaped by biographical accounts of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer. However, these accounts are not used in order to project their respective biographies onto their self-portraits, but rather to establish the position of these women as creative professionals and their involvement with the public sphere. Concepts of identity, reality and subjectivity are also examined, for which a postmodern approach, largely informed by Amelia Jones' discussions on contemporary self-portrait photography, will be taken.²⁸ Finally, continued analysis of the formal and compositional components of the photographic medium throughout this thesis will contribute to my arguments on identity and professionalism.

The first chapter of this thesis, 'The Occupational Self-Portrait', explores how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer produced images of themselves to promote professionalism

²⁵ For example, John Willet, *The Weimar Years: A Culture Cut Short*, London, 1984.

²⁶ Shearer West, *Utopia and Despair: The Visual Arts in Germany 1890-1937*, Manchester, 2000, 160.

²⁷ Due to the restrictions of word limit this thesis will not focus on the political and racial tensions during the last four years of the Republic. For more information see, Weitz, 'Revolution and Counterrevolution from the Right', *Weimar Germany*, Princeton and Oxford, 2007, 331-360 and Detlev Peukert, 'The Erosion of Options', *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, London, 1991, 258-269.

²⁸ Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject*, London and New York, 2006.

through the inclusion of their high-end equipment in the self-portrait. Through historical evidence, I argue that women's relationship to photography must be considered separately to that of the fine arts. Whilst photographic training was more readily available to women, they still faced challenges in establishing themselves as independent professionals. As a result, women still felt the need to assert their professional capabilities, and it can be argued that the self-portrait was an important way of doing this. This chapter will also discuss how the types of camera included in the photographs of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer contributed to the construction of a professional image. I consider the likelihood that they were intended for publication, but I also discuss the evidence to suggest that these images were particularly important personally to the photographers.

The second chapter, 'High Art and Mass Culture', examines how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer interacted with, and responded to, growing mass culture in Weimar Berlin. It explores the ways in which the camera was often presented as a fashion accessory, rather than a tool for the professional, in a group of popular magazines. I show how the self-portraits by Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are sympathetic with the 'high art' New Photography, but also the 'lowbrow' illustrated press. It shall be argued that women were more readily associated with consumerism during the Weimar Republic and that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer can be read as a necessary negotiation of their position between the New Photography and mass cultural forms of entertainment promoted by popular magazines.

The first two chapters of this thesis take a more 'traditional' view of self-portraiture and identity by reading the content of the photographs as having various signifiers which point towards professionalism and mass culture, arguing how the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer connote a professional identity or one influenced by the mass media. Conversely, chapter three takes a theoretical turn to consider how identity is constructed in front of the camera. 'Theoretical Perspectives: Subjectivity and Reality' considers the construction of identity in relation to presumed 'reality'. By drawing upon historical understandings of the photographic medium, which often presumed an accurate 'reality' before the camera lens, it is argued that the foci photographers deliberately draw attention to the constructed nature of the photograph. Through their self-portraits, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer highlight the ability of the photographer to construct and manipulate images. This chapter will argue that these self-portraits do not present an accurate depiction of the photographers' identity, as is often assumed historically, but rather they present an identity that the photographers perform. By doing so, it will be argued that these self-portraits can be considered as deconstructing the myth that self-portraits revealed the identity of their creator and that photography recreated reality.

In addressing the research questions mentioned above, this thesis will show how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer played a significant role in the New Photography, which was partly recognised at the time, but is only just being recognised in present scholarship, by scholars such as Carmel Finnan. I agree with Finnan's emphasis on the importance of women's contribution to photography in Germany, as she states that '[t]he pioneering

developments in photography that took place in Germany during the Weimar Republic are inextricably linked to women's significant contribution to the innovations in this art form and its central role in the expanding, technologically-based mass media.²⁹ This research will prove particularly important for Weimar scholars as it will present a new way of examining women's contribution to photographic developments, mass culture and the self-portrait genre. My research will address an important gap in scholarship regarding the questions provoked by female photographers' self-portraits as well as reconsidering traditional approaches to images of the self.

²⁹ Carmel Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity: Yva's Photographic Career and Oeuvre' in Christiane Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, Würzburg, 2006, 125.

CHAPTER ONE

THE OCCUPATIONAL SELF-PORTRAIT

At the start of the twentieth century, the self-portrait was one of the most popular subjects for the creative artist, especially for the photographers of the twenties and thirties.³⁰ Across Europe, photographers took different approaches to the self-portrait. These ranged from narrative psycho-biographical images such as Man Ray's *Self-portrait with Gun* (1932) (fig.12),³¹ photographic manipulation as with Yva's³² *Self-portrait* (1926) (fig.13) or playing with appearances and identity such as Werner Rohde's *Man with Mask* (1928) (fig.14). Photographers also used the self-portrait to demonstrate their profession. I will refer to this as an 'occupational self-portrait' ('Berufsporträt'), where the creator includes the tools of their trade or presents themselves at work. Scholars such as Marsha Meskimmon have discussed the occupational self-portrait in reference to painting, but this thesis shall extend the use of the term to photography.³³ Women often used this form of self-portrait, and this chapter will examine the occupational self-portraits of Lotte Jacobi (1929) (fig.1), Eva Besnyö (1931) (fig.2) and Marianne Breslauer (1933) (fig.3), all of which were taken in Berlin during the later years of the Weimar Republic.

³⁰ Hilary Schmalbach, *Ilse Bing: Fotografien 1929-1956*, exhibition catalogue, held at Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen, 1996 and other venues, published in Aachen, 1996, 7.

³¹ Allegedly this portrait was done after Lee Miller, Ray's muse (and probably lover), left him. Janine Mileaf, 'Between You and Me: Man Ray's Object to Be Destroyed', *Art Journal*, 63, No. 1, Spring 2004, 12, <http://www.mariabuszek.com/ucd/Thesis/MileafRayObjectTBD.pdf> accessed August 2013.

³² Yva's full name was Else Neuländer-Simon, but more commonly referred to as Yva.

³³ Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, London and New York, 1999, 115.

In Jacobi's studio self-portrait she inquisitively examined herself in the mirror, whilst clutching the cord release to capture her reflection with a large traditional camera. Her photographic equipment is given particular prominence, while Jacobi has positioned herself towards the edge of the photograph. In Besnyö's self-portrait the camera again proves to be a key focus of the image; the lens is directed at the viewer whereas Besnyö's eyes are averted downward, thus drawing attention to her camera. This, combined with her shirt, developing glove and studio setting, creates an image of Besnyö busy at work. Breslauer's self-portrait presents a more ambiguous setting and her partial nudity suggest a more private space, perhaps capturing her reflection in a bedroom mirror. Despite this playful exposure, Breslauer still clearly references her professionalism through the tripod, the cord release and her professional camera. Due to the prominence of the camera in these three self-portraits, it can be argued that the indication of their profession is deliberate and particularly important. Whilst Hilary Schmalbach identifies the significance of professionalism in Jacobi's self-portrait, arguing that this 'is not a picture of self-reflection and pondering, but an ambitious statement',³⁴ she does not consider why. I argue in this chapter that this ambition arose out of the historical context of the late Weimar Republic, and that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer used the occupational self-portrait as a way of asserting their presence in the professional sphere of photography.

All three self-portraits were significantly taken whilst the photographers were on the verge of independent careers, and the first section of this chapter will therefore examine

³⁴ Schmalbach, *Ilse Bing*, exhibition catalogue, Aachen, 1996, 7. Original German: 'Dies ist kein Bild von Selbst-reflexion und Nachdenklichkeit, sondern ein ambitioniertes Statement.' All translations are the authors own unless otherwise stated.

the training structures available to women wanting to become professional photographers. Although the photographic sphere was on the whole more welcoming to women, it was not completely free from restrictions, and the consequent tensions in these self-portraits shall be discussed. The first section of this chapter will argue that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer had an increased need to produce self-portraits emphasising their professional capabilities due to the restrictions and difficulties that still existed. The second part of this chapter will examine in more detail how these self-portraits consequently asserted professionalism. The types of camera used will be analysed to determine what they signify about the photographer. It will be argued that by purposefully depicting professional camera models and studio equipment, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer attempted to distinguish themselves from amateurs and presented themselves as serious and capable photographers.

Becoming a Photographer

'I had only one desire: to be a good photographer'³⁵
Eva Besnyö

The photographer and friend of Besnyö, György Kepes, stated in 1930 that 'If you want to be a photographer, you must go to Berlin'.³⁶ Even past the so-called 'golden twenties'³⁷

³⁵ Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö: Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam*, Paul Aston and Steven Lindberg (trans), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum and the Berlinischen Galerie, Berlin, 2011-2012, Berlin, 2011, 212, footnote 29.

³⁶ György Kepes quoted in Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 217.

³⁷ The twenties in Germany are often referred to as the 'Golden Twenties' due to the relative economic boom following the first world war, prior to the Wall Street crash in 1929, for example John Willet, *The Weimar Years: A Culture Cut Short*, London, 1984.

and the Wall Street Crash of 1929³⁸, Berlin was still considered the centre for modernist photography. Whilst Besnyö also considered moving to Paris, it was Kepes's opinion that 'Paris is passé, it's romantic'³⁹ that encouraged her to move to Berlin in 1930 to pursue her career in photography.⁴⁰ Indeed Kepes' opinion is reinforced by the fact that photographers were in demand in Berlin, whether for commissioned portraits, advertisements or photojournalism. Writing in 1929, the German photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch reflected back on a time when 'photography as a profession seemed almost invariably a target for ridicule', but, crucially, '[t]hat time is now over.'⁴¹ Renger-Patzsch's quotation illustrates the rapidly changing reception of photography in the late twenties, suggesting that now it had become accepted as a legitimate profession. Many photographers subsequently ran their own studios, worked freelance for photography agencies or worked in big publishing houses.

Women were also in demand, particularly to work for the numerous magazines with a female readership, for example, *Die Dame* and *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung*. Christiane Schönfeld has emphasised that despite the growing women's movement in Germany since the late nineteenth century, it was especially during the Weimar era that women 'sought to redefine their proscribed public and domestic roles at an accelerated rate as shifting definitions of femininity aided their desire to become professional, independent

³⁸ Starting in late October 1929 the Wall Street crash was the most severe stock market crash in the history of America.

³⁹ Willem Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Karen Gamester (trans), Amsterdam, 1999, 35.

⁴⁰ Besnyö had feelings for Kepes, although they were never romantically involved, which is also likely to have influenced her decision to follow him to Berlin, Besnyö: '[h]e was such an incredibly handsome man. I instantly fell in love with him' quoted in *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴¹ Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Photographie und Kunst' ('Photography and Art') in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild, 1929*, quoted in translation in David Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography 1927-33: Documents and Essays*, London, 1978, 15.

producers of modern culture.’⁴² As the quotation by Besnyö at the start of this chapter highlights, many women were attracted to the new profession of photography and its possibilities. In the decade after the First World War there was an unprecedented expansion in the visibility of women behind the camera.⁴³ In 1925 there were 4,118 women officially employed in photography in Germany,⁴⁴ and by 1929, there were over one hundred studios in Berlin that were owned and managed by women, which was more than thirty percent.⁴⁵ Photography was appealing to women, as it allowed them not only the possibility of a career, but also an artistic and intellectual challenge, mobility and public exposure.⁴⁶ Through photography, women could express themselves, earn a living, and ultimately assert their presence in the public sphere. Furthermore, photography was accessible for women. Whereas the fine arts still excluded women, particularly in the academies where women struggled to gain similar recognition in comparison to their male counterparts,⁴⁷ the relatively new field of photography was more open. As such, patriarchal structures in photography must be considered separately to the fine arts.⁴⁸

⁴² Christiane Schönfeld, ‘Creative Women of the Weimar Republic: Borrowed Spaces and Modern Cultural Practices’ in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, Würzburg, 2006, xvi.

⁴³ Matthew Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945*, exhibition catalogue, held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2007 and other venues, published in New York, 2007, 71.

⁴⁴ Statistics from The Society of German Photographers, Ulrich Rüter and Robin Lenman, ‘Germany’ in Robin Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, Oxford, 2005, 250.

⁴⁵ In 1929 there were approximately 430 photographic studios in Berlin, Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi, Berlin, New York*, Karen Margolis, Kevin Michael Madden and Taryn Toro (trans), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum, Berlin, 1997, (English edition) Berlin, 1998, 35.

⁴⁶ Ute Eskildsen, ‘A Chance to Participate: A Transitional Time for Women Photographers’ in Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West (eds), *Visions of the ‘Neue Frau’: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, Aldershot, 1995, 62.

⁴⁷ For example, female artist Lotte Laserstein notes that women were not considered as equals in the Berlin Academy, Caroline Stroude, *Lotte Laserstein*, exhibition catalogue, held at Thos. Agnew and Sons Ltd and the Belgrave Gallery, London, 1987, published in London, 1990, 3.

⁴⁸ By ‘fine arts’ in this thesis I refer to traditional modes of art-making including painting, sculpture and drawing, which were often associated with academic institutions.

It can be argued that one of the reasons why photography was more accessible was firstly due to the fine arts having such an extensive male-dominated history that, as Naomi Rosenblum has pointed out, was not so firmly in place in the less than one hundred-year-old medium of photography.⁴⁹ Furthermore, photography was more closely aligned with applied art. Arts and crafts schools ('Kunstgewerbeschulen') included applied arts such as weaving and textiles, which were often considered 'feminine'. Consequently, these disciplines were more attractive for women and more accessible for them than painting.⁵⁰ Photography occupied a position somewhere between the fine arts and these applied arts. As Besnyö stated, in Berlin 'photography had status',⁵¹ but the technical and mechanical aspects of the medium delayed its full recognition as a reputable art form.⁵² It can be argued that photography was therefore appealing to women due to its options for artistic creativity without such restrictions that were often found in the academies.

It is notable that many women who began exploring the opportunities afforded by photography engaged in self-portraiture. In Germany, this included, for example, Marianne Brandt, Germaine Krull, Aenne Biermann, Gertrud Arndt, Lotte Beese, Yva (Else Neuländer-Simon) and Marta Astfalck-Vietz (figs 9, 13, 15-19). Across Europe, many other women also engaged in the self-portrait, such as Ilse Bing and Florence Henri working in France (figs 10 and 20). Whether the photographers were self-taught or part of a school or institution, the self-portrait was important for them. By turning themselves into the

⁴⁹ 'The barriers to their participation in photography were lower, and recognition often came faster than in the other arts', Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, Paris, London and New York, 1994, 7.

⁵⁰ Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, London and New York, 1999, 16.

⁵¹ Besnyö quoted in Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 84.

⁵² Carmel Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity: Yva's Photographic Career and Oeuvre' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 124.

subject of their works, female photographers' gained control over how they were visualised. The numerous self-portraits by German female photographers after the First World War coincided with female emancipation and the increased confidence of women as they entered the workforce and the public sphere. Indeed, Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mühlens-Molderings suggest that the production of self-portraits by female photographers across Europe in the twenties rose out of a desire to break free from women's pre-war image and was an attempt at defining and asserting their new identity.⁵³ This new identity can be understood as being linked to the changing opportunities available to women as they sought a career as a professional photographer.

From the early days of the medium there was an educational infrastructure to support women entering the professional sphere of photography. The availability of training for women helped encourage them into the profession and likely contributed to the large numbers of practising female photographers. The Lette-Verein in Berlin was established in 1866 with the intention of encouraging and enabling women (exclusively) to enter the profession of photography. The success of the institution was certainly acknowledged and it opened its doors to men from 1910.⁵⁴ This marked a contrast to the Berlin Fine Art Academy, which denied women entry until 1919, at which point it also introduced a stricter entrance examination.⁵⁵ A photograph of pupils at the Berlin Academy in 1925 is

⁵³ Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mühlens-Molderings, 'Mirrors, Masks and Spaces: Self-portraits by Women Photographers in the Twenties and Thirties' in Gladys Fabre, *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat*, exhibition catalogue, held at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2004, published in Barcelona, 2004, 321.

⁵⁴ Robin Lenman, 'Lette-Verein Photographic School' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, Oxford, 2005, 362.

⁵⁵ Anna-Carola Krausse, *Lotte Laserstein: My Only Reality*, Katherine Vanovitch (trans.), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum, Berlin, 2003, Dresden, 2003, 46.

indicative of the wider gender imbalance in the fine arts, as we see only four female pupils compared to eleven male (fig.21), this contrasts with the photography schools, which demonstrated a more equal gender balance. For example, when Jacobi was training in Munich (1925-1927), more than half of the students in the photography department were women.⁵⁶ Similarly, Breslauer recalls that during the years she studied at the Lette-Verein (1927-29) there were more women than men.⁵⁷

Despite the Lette-Verein initially being set up solely for women, it was far from sidelined as an institution and was in fact considered as the 'No.1 department for portrait photography'⁵⁸ and one of the best institutions in central Europe.⁵⁹ The reputation and gender-balance of the Lette-Verein no doubt encouraged Breslauer to study there. During her studies she established a network of photographers in Berlin, and had a circle of photographer friends. From the people photographed in her final assignment we can see with whom she worked and became friends.⁶⁰ These included Walter Menzel, Beate Frese, Paul Citroen and Otto Umbehr (Umbo) (figs 22-23). Significantly, none of these photographers studied with her at the Lette-Verein; Frese studied at the Burg Giebichenstein Art School, whereas the men were educated at the Bauhaus. Breslauer

⁵⁶ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 22.

⁵⁷ Katharina Sykora, 'Interview mit Marianne Breslauer', Zurich, July 1982, in *Atropin: Frauen-Foto-Zeitung*, September 1982, 14.

⁵⁸ Christine Hessel, 'The Photographer' in Erich Janke (ed.), *The Modern Book of Female Occupations*, Minden, 1928, 132-138 in Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', Kathrin Beer and, Christina Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer: Photographs*, Francesca Gatenby and David Wright (trans), exhibition catalogue, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, 2011, Zoelmond, 2011, 22.

⁵⁹ Lenman, 'Lette-Verein Photographic School' in Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, Oxford, 2005, 362.

⁶⁰ Breslauer refers to her friends at the time she was at the Lette-Verein as including Paul Citroen, Rut Landshoff, Walter Menzel and Umbo, in Marianne Feilchenfeldt Breslauer, *Bilder meines Lebens: Erinnerungen*, Nimbus, Wädenswil, 2009, 58.

had, therefore, already started to establish a network of photographers offering inspiration from different training backgrounds. Whilst the Bauhaus was also one of the most renowned art schools of its time, it proved to be 'much less forward-looking when it came to gender issues.'⁶¹ Perhaps as a result of this, Breslauer, as well as Jacobi and Besnyö, chose to study in institutions that were more encouraging towards women entering the profession. The accessibility of training was crucial for women; it equipped them with the important skills they needed to establish themselves as professional photographers. Indeed, many women who had also previously studied at the Lette-Verein went on to have successful careers in photography, notably the director of the Ullstein Photographic Studio Elisabeth Heddenhausen.⁶²

Lotte Jacobi's sister, Ruth Jacobi (1899-1995), also studied at the Lette-Verein, but Lotte did not follow this route. Instead, she chose to study film alongside photography at the Bavarian State Academy at the University of Munich between 1925 and 1927. Jacobi had a long history of photographers in her family, with her great-grandfather allegedly learning the medium in 1839 from Louis Daguerre himself.⁶³ Despite the availability of training from her father, it is clear that both sisters sought formal qualifications independently which, arguably, Lotte achieved by moving to Munich. On Lotte's return to

⁶¹ Schönfeld, 'Creative Women of the Weimar Republic' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, xiv. Anja Baumhoff, 'What's in the Shadow of a Bauhaus Block? Gender Issues in Classical Modernity' in *Ibid.*, 51-67.

⁶² Beckers and Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 29.

⁶³ Louis Daguerre was the inventor of modern photography. Beckers and Moortgat question the authenticity of this statement and suggest it may have been more of a family legend, Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 14.

Berlin after completing her formal qualifications, as the older sister, she was ready to take over her father's studio in 1927.

As well as the educational institutions that were available, another way in which women could develop skills in photography was through studying apprenticeships in practising studios. Besnyö's training was different to that of Breslauer and Jacobi in that she began her career as a trainee photographer at the 'József Pécsi Portrait, Advertising and Architecture Studio' in Budapest between 1928 and 1930. Here, Besnyö worked with Pécsi's clients and gained experience with the everyday practice of studio portraits.⁶⁴ After two years of study, Besnyö completed an assistant's exam on the craft of photography. Pécsi was in tune with modern photographic developments and during Besnyö's time in his studio, Pécsi's would have been working on his publication *Photo und Publizität (Photo and Advertising)*.⁶⁵ Published in 1930, this became one of the first books on advertising photography, and included bold photomontage style advertisements (fig.24). This appeared to be highly influential on Besnyö as when she first moved to Berlin in October 1930, she began work in the advertising studio of René Ahrlé.⁶⁶ The training Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer received in pioneering photography departments or studios developed their photographic proficiency and equipped them with the necessary skills to pursue their desired career. Whether they studied at a photography school or as a trainee, it was a vital step towards their professional status and provided the confidence to produce occupational self-portraits that emphasised their proficiency.

⁶⁴ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 212.

⁶⁵ József Pécsi, *Photo und Publizität*, Berlin, 1930.

⁶⁶ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

The self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were not commissioned works and arguably therefore the photographers had full control over the image they created. They presented themselves on their own: bold, confident and in control of their photographic equipment. I contend that this appearance of professionalism was particularly important as these self-portraits coincided with important times in the careers of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer. Jacobi, in her self-portrayal, asserts the significance of her profession as she returned to Berlin following her training to continue as the fourth generation of her family to be involved in the photography business.⁶⁷ Her 1929 self-portrait is therefore taken during the first years running her father's studio. Jacobi's work in the studio consisted mainly of commercial portraiture, but she maintained her creative independence and would choose her desired subjects, as one client joked, 'it was better to wait for Lotte Jacobi to approach you'.⁶⁸ Whilst the studio traditionally specialised in commissioned portraits, the new developments in the illustrated press meant that Jacobi's photographs reached wider audiences by frequently appearing in magazines.

Besnyö had completed her studies in 1930 and produced her occupational self-portrait a year later during her first year in Berlin. Her image was taken after she had left the studio

⁶⁷ Lotte's great-grandfather, Samuel Jacobi, allegedly received instruction from Daguerre in Paris between 1839 and 1842, and returned to Thorn to set up a photography studio. The business was passed firstly to his son, Alexander, and then to Alexander's three sons. The eldest of these sons was Lotte's father, Sigismund, who would then pass the Berlin studio down to Jacobi. As a result of this history there was an expectation that Lotte would continue the family business. Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 11-14.

⁶⁸ The actress Steffie Spira in a conversation with the authors (1990) in *Ibid.*, 37, footnote 55.

of Ahrlé, feeling that it was too commercial,⁶⁹ and decided to pursue press photography in the studio of the photographer and art historian Dr Peter Weller, for whom she worked for at the time the self-portrait was taken.⁷⁰ Working in Weller's studio was a well thought-out decision; before leaving Budapest, Besnyö created a list of photographic studios in Berlin to approach for work, which included Weller.⁷¹ Besnyö, like Jacobi, appears to have maintained an element of freedom in her work, as she describes, 'Weller probably soon realised that he got his best pictures from me by leaving me alone.'⁷² As a result of her work for Weller, she had photographs published in the widely read *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung (BIZ)*. However, her success would come in the months that followed when she owned her own studio and received commissions from the Neofot Picture Agency, resulting in photographs being published in *Die Welt*, *Deutsche Frauen Zeitung* and *Der Querschnitt*.⁷³ Besnyö's self-portrait therefore marks the start of her career and her determination to become a successful photographer.

Breslauer had completed her studies in the spring of 1929 and began work in the most technically advanced studio of its time, the publishing house Ullstein Verlag.⁷⁴ Working

⁶⁹ Besnyö worked as a volunteer in René Ahrlé's advertising studio at Nurnbergerstrase 7 from 1 November 1930 to 14 January 1931; 'her growing aversion to consumer advertising played a part in her decision to leave', Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

⁷⁰ Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 83- 84. From talks between Diepraam and Besnyö February 1994 and March 1997. Besnyö worked in the studio of the press photographer Dr Peter Weller in Berlin from 1 February to 1 July 1931 at Nollendorfplatz 7. Weller's archive was destroyed in the bombing of Berlin and it is therefore difficult to identify photographs taken by Besnyö during her time in Weller's studio.

⁷¹ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

⁷² Eva Besnyö, talks between Diepraam and Besnyö, February 1994 and March 1997, Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 83.

⁷³ Marion Beckers, 'Eva Besnyö', Jewish Women's Archive online, 2005, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/besnyo-eva>, accessed March 2013.

⁷⁴ Marion Beckers, 'Marianne Breslauer' Jewish Women's Archive online, 2005, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/breslauer-marianne>, accessed January 2013.

under fellow Lette-Verein alumnus Elisabeth Heddenhausen, Breslauer was a 'photo editor and photojournalist', which involved studio work, including portraits and advertising, as well as photo-reporting on everyday themes in Berlin.⁷⁵ The engagement with fashion photography at Ullstein appears to have been influential on her self-portrait, with her use of a custom-made designer dressing gown, glossy hair and glamorous pose, the significance of which will be considered further in the second chapter of this thesis. Despite enjoying many aspects of her work at Ullstein,⁷⁶ Breslauer decided to leave in 1932, as 'she soon realised that the swift eye for a sensation and the audacity required of a photo-reporter were not really her style'.⁷⁷ Instead, she chose to work freelance for the Mauritius photography agency, which allowed her to pursue greater independence and choice over her subjects. Consequently, Breslauer's self-portrait of 1933 should be understood as marking a turning point in her career. Breslauer's and Besnyö's self-portraits were taken when both women sought to refine the type of photography they wished to work with during their career, as they sought to establish themselves as independent photographers.

As I have demonstrated, training was readily available for women, making photography appear more accessible. However, this appearance was often deceptive, as Carmel Finnan argues, '*Initially* [my emphasis], women gained easier access to this art form as active participants than to other more traditional areas of fine art such as painting and

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Marianne Breslauer in a letter to Erwin Blumenfeld: 'it is real work and I enjoy doing it', 7 November 1931, Beckers and Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 27 and 31, footnote 35.

⁷⁷ Martin Gasser and Kathrin Beer, 'Marianne Breslauer, Photographs', Fotostiftung Schweiz Website, Pauline Cumbers (trans.), 2010, www.fotostiftung.ch/en/exhibitions/past/marianne-breslauer/, accessed March 2012.

sculpture.⁷⁸ The need for female photographers to establish themselves was particularly important, yet not an easy task. In many ways, the gender equality in Weimar Germany was illusionary, as Ingrid Sharp argues, although men and women were equal in principal, the lack of legal reform meant that they were still bound by the restrictive family law of 1900.⁷⁹ The photographer Lotte König experienced both the difficulties and successes of being a female photographer, and she reflected on these in an essay, 'Die Frau als Photographin', published in Berlin in 1931. Here, she states that '[p]hotography is a wonderful, interesting, and at the same time difficult profession for women.'⁸⁰ Despite acknowledging these difficulties, König had founded a studio that she ran with two other women.⁸¹ She also argued that whilst there was a record number of female professional photographers in Germany in the early thirties, the situation was in fact more complex and men still largely dominated the photographic scene.⁸² Moreover, scholars specialising in the Weimar Republic have widely recognised that women earned twenty to forty percent less than their male counterparts for the same work.⁸³ Indeed, Breslauer's partner, Walter Feilchenfeldt, who purchased her high-end SLR camera for her, supported Breslauer financially.⁸⁴ Similarly, at the time of Besnyö's self-portrait she was dependent

⁷⁸ Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 124.

⁷⁹ Ingrid Sharp, 'Gender Relations in Weimar Berlin', in *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸⁰ Lotte König: 'Ein wunderschöner, interessanter, aber zugleich schweiriger Frauenberuf ist die Photographie.', König, 'Die Frau als Photographin', in Ada Schmidt-Beil (ed.), *Die Kultur der Frau: Eine Lebenssymphonie der Frau des XX. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1931, 292. König ran a studio in Berlin, Atelier König-Rohde.

⁸¹ Mila Ganeva, 'Fashion Photography and Women's Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Autumn, 2003, 2, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317007>, accessed December 2011.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸³ Helen Tierney (ed.), 'Germany, 1919-1933 (Weimar Republic)', *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*, Volume Two, Westport, 1999, 585.

⁸⁴ Kathrin Beer, 'Marianne Breslauer's Legacy' Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 193.

on her father for financial support⁸⁵ and was working for free in Weller's studio.⁸⁶ Whilst it might appear upon first viewing that these foci occupational self-portraits suggest professionalism, they also begin to reveal the tensions women encountered in this sphere.

A key indication of some of the tensions in Besnyö's self-portrait is evident through the fact that she cropped the image.⁸⁷ The original negative (fig.25) reveals that a male colleague stands behind Besnyö, whose forehead remains visible on the right hand side of the cropped version (fig.2).⁸⁸ Commenting on this occurrence, Besnyö herself emphasised her annoyance: 'everything was going fine and then the employee put himself in the picture and spoiled everything.'⁸⁹ Whilst scholars Beckers and Moortgat identify this compelling alteration in their monograph on Besnyö, they do not discuss what this may suggest about her difficult professional position at the time. Conversely, I argue that her editing provides further evidence to suggest Besnyö's desire to have her own studio and independence. Indeed, at the start of the summer in 1931, shortly after this photograph was taken, she left Weller's studio and began renting her own space.⁹⁰ She started her own business as a photographer in her studio, complete with a darkroom, at Nachodstrasse 25 and worked in cooperation with the Neofot agency.⁹¹ Besnyö's self-

⁸⁵ Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 66.

⁸⁶ Tineke de Ruiter, *Eva Besnyö*, Donal Mader (trans), Amsterdam, 2007, 313.

⁸⁷ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 214.

⁸⁸ Besnyö mentioned that there was one other assistant that worked in the studio, Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 81.

⁸⁹ Besnyö in Beckers and Moortgat (ed.), *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1991, 13.

⁹⁰ Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 83.

⁹¹ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 241.

portrait therefore might be understood as acting as visual evidence towards her striving for professional regard at this early stage in her career.

Whilst many women did manage to open and run their own studios this remained a challenge, as König's aforementioned comment highlights. Numerous women entered the field of photography, but fewer of these were actually independent.⁹² Although Jacobi ran her own studio, this was her father's legacy, and the studio was not transferred to her own name until five years after her self-portrait, in 1934.⁹³ It was therefore particularly important for women to establish themselves as professionals in this field in order to prove their capabilities, and through their occupational self-portraits Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer assert their determination. Furthermore, the Weimar years were a transitional time for women's position in society, as Dorothy Rowe has identified, there were 'anxieties regarding the role of women in the public realm'.⁹⁴ Working women, so-called 'double earners', triggered this anxiety as they were thought to be taking jobs away from men who needed to support their family.⁹⁵ Jacobi notes the restrictions she felt as a young woman surrounded by prevailing opinions that women were not to pursue a career. Jacobi's childhood desire to become an actress was met with disapproval by her family, as she recalls: 'but God forbid [a woman would] have any artistic aspirations –

⁹² Lotte König, 'eine selbständige Photographin war eine Seltenheit' in 'Die Frau als Photographin', in Ada Schmidt-Beil (ed.), *Die Kultur der Frau: Eine Lebenssymphonie der Frau des XX. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1931, 292.

⁹³ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 314.

⁹⁴ Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, Aldershot, 2003, 2.

⁹⁵ Women were called 'double earners' as they were thought to be earning in addition to their (presumed) partner. Due to the unemployment from 1929, it was thought that women were taking jobs away from husbands and fathers, Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, 'Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work' in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Mation Kaplan (eds), *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, New York, 1984, 34.

again, that would look suspiciously like a career'.⁹⁶ It can be argued that it was because of these tensions that many women, for example those listed at the start of this chapter, produced occupational self-portraits at the start of their career as a way of presenting themselves as self-assured capable photographers.

The parallels between self-representation and professionalism are also evident in self-portraits by other female photographers. Carmel Finnan argues that Yva's self-portrait (fig.13) was produced during a time when 'she was trying to gain a sense of her own self-worth and autonomy as a young professional photographer and businesswoman.'⁹⁷ Additionally, Larisa Dryansky draws attention to the fact that Frankfurt-born photographer Ilse Bing produced a self-portrait each time she acquired a new camera, as Dryansky infers, '[t]his practice became a ritual with Bing, whose self-portraits over the years provide markers in the photographer's technical evolution.'⁹⁸ For example her self-portrait from 1925 (fig.26) shows Bing with her new 9 x 13 cm plate Voigtländer camera, which occupies a central position in the photograph. In reference to Bing, Dryansky points towards the correlation between female photographers' self-portraits and the progression of their career. Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer produced an occupational self-portrait at the start of their careers, which in a similar way to Yva's and Bing's images, acted as an established way of asserting their professionalism.

⁹⁶ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 18, footnote 10.

⁹⁷ Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 123.

⁹⁸ Dryansky, *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 11.

Tools of the Trade

This chapter has hitherto argued that despite some of the initial possibilities afforded to female photographers, the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer can be understood as demonstrating an increased *need* to establish their capabilities due to the restrictions that were in place regarding women seeking careers. As a result, the foci self-portraits begin to expose the tensions inherent in this field for women. This is further revealed in the specific depiction of complex photographic equipment, which, it can be argued, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer include in their self-portraits to highlight their technical proficiency and professionalism. The camera was the tool of the professional photographer and it forms a central feature in the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer. Many new cameras came to the market in the twenties, including revolutionary small-format cameras, which allowed photography to leave the studio (with less bulky equipment), whereas faster shutter speeds meant movement could be captured. The Leica was the first of the small-format cameras to be produced on a large scale (fig.27).⁹⁹ Such cameras were hand-held, easy to use, and did not require a studio or complex equipment; as a result a larger mass audience could engage with photography.

The revolutionary Leica camera was marketed on a vast scale, but its use by professionals was often criticised due to the small size of the negative.¹⁰⁰ To use a small camera and

⁹⁹ Appearing on the market in the mid-twenties, the Leica used 35 mm film.

¹⁰⁰ Dryansky, '[p]rofessional photographers, for their part, gave the new [small-format] camera a cool reception', *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 13. John Phillips, '[small-format cameras were] treated by most serious photographers [around 1929] as novelties and judged incapable of producing negatives of adequate

then enlarge the image was considered by some as producing poorer quality photographs.¹⁰¹ Tim Gidal, one of the founders of modern photojournalism,¹⁰² argued that 'from 1924 to 1930 [the small-format cameras] were chiefly regarded as little more than amusing playthings'.¹⁰³ Female photographers also enforced this view; Florence Henri openly disdained the small-format camera, and told budding photographer Gisèle Freund that she would never be a good photographer if she used such a camera.¹⁰⁴ It seems that Breslauer shared Henri's view, as she stated in an interview that the format of the Leica was 'too small' for her.¹⁰⁵ Instead, she used a medium format Mentor 6 x 9 SLR camera,¹⁰⁶ which produced high quality prints. This camera can be seen in her 1933 self-portrait and was able to capture images in closed rooms, such as the one depicted in this image, due to its luminescent optics.¹⁰⁷ The SLR cameras were more expensive and were therefore not usually owned by the camera-curious masses. As John Phillips has identified, '[t]he decks of cruise liners were not crammed with tourists sporting reflexes',¹⁰⁸ instead, they would purchase the cheaper folding cameras for example the Zeiss-Ikon Cocarette (fig.28). The reflex cameras were robust instruments with

quality' (although developments in the mid-30s did improve the quality), John Phillips, *The Classic Rolleiflex: A Definitive Guide*, East Sussex, 2010, 16.

¹⁰¹ Dryansky, *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 32.

¹⁰² His first picture story, 'The Vagabond Congress', was published by the *Munchner Illustrierte Presse*, a forerunner of *Picture Post*, in 1929.

¹⁰³ Tim Gidal, *Modern Photojournalism, Origin and Evolution, 1910-1933*, New York, 1973, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Dryansky, *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 34.

¹⁰⁵ Katharina Sykora, 'Interview mit Marianne Breslauer', Zurich, July 1982, in *Atropin: Frauen-Foto-Zeitung*, September 1982, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Marianne Breslauer, 'Ich benutze die 'Microflex' 9 x 12 und die 'Mentor' 6 x 9, beides Spiegelreflex.' letter to Dr. Unda Hörner, 2001, unpublished, Breslauer Curatorial File, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (appendix.1). At the start of her career in the late twenties she used a 150 mm Zeiss-Ikon Microflex 9 x 12, Zeiss Tessar 1:4.5, 150 mm, T-1/2000sec. In 1930 she received the Mentor camera as a present from her partner Walter Feilchenfeldt, Mentor, Zeiss Biotessar, 1:2.8, 135 mm, B-1/600sec.

¹⁰⁷ Beer, 'Marianne Breslauer's Legacy', Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, Zoelmond, 2011, 193. Details courtesy of the records viewed at a preview of the auction Simon & Silberberg in the Galerie Georges Petit Paris, 1932.

¹⁰⁸ John Phillips, *The Classic Rolleiflex: A Definitive Guide*, East Sussex, 2010, 20.

sophisticated focusing finders but tended to be large, heavy and expensive.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Jacobi includes a large-format camera in her self-portrait. She used an 18 x 24 cm plate studio camera fitted with a Perscheid soft-focus lens. Although Jacobi did own smaller-format cameras such as the Leica (purchased the same year as the 1929 self-portrait was produced) (fig.29)¹¹⁰ and a custom-made Ermanox, she has chosen to photograph herself with the large-format studio camera. Only professionals would use cameras such as these.

Besnyö used a medium-format twin lens reflex camera, the popular 6 x 6 Rolleiflex (fig.30), which was the first high quality compact roll-film reflex and produced square negatives.¹¹¹ Whilst Besnyö was studying under Pécsi, he advised Besnyö's father to purchase a Rolleiflex for her in early 1929 when this camera had recently come on the market.¹¹² Besnyö's Berlin self-portrait could therefore be signifying a self-conscious attempt to show off her understanding of such new equipment.¹¹³ Although it was a smaller format camera than Jacobi and Breslauer's, it was new and expensive, aimed at professionals and serious amateurs.¹¹⁴ Consequently, it can be argued that the inclusion of professional camera models by Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer was a deliberate choice because of prevailing negative attitudes towards the mass-produced small-format cameras lacking in professional quality. The inclusion of high-end and larger-format cameras in the foci self-portraits asserts that the photographers are not simply 'playing'

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹⁰ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 42.

¹¹¹ 75 mm Tessar lens, Compur shutter 1 sec- 1/300.

¹¹² Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 23.

¹¹³ The Original Rolleiflex was in production between 1929 and 1932 and was made by the German company Franke & Heidecke. Phillips, *The Classic Rollei*, East Sussex, 2010, 28.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

with cameras, but are professionals. Moreover, in doing so they visually distinguish themselves from amateur photographers or snapshot leisure photography.

Although Jacobi was fascinated with new photographic techniques, she hesitated to commit herself to modern cameras such as her Ermanox.¹¹⁵ Consequently, Beckers and Moortgat infer that her 1929 self-portrait, with the old-fashioned camera, 'seems rather traditional'.¹¹⁶ However, neither Beckers nor Moortgat qualify this claim in any detail. Although the plate-backed camera emphasises traditional techniques it also significantly refers to the tradition of photography in her family. By referencing her male predecessors, it could be argued that Jacobi was drawing attention to the fact she was the first woman to take over the family studio. As a result, the photograph asserts that although she is continuing the tradition of studio portraiture, she is challenging its previously male-dominated history in her family. Furthermore, her fellow worker at the studio and younger sister, Ruth Jacobi, produced a strikingly similar self-portrait from the early thirties (fig.31).¹¹⁷ This image was likely inspired by Lotte's self-portrait; Ruth stands by a similar plate-backed camera, again, clutching a cord release to take the photograph in a mirror. From 1931, Ruth ran the studio alongside her sister before moving to the USA in 1935.¹¹⁸ Whilst Ruth and Lotte Jacobi gained the opportunity to run the studio due to their father, the professional nature of their self-portraits emphasise the maintained

¹¹⁵ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁷ The photograph has not been dated; I have estimated the date as c1931-1935, as it is likely to have been taken when Ruth was running the studio with her sister.

¹¹⁸ The Jewish Museum Berlin, 'Ruth Jacobi. Photographs', <http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/01-Exhibitions/02-Special-Exhibitions/2008/jacobi.php>, accessed March 2013.

need to establish themselves as proficient photographers signifying the changing roles available to women, but also their tensions.

The camera models included in the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer not only point towards their capabilities as photographers, but also suggest the types of photographs they took. Whilst Jacobi's large studio camera refers to her practice as a studio portrait photographer, Besnyö's hand-held camera suggests that despite her being in the studio, she would also experiment with street photography. An image taken by her then partner John Fernhout shows the ease at which Besnyö would use her Rolleiflex outside due to the camera being small and lightweight (fig.32). Besnyö emphasised that the camera provided a new way for her to engage with the world around her, as she stated '[w]hen I walk around with my camera I see things. With a shopping bag I walk straight past everything'.¹¹⁹ Although Besnyö often used her Rolleiflex outside, the noteworthy studio setting for her self-portrait helps create a more professional image of the photographer, which arguably she was doing deliberately. A potential reason for this is because the Rolleiflex was marketed as easy to use (fig.33), and with 35,000 sold between 1929 and 1932, it was a fairly common camera in Weimar Germany.¹²⁰ Through using the Rolleiflex in a professional setting, she enforces that it is not a small-format camera used by the masses as photojournalist Gidal identified, but rather a tool to enable her greater freedom outdoors.

¹¹⁹ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 205, footnote 1.

¹²⁰ Phillips, *The Classic Rolleiflex*, East Sussex, 2010, 28.

The inclusion of Besnyö's glove in her self-portrait further signals her ability to develop the photographs herself, which would not have been done in recreational photography. The glove is clearly unnecessary for the actual taking of the photograph itself here and it can be argued that it is therefore used by Besnyö to emphasise that her capabilities extend beyond capturing 'just' the image. The importance of being able to develop your own work was emphasised by Besnyö who herself claimed that 'making your own print is an essential part of the whole process'.¹²¹ Non-professionals would pay to get their photographs developed and would consequently have less influence over the image, whereas Besnyö could experiment with the contrasts of light and dark, gaining further control over the outcome of the final print. Indeed, it was this control in processing images that allowed her to crop her self-portrait. I have argued that Besnyö purposefully used the studio setting and the indication of her abilities to develop the film in order to construct an image of herself as a capable professional. Whilst Besnyö includes the developing glove to signify professionalism, Jacobi and Breslauer include the cord release. This release was used before the self-timer was invented and allowed photographs to be taken with some distance from the camera, which meant that in the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer their faces can be seen, in significant contrast with self-portraits taken through the view-finder such as Germaine Krull's (fig.9). Breslauer also includes a tripod, a further item that would only have been used by professionals. Crucially, all three photographers suggest important control over the whole photographic process. They position their equipment, decide on the subject, the composition and control when the photograph is taken through the cord release.

¹²¹ Talks between Diepraam and Besnyö, February 1994 and March 1997, Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 30.

The underlying restrictions on women in the professional sphere were further highlighted by the fact that not only did female photographers' self-portraits often show their photographic equipment, but also the way the self-portraits were constructed often presented a more formal and professional image of the photographer compared with their male counterparts. Numerous contemporaneous self-portraits by male photographers, for example by photographers who Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer knew, often presented themselves in a more casual manner rather than presenting photography as work. In a light-hearted self-portrait, the renowned fashion photographer Erwin Blumenfeld presents himself nude with just a camera to conceal his dignity (1930) (fig.34). The camera appears less as a professional tool, and more as an item to have fun with. Breslauer was a friend of Blumenfeld as is evident through the letters she wrote to him whilst at Ullstein, as well as his own portrait of her in 1937 (fig.35).¹²² The way in which Breslauer reveals her body in her 1933 self-portrait seems to contrast, or indeed be a play on, Blumenfeld's deliberate bodily concealment here. Breslauer's construction of a professional image is complicated by her nudity. However, it could be argued that she is using this nudity in a clever way. Whilst Carol Duncan emphasises how modernist male self-portraits frequently depicted the clothed and dominant male artist with a nude female model to accentuate male virility,¹²³ in Blumenfeld's self-portrait he presents himself nude and surrounded by three clothed women. Despite this, Blumenfeld uses the camera to conceal his phallus, thereby arguably maintaining his male (creative) authority.

¹²² Beckers and Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 27 and 31, footnote 35.

¹²³ Carol Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting', *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*, Cambridge, 1993, 99.

This is emphasised even further by the fact that both the heads of his female subjects are disconcertingly below and at the same height as his groin area. In addition to Duncan's observations, Amelia Jones' 1994 article on sixties and seventies performance art 'Dis/Playing the Phallus' is a useful way of considering how Breslauer and Blumenfeld have used their bodies in their self-portraits.¹²⁴ Jones argues that 'the artist's authority is most effectively confirmed when the function of the phallus is masked, hidden under art-historically sanctioned symbols of artistic genius'.¹²⁵ Whilst in Blumenfeld's self-portrait the phallus remains masked, Breslauer's nudity could be understood as challenging this 'privileging of the anatomically male subject within Western culture'¹²⁶ by cleverly exposing her body at the same time as asserting her creative profession. In doing so, Breslauer's self-portrait significantly draws attention to, and perhaps even mocks, images such as Blumenfeld's that equated creativity with potent masculinity as the 'singularly masculine conception of artistic authority put into place within modernism'.¹²⁷

In a similar way to Blumenfeld's light-hearted image, Umbo, who was a friend of Besnyö and Breslauer, presents himself in a self-portrait from c.1930 whilst lying on a beach with the shadow of his Leica cast over his face (fig.36). The combination of the beach setting and the Leica's association with leisure snapshot photography align this image with tourism, which was often met with negative connotations due to tourists' indiscriminate

¹²⁴ Amelia Jones, 'Dis/Playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform their Masculinities', *Art History*, Vol. 17, December 1994, 546-584.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 547.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 547.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 547.

modes of viewing.¹²⁸ Arguably, Umbo could be more readily aligned to a tourist than a professional photographer. Whereas John Fernhout took photographs of Besnyö at the beach with her Rolleiflex, this was not how she chose to represent herself in her 1931 self-portrait. Whilst I acknowledge that not all self-portraits by men were 'playful' and all by women photographers serious during this period, it is noteworthy that some women did in fact use the self-portrait differently in relation to the tensions they experienced as female professionals. I have argued that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are notable for their expression of photography as a profession as opposed to for leisure. Conversely, in many self-portraits by contemporaneous male photographers this distinction often appears blurred.

Although the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer point towards their desire to create a professional public image, there is no evidence to suggest these images were published in contemporary magazines, unlike many of their other photographs. Indeed, many photographic self-portraits were published in the illustrated press or in photobooks at this time.¹²⁹ For example, Albert Renger-Patzsch's photograph of himself in a car mirror (1928) was published in the popular journal *Uhu* (fig.37), and a self-portrait by El Lissitzky was used on the front cover of Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold's seminal text *Foto-Auge*, published in Germany in 1929 (fig.38). Large audiences would have seen both of these images. Self-portraits by women were likewise published, for example Henri's self-portrait capturing her reflection in a mirror appeared in *Foto-Auge* (fig.20). There is

¹²⁸ Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures*, Oxford and New York, 2000, 3.

¹²⁹ Photobooks were common in Europe during the twenties and thirties; they would showcase a particular photographers work, sometimes including an introduction but often with limited text.

evidence to suggest that this image circulated amongst female photographers. Indeed, Dryansky argues that Henri's self-portrait influenced Bing's *Self-portrait in Mirrors* (1931) (fig.10).¹³⁰ As *Foto-Auge* was widely distributed in Germany, it is likely that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer also took inspiration from Henri's self-portrait. Furthermore, through seeing self-portraits in books and magazines, they may have also created their own self-portraits for potential publication.

The self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are also comparable to the numerous published images depicting working women in the illustrated papers and magazines, to which they themselves also actively contributed. Women were shown in a variety of working roles, for example as actresses, artists, writers and white-collar workers (figs 39-40). Breslauer took numerous photographs of Annemarie Schwarzenbach who was an independent and successful writer (figs 41-42). Jacobi repeatedly photographed female creative professionals and was particularly fascinated by female dancers and actresses such as Lotte Lenya (fig.43). Besnyö also took photographs of working women including the artist Charley Toroop, of whom she took multiple pictures. In a photograph from 1932, Toroop is shown at work painting a nude model from life (fig.44). As women had restricted access to nude models until the start of the twentieth-century, women often avoided this subject.¹³¹ Besnyö's photograph of Toroop could therefore be considered as a significant attempt to foreground and acknowledge Toroop's confident engagement

¹³⁰ Bing was one of only a few photographers to solely use the Leica. Dryansky, *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 19.

¹³¹ Marsha Meskimmon, 'Domesticity and Dissent: The Dynamics of Women Realists in the Weimar Republic' in *Domesticity and Dissent: The Role of Women Artists in Germany 1918-1938*, exhibition catalogue, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery New Walk, 1992, Leicester, 1992, 27-28.

with the nude.¹³² The self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer could be seen alongside images of working women produced during the Weimar years and their photographs therefore actively contributed to the growing body of public images of female professionals in the printed press. Consequently, I have argued that their self-portraits point towards the sustained need, and indeed desire, for women to assert their public presence in the professional sphere.

Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were forced to leave Germany in 1932-1936 due to the National Socialist dictatorship and their Jewish identity, which meant that many of their photographs were left behind and subsequently lost or destroyed.¹³³ However, the foci self-portraits still exist, indicating that these images were important for their creators. When Jacobi left Germany she was forced to choose a selection of photographs to take with her, in her selection she included many published photographs, but also her 1929 self-portrait.¹³⁴ The photographs that survive from Jacobi's Berlin period remain only a tiny part of her archive, emphasising the importance of the works she chose to save from this period.¹³⁵ Similarly, Breslauer carried her photographs with her throughout her exile and a few hundred of her negatives survive, although it is estimated that she took around

¹³² This photograph was displayed in a 1933 exhibition of Besnyö's work at van Lier's gallery, Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 225.

¹³³ Breslauer left Germany in 1933 and travelled to Zurich, after returning to Berlin briefly, she emigrated to the Netherlands in 1936. Besnyö moved to Amsterdam in 1932. Jacobi left for America in 1935. The only works from Besnyö's period in Weller's studio that survive are the ones she made second prints of and took to Amsterdam in 1933.

¹³⁴ Much of her work was lost when she left Germany in 1935, Wise (ed.) *Lotte Jacobi*, Massachusetts, 1978, 8.

¹³⁵ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 8.

100,000 photographs between 1927 and 1938.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the designer dressing gown Breslauer wears in her self-portrait still exists, suggesting Breslauer held on to this item due to its sentimental value.¹³⁷ Whilst Besnyö was working for Weller, he owned the negatives from the photographs she took.¹³⁸ However, we know she made copies of her favourite images, which she kept in her portfolio. The 1931 self-portrait was one such image, highlighting its importance.¹³⁹ Later in Besnyö's life, the photograph became part of her 'choice collection', a selection that was created by the photographer whilst her archive was being catalogued. This collection features two hundred of her personal favourite photographs or most published images.¹⁴⁰ The fact that these three self-portraits survived despite exile indicates the importance of the professional significance each of these images conveyed for their maker.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer asserted professionalism. By discussing the accessibility of training for women, but also the restrictions that still existed in Weimar Germany, I have argued that the occupational

¹³⁶ Manuela Reichart (director), *'Zur Person Marianne Breslauer'* ('Film Portrait of Marianne Breslauer'), 25 minute film, including interviews with Inge Feltrinelli, Maria Becker, Janos Frescot (2010) and Marianne Breslauer (1989).

¹³⁷ The custom made dressing gown is now in the possession of Cécile Kühne-Feilchenfeldt, Beckers and Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Beer and, Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 31, footnote 38.

¹³⁸ Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö, Monografieën van Nederlandse fotografen*, no.9, Amsterdam, 1999, 34, Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216, footnote 64.

¹³⁹ Besnyö's oeuvre from her Berlin period is represented by around forty photographs and will thus always remain only a fragment, Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 207.

¹⁴⁰ These photographs also formed an exhibition, 'The Choice Collection' at FOAM, Amsterdam, 2003, Tineke de Ruiter, *Eva Besnyö*, Donal Mader (trans), Amsterdam, 2007, 303.

self-portrait was important for women in order to 'prove' their capabilities and establish themselves. Through engaging in photography and observing the world around them, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer participated in modernity. Their self-portraits asserted their presence within a new and modern public field and the camera was an important tool to achieve this. This chapter has also identified that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer included high-end cameras in their self-portraits in order to heighten the professionalism of their images due to the mass-consumerism of small-format and cheap folding cameras. The complex relationship the foci photographers had with mass culture is explored further in the following chapter, in which the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are compared to images of women in the media, to suggest how these three photographers chose to construct images of themselves that in some respects conformed to, but also subverted, mass images of women.

CHAPTER TWO

HIGH ART AND MASS CULTURE

The German cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer observed in 1927 that ‘the most striking proof of photography’s extraordinary validity today is the increase in the number of illustrated papers’.¹⁴¹ In the early thirties approximately 2500 newspapers and periodicals were in circulation in Berlin¹⁴² and Germany led the way with its illustrated press, setting the example worldwide for innovative photography and layout.¹⁴³ In the cultural metropolis of Berlin, photographic images proliferated in illustrated papers such as *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung (BIZ)*, in magazines targeted at women including *Uhu* and *Die Dame*, as well as cultural journals such as *Der Querschnitt*. More people than ever before were viewing photographs in their daily lives; a photograph of a woman at a newsstand by Willy Pragher in 1929 epitomises the volume of illustrated papers from which consumers could choose (fig.45). Photography was considered a fundamental way of capturing the fast pace of modern life, and it was this sense of emergency and actuality created through photography that was central to the illustrated press.¹⁴⁴ Lotte Jacobi, Eva Besnyö and Marianne Breslauer all contributed images to, and were influenced by, the illustrated papers and magazines. This chapter positions the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer (figs 1-3) alongside mass cultural forms such as advertising and fashion plates, to argue how their photographic careers, and particularly these foci self-

¹⁴¹ Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Photography’, 1927, quoted in translation in Mila Ganeva, ‘Fashion Photography and Women’s Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva’, *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Autumn, 2003, 1, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317007>, accessed December 2011.

¹⁴² Willem Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Karen Gamester (trans), Amsterdam, 1999, 51.

¹⁴³ Larisa Dryansky, *Ilse Bing: Photography Through the Looking Glass*, New York, 2006, 14.

¹⁴⁴ Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, ‘Visual Culture: Illustrated Press and Photography’, *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 642.

portraits, offer an interesting way of exploring what might be considered a photographic dialectic between high and low cultures.

The first part of this chapter will examine how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer simultaneously engaged with both 'high art' photographic techniques and mass culture. The relationship between women more generally and mass culture in the Weimar Republic will also be considered. Scholars including Andreas Huyssen and Patrice Petro have argued how mass culture has historically often been associated with women.¹⁴⁵ Writing in 1986, Huyssen argued that women were, (and to some extent still are), frequently considered as key consumers of mass culture, whereas the high arts, modernism and 'real, authentic culture' were more closely aligned with men.¹⁴⁶ Huyssen defines 'modernists' as those who wished to keep high art 'pure' from 'the encroachments of urbanization, massification, technological modernization, in short, of modern mass culture'.¹⁴⁷ Whilst Huyssen's comments mostly relate to the late nineteenth century, his arguments are useful for understanding women's position in the Weimar Republic. Men still largely dominated 'authentic culture', such as painting, whereas women were more readily associated with consumerism and mass culture.

In this chapter it shall be demonstrated how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer engaged with 'high art' photographic techniques and were part of the wave of experimental

¹⁴⁵ Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other' in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, 44-62; Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*, New Jersey, 1989.

¹⁴⁶ Huyssen, 'Mass Culture' in *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, 44-62.

¹⁴⁷ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, 163.

photography beginning in the twenties after a move away from Pictorial Styles. These avant-garde photographic developments were referred to at the time as the 'New Photography';¹⁴⁸ this encompassed emergent photographic 'styles' including New Objectivity and New Vision, as well as techniques such as photomontage, photo-essays and camera-less photography (such as photograms). I position these forms of experimental photography as distinct from the 'mainstream' documentary photographs in the mass media, but, in a similar way to Huyssen's comments on the avant-garde more generally, I argue that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer contributed to the development of an alternative relationship between high art and mass culture.¹⁴⁹

Breslauer's self-portrait (fig.3) points towards the techniques of the New Photography, but also the types of images appearing in female magazines, demonstrating a negotiation of boundaries between high and low cultures. Arguments which draw upon the illustrated press in this chapter will focus on publications from Ullstein Verlag, not only because this was where Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer most frequently published images, but also, as Maud Lavin has identified, because Ullstein 'best exemplifies how the mass media of the period represented women'.¹⁵⁰ The second section of this chapter will consider the ways in which the foci photographers portray themselves in their self-portraits in comparison to how women were being represented with cameras in the press. As a result of women's association with consumerism, they were frequently used in camera advertisements,

¹⁴⁸ David Mellor, 'Preface' in *Germany The New Photography 1927-33: Documents and Essays*, London, 1978, 7. For example, Werner Gräff uses the term 'New Photography' in 'Vorwort' in *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf! Berlin*, 1929, 1, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴⁹ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, viii.

¹⁵⁰ Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, New Haven and London, 1993, 59.

which often presented the camera as a fashionable item for the so-called 'modern woman'. I show that whilst Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer published photographs in the illustrated press, and to some extent relied on it for income, they also critically responded to mass media constructions of women through their self-portraits. By doing so, this chapter builds on the conclusions from chapter one, as it is argued that the foci photographers' presentation of themselves as professionals was even more important at a time when many images in the illustrated press associated the camera with fashion and commodity items.

The Illustrated Press and the New Photography

'I am an artist not a commercial photographer.'¹⁵¹

Lotte Jacobi.

By 1926 there were four million people living in Berlin, leading Kracauer to deem the capital the 'home of the masses'.¹⁵² These masses included 'white-collar workers' ('die Angestellten') who would be employed in basic office and service jobs, but who would have a disposable income to spend on mass entertainment such as the cinema and magazines.¹⁵³ With *BIZ* costing just twenty pfennigs it was affordable for a large number

¹⁵¹ Richard M. Bacon, 'Lotte Jacobi', *Yankee*, August, 1976, 64, in Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi, Berlin, New York*, Karen Margolis, Kevin Michael Madden and Taryn Toro (trans), exhibition catalogue, held at Das Verborgene Museum, Berlin, 1997, (English edition) published in Berlin, 1998, 9.

¹⁵² Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Cult of Distraction' (1926) in Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Thomas Y Levin (trans and ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1995, 325 and 328.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 324.

of people.¹⁵⁴ Ullstein was the biggest publishing organisation in Berlin during the Weimar period and published many of the journals and newspapers with the largest circulation including *BIZ*, *Die Dame*, *Uhu* and *Der Querschnitt*. These publications appealed to mass readers, particularly the former two, through their use of photojournalism, and played a key role in the flourishing mass culture. Writing in the 1980s Huyssen identified mass cultural items as including 'serialized feuilleton novels, popular and family magazines, the stuff of lending libraries, fictional bestsellers and the like'.¹⁵⁵ Some of Huyssen's ideas are relevant to the considerations of mass culture in Weimar Germany, with Kracauer referring to the cinema and magazines as forms of mass culture, which, due to their association with lowbrow entertainment, were considered as inferior to the fine arts.¹⁵⁶ Kracauer argued that mass entertainment was a distraction, whereas the high arts of painting, literature, drama and music encouraged greater contemplation.¹⁵⁷ Certain forms of photography, particularly the experimental and creative aspects of the New Photography, could be considered highbrow, such as images produced by László Moholy-Nagy and Albert Renger-Patzsch. It would be wrong to think that this type of photography did not appear regularly in magazines, for example, a photograph by the Hungarian avant-garde photographer Martin Munkácsi graced the cover of *BIZ* in 1932 (fig.46). In this photograph, Munkácsi arguably engages with mass culture through his celebrity subject, actress Greta Garbo, but he presents her in a non-conventional composition by

¹⁵⁴ In January 1927 the average salary for a white-collar worker was 170.96 marks, Hilde Walter, 'Die Misere des "neuen Mittelstands"' ('The Misery of the "New Mittelstand"'), *Die Weltbühne* 25, no. 4, 22 January 1929, 130-134, quoted in translation in Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg (eds), *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 188.

¹⁵⁵ Huyssen, 'Mass Culture' in *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, 49.

¹⁵⁶ Kracauer, 'The Cult of Distraction' (1926) in *The Mass Ornament*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, 326.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 323 and 326.

completely concealing her face and most of her body with a large parasol. Likewise Andre Kertesz's image of a balanced fork, published in *Uhu*, draws attention to the formal properties of everyday objects, which was a technique frequently used by photographers who engaged with New Objectivity (fig.47).

Whilst examples of the New Photography did appear in illustrated papers and magazines, the majority of published images in the press could arguably be considered lowbrow. It can be inferred that for Kracauer, photographs that were published in newspapers such as *BIZ* to illustrate events and stories were easily consumed and had no sense of intellectual depth. For example, a photo-essay published in the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* appears to show 'typical' scenes of Spanish life providing the impression of a snapshot of 'reality' (fig.48). This documentary style dominated much of the mass media. The German writer Edlef Köppen shared Kracauer's opinion of magazines' association with lowbrow culture. In his 1925 article, 'The Magazine as a Sign of the Times', he critiqued the easily consumable magazines that had flourished since the start of the twenties.¹⁵⁸ He linked the fast pace of modern life with a lack of contemplation for high artistic forms. He argued that: 'what is being cultivated here is nothing but exceedingly banal entertainment ... [t]he motto here is to be informed about everything, but know nothing thoroughly.'¹⁵⁹ In contrast to photographs by Kertesz and Munkácsi, which were sympathetic with techniques of the New Photography, the function of documentary photographs was to briefly inform readers about an event, thus limiting their potential for

¹⁵⁸ Edlef Köppen, 'Das Magazin als Zeichen der Zeit' ('The Magazine as a Sign of the Times'), *Der Hellweg* 5, no.24, 17 June 1925, 457, quoted in translation in Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg (eds), *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 644-645.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 645.

encouraging deeper contemplation. In contrast, Köppen points out that for one mark, the usual price of a magazine, a good book cannot be produced.¹⁶⁰ Mass culture was therefore often associated with the lower income classes (such as white-collar workers) who could often only afford cheaper forms of entertainment.

As a result of writers' views such as Kracauer and Köppen, it is likely that some photographers would have wanted to avoid potential associations with mass culture and cheap commodification culture. As Huyssen infers: '[t]hus the nightmare of being devoured by mass culture through co-option, commodification, and the "wrong" kind of success is the constant fear of the modernist artist, who tries to stakeout his territory by fortifying the boundaries between genuine art and inauthentic mass culture.'¹⁶¹ These boundaries, I argue, were being negotiated by female photographers, such as Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, who engaged with the ideas of the New Photography, but also used the mass culture of magazines and newspapers to provide a platform to show their photographs to large audiences, as well as crucially earning an income.

Whilst working for Weller, Besnyö's photographs were published in *BIZ* and various women's magazines.¹⁶² *BIZ* was a weekly newspaper that reached a circulation of over a million,¹⁶³ meaning that Besnyö's photographs would have been seen by a mass audience. Besnyö often engaged in documentary style photography, as can be seen in a

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 645.

¹⁶¹ Huyssen, 'Mass Culture' in *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, 53.

¹⁶² Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 83.

¹⁶³ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, 'Visual Culture' in *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 641.

double-page spread in the *Deutsche Frauenzeitung*, which includes four photographs by Besnyö and five by Weller, and provides a documentary photo-essay on the poor social housing situation (fig.49) (1930). These photographs are illustrative to the article and briefly inform the viewer about the ‘tent city’ in Zeuthen (near Berlin), where people who had lost their jobs were living in tent-like structures.¹⁶⁴ Breslauer frequently published photographs between 1929 and 1937. In 1932, her image of a bridge in Berlin was given a full page in *Der Querschnitt*, a magazine that deliberately mixed an interesting combination of high and low culture (fig.50). For example, *Der Querschnitt* often combined discussions on mass sporting events (in particular boxing) alongside images of fine art and was highly influenced by the tastes of gallery owner Alfred Flechtheim, who originally launched the magazine (figs 51-52). Images Breslauer had taken in Paris were also published in *Für die Frau*, a supplement of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and her fashion photographs at the Ullstein studio were published in *Die Dame*, 1933 (fig.53).

Jacobi published frequently between 1927 and 1933 in journals including *Die Dame*, *Uhu*, *Der Querschnitt* and the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*.¹⁶⁵ *Uhu* and *Die Dame* were devoted to both defining and shaping the image of the independent and fashionable ‘New Woman’ (Neue Frau). Jacobi’s photographic contribution to the article ‘How Hollywood changes German actresses’ published in *BIZ* in 1930 demonstrates her engagement with celebrity subjects (fig.54) and as such, would conform to Kracauer’s notion of lowbrow. Maud Lavin has identified that the avant-garde in Weimar Berlin interacted with, contributed

¹⁶⁴ Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö: Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam*, Paul Aston and Steven Lindberg (trans), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum and the Berlinischen Galerie, Berlin, 2011-2012, Berlin, 2011, 217.

¹⁶⁵ Some of which are credited as ‘Jacobi’ and some ‘atelier Jacobi’.

and responded to the illustrated press and mass culture,¹⁶⁶ and Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer's publication of images in magazines signals this interaction. Furthermore, Jacobi was well positioned geographically to engage with a combination of high and lowbrow culture. Photographers often set up studios in key places of mass cultural entertainment and Jacobi's studio, based in the centre of the new west end of the city at Joachimstaler Straße, was a place that was considered a 'vibrant mixture of mass culture and avant-garde'.¹⁶⁷

Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg have argued that Weimar photography played 'an essential part in commodity production, distribution, and consumption.'¹⁶⁸ As was discussed in chapter one, cheaper cameras became available which, to a degree, helped align photography with mass-consumption, as did the volume of photographs appearing in the press. Whilst photography came to be associated with consumption, so did women, who were deemed key consumers. Hanns Kropff in his 1926 article 'Women as Shoppers' claimed that '[s]eventy-five percent of all things are brought by women'.¹⁶⁹ Even post economic crash, by 1932 around the time Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer took their self-portraits, this statistic had risen to eighty-five percent, as estimated by the

¹⁶⁶ Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, New Haven and London, 1993, 47-59.

¹⁶⁷ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 34. The Berlin atelier Jacobi was based in an apartment on the first floor. Other photographers set up their studios in areas associated with mass cultural forms of entertainment such as Karl Schenker who had a studio at Kurfürstendamm 29 until 1921, as well as female photographer Frieda Riess (Kurfürstendamm 14/15) who ran her studio 1918-1932.

¹⁶⁸ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, 'Visual Culture' in *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 642.

¹⁶⁹ Hanns Kropff, 'Frauen als Käuferinnen' ('Women as Shoppers') in *Die Reklame. Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute*, July 1926, 649-650, quoted in translation Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg (eds), *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 660.

advertising trade journal *Gebrauchsgraphik*.¹⁷⁰ As a result, advertisements frequently targeted women, who were often viewed as ‘little more than mindless shoppers’.¹⁷¹ This opinion also highlights how consumerism was associated with a lack of thought, in a similar way as to how lowbrow photographs were deemed incapable of stimulating contemplation (as argued by Kracauer).¹⁷² The purchasing of commodity items and the viewing of lowbrow photographs in the press were therefore on a comparable level.

Marsha Meskimmon highlights how female painters in the Weimar Republic were often excluded from the avant-garde, as she emphasised in the title of her text on female artists, quoting the painter Gerta Overbeck who stated that ‘we [women] weren’t modern enough’, in comparison with their male counterparts.¹⁷³ Arguably as a result of women’s association with mass culture, female artists and painters struggled to gain recognition for their involvement with the high arts. Female painters often engaged with figurative art rather than abstraction, deemed by some as ‘regressive’, and hence, more crucially perhaps, women were often considered ‘not modern enough’.¹⁷⁴ For women seeking to contribute to the photographic avant-garde, or the New Photography, the situation could be seen as even more complex. The many different uses of photography,

¹⁷⁰ Ulrich E. Meisel, ‘Ein Magazine auf dem Kriegspfad’, *Gebrauchsgraphik* 9, Issue 12, December 1932, 52-53 in Lavin, ‘The Representation of Women in German Advertising 1929-1933’ in *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, and Graphic Design*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2001, 50.

¹⁷¹ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, ‘Visions of Plenty: Mass Consumption, Fashion, and Advertising’, *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 656.

¹⁷² Kracauer, ‘The Cult of Distraction’ (1926) in *The Mass Ornament*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, 326.

¹⁷³ Gerta Overbeck cited in Ursula Bode, ‘Sachlichkeit Lag in der Luft. Zwanziger Jahre: Bilder einer Malprovinz’, *Westermann’s Monatshefte*, no. 8, 1976, 36, in Meskimmon, *We Weren’t Modern Enough*, London and New York, 1999, 1, footnote 1. Original German: ‘Wir wurden gar nicht ernstgenommen. Uns kannte keiner, da liefen ja lieber zu Schwitters und den anderen in der Kestner-Gesellschaft, wir waren ja nicht modern genug’.

¹⁷⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, ‘Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting’ in *October*, Vol.16, New York, Spring 1981, 39.

ranging from snapshots to photographs on gallery walls, meant that the medium's status was hard to ascertain.¹⁷⁵ Renger-Patzsch's 1929 essay 'Photography and Art', published in the magazine *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* considered the relationship between the two mediums in some detail. He acknowledged that '[t]he question of whether photography can be regarded as art or not has given rise to much verbal and written discussion'.¹⁷⁶ Whilst Renger-Patzsch did not attempt to define photography as 'art', he argued that it had exerted an immense influence over contemporary Berlin, concluding that 'modern life is no longer thinkable without photography'.¹⁷⁷ Yet debates continued to rage and some art historians felt that photography existed in sharp separation to the fine arts. In a preface to Renger-Patzsch's photobook *Die Welt ist Schon* (1928) German art historian Carl Georg Heise emphasised the threat of photography on painting, writing that '[s]ince the invention of photography, painters tend to avoid all areas in which mechanical methods could represent serious competition'.¹⁷⁸ For some, photography was a matter for 'serious artistic concern',¹⁷⁹ for others, photography was thought to aid and expand art.¹⁸⁰ The creative aspects of photography were certainly acknowledged, for example, Franz Roh asserted in his introduction to his important photobook, *Foto-Auge* (1929), that the very choice of an object to photograph is already a creative action.¹⁸¹ Consequently,

¹⁷⁵ In exhibitions such as 'Film und Foto', Stuttgart, 1929.

¹⁷⁶ Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Photographie und Kunst' ('Photography and Art') in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1929, quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 15.

¹⁷⁷ Renger-Patzsch: 'it exerts an immense influence on wide sections of the population' in *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Carl Georg Heise, 'Preface' in Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt ist Schon*, Munich, 1928, quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Renger-Patzsch, 'Photographie und Kunst' ('Photography and Art') in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1929, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Nash, 'Photography and Modern Art' (1932), a review of Karl Blossfeldt, *Art Forms in Nature*, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 23-24.

¹⁸¹ Franz Roh, 'Mechanism and Expression: the Essence and Value of Photography', in Roh and Jan Tschichold (eds), *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit*, Stuttgart, 1929, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 31.

during the Republic, photography occupied a difficult position between lowbrow photojournalism and highbrow fine arts.

As was outlined in the introduction, until the First World War, Pictorial photography was the dominant photographic style. By trying to emulate painting, photographers attempted to align the medium closer to the status of the fine arts. The New Photography that developed in the twenties allowed the medium to develop its own set of characteristics for the first time. New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) was one strand of this new photography, which often used sharp focus to draw attention to the objective characteristics of the medium. The other key strand was New Vision photography (Neues Sehen), which largely originated from the Bauhaus. The techniques that were central to New Vision included disorientating viewpoints (for example frogs-eye and birds-eye), abstract photograms and photomontage.¹⁸² Photographs that identified with techniques of the New Photography could arguably have been interpreted (by those who actively engaged with contemporary critical debates regarding photography) as more highbrow than the Pictorial Style or the documentary photographs that dominated newspapers and magazines, due to their creativity, artistic skill and originality of composition. Published articles are likely to have contributed towards such opinions. For example, Albert Renger-Patzsch argued in 'Joy Before the Object' (1928), published in *Das Kunstblatt*, that the Pictorial Style of photography resulted in 'ruining one's own technique' and was even

¹⁸² Carmel Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity: Yva's Photographic Career and Oeuvre' in Christiane Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, Würzburg, 2006, 126. A photogram or photogenic is a camera-less image created by placing an object on light sensitive paper.

'damaging to photographic achievement'.¹⁸³ He continued to emphasise that characteristics of New Objectivity, such as 'the mechanical procedure', 'the possibility of arresting static moments' and the 'objectivity of its representations' demonstrated 'the greatest' advantages over other media.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Werner Gräff in his foreword to *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf!* (1929) criticised the application of the rules of painting to photography (Pictorial Style), which he emphasised as being 'out of date'. Instead, he deemed 'the new photography' as the most 'impressive'.¹⁸⁵ Even publications on design and advertising, such as the journal *Gebrauchsgraphik*, promoted objective photography and advocated its use as a good marketing strategy, thereby criticising Pictorialist or heavily retouched styles.¹⁸⁶ Consequently photographic journals, catalogues and marketing designs alike suggest that the New Photography was recognised as more highbrow than other photographic styles such as Pictorial or documentary.

Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer also engaged with some of these methods of the New Photography, be it New Vision or New Objectivity.¹⁸⁷ Breslauer's image of a Parisian street (fig.55), typifies the New Vision's technique of playing with viewpoints. By taking the photograph from above, Breslauer presents a different view of an otherwise everyday scene. As was discussed in chapter one, Breslauer had a circle of photographer friends, some of whom, such as Umbo, Walter Menzel and Paul Citroen, trained at the Bauhaus

¹⁸³ Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Die Freude am Gegenstand' ('Joy Before the Object') in *Das Kunstblatt*, volume 12, no. 1, January 1928, 19, quoted in translation Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg (eds), *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 647.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Gräff, 'Vorwort' in *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf!*, Berlin, 1929, quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 25-27.

¹⁸⁶ Lavin, 'The Representation of Women' in *Clean New World*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2001, 63.

¹⁸⁷ Due to the scope of this thesis I do not attempt to conclusively label the photographic styles of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer.

and Breslauer was therefore no doubt very familiar with this New Vision style. In Besnyö's self-portrait, she also experiments with camera angles as she leans forward over the mirror to capture her reflection (fig.3). A further important aspect of the New Photography was experimental work with the medium, for example photograms (or photogenics), which were created by exposing light to photosensitive paper without using a camera. Bauhaus photographer László Moholy-Nagy, who is often credited for the term New Vision, engaged with such experimentation (fig.56).¹⁸⁸ The creative potential of the photographic medium appealed to Jacobi, who also produced many (often overlooked) camera-less images, albeit mainly later in her career (fig.57). It can be argued that experimental photography such as this occupied a different position to the photographic demands of mainstream photojournalism seen in the illustrated papers.

There is no doubt that Besnyö took inspiration from New Objectivity; in reference to Renger-Patzsch's photobook *Die Welt is Schön (The World is Beautiful)* (1928), she commented that 'it gave me a completely new perspective'.¹⁸⁹ Besnyö acquired Renger-Patzsch's photobook for her birthday in 1929.¹⁹⁰ The book came to be considered as the manifesto for photographic New Objectivity, for which Renger-Patzsch was identified as a leading figure, and it featured his characteristic style of celebrating the aesthetic qualities of overlooked subjects.¹⁹¹ In this photobook, natural and man-made objects are juxtaposed, suggesting that the photographer's lens could capture beauty in both. For

¹⁸⁸ Moholy-Nagy described the new forms as 'Das neue Sehen' in Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 126.

¹⁸⁹ Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 34.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁹¹ H. A. Berinson, 'Renger-Patzsch, Albert', Oxford Art Online, www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T071462, accessed May 2013.

example, on the front cover to the book, a close-up photograph of a flower is contrasted with a photograph of drinking glasses (fig.58). Renger-Patzsch draws out the aesthetic qualities of the commonplace item of a glass through his use of light and shadows. Besnyö's photographs of industrial subjects, produced two years after Renger-Patzsch's book was published, were likely to have been inspired by his style (fig.59).

Besnyö was also influenced by Werner Gräff's photobook *Es Kommt der Neue Fotograf* (1929) (fig.60), which she first read whilst in Budapest.¹⁹² This catalogue accompanied the important 'Film und Foto' exhibition held in 1929 in Stuttgart (as did Roh's *Foto-Auge*), which featured a range of photographic styles including montage, advertising and magazine photography from Europe and America. There was a focus on New Objectivity and New Vision photography, including images by Man Ray, Renger-Patzsch, John Heartfield and Alexander Rodchenko. Exhibitions such as this contributed to the appreciation of photography as a high art form. In Gräff's photobook, he draws attention to the new direction for photography, moving away from restrictive 'rules' (typified by Pictorial photography) to a freer and more experimental approach.¹⁹³ The importance of this exhibition should not be overlooked; whilst Besnyö took inspiration from Gräff's catalogue, it is also likely that Jacobi and Breslauer would have visited such a highly influential show. Furthermore, it may even have encouraged Breslauer and Jacobi to exhibit their work. Indeed, in the catalogue for the 'Internationale Ausstellung Das Lichtbild', held in Munich in 1930, the year after 'Film und Foto', Breslauer and Jacobi are

¹⁹² Werner Gräff, *Es Kommt der Neue Fotograf (Here Comes the New Photographer)*, Berlin, 1929. Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 34.

¹⁹³ Werner Gräff, *Es Kommt der neue Fotograf!*, Berlin, 1929, quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 25.

listed as contributors alongside leading photographers such as Renger-Patzsch, Moholy-Nagy and Pécsi (appendix.2).¹⁹⁴ Beckers and Moortgat conjecture that it was perhaps from this exhibition catalogue that Besnyö saw Weller's name whilst in Budapest and decided to approach his studio after she moved to Berlin.¹⁹⁵ This adds further evidence to suggest that Besnyö wanted to be involved in high art photography, perhaps hoping to exhibit work in exhibitions herself; in 1933, Besnyö held a solo exhibition at the Kunstzaal van Lier in Amsterdam (fig.61). Besnyö's commitment to new developments in photography continued into the late thirties when she organised the internationally-orientated exhibition 'Foto '37' at the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), intended to enhance awareness of photography as an artistic medium.¹⁹⁶ Thus, from early on in their careers, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were seeking to not only achieve recognition through publication of their images in the illustrated press, but also through contributing work to high-end exhibitions.

In turn, the foci self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer could be interpreted as showing a visual engagement with highbrow photographic techniques. As Beckers and Moortgat have argued with Besnyö's self-portrait, '[t]he photographer presenting herself here is self-consciously sending out a message: I am familiar with the pictorial elements of modern compositions, and can handle them technically as well as according to all the

¹⁹⁴ Anonymous, *Internationale Ausstellung Das Lichtbild*, (International Exhibition of the Photograph), exhibition catalogue, held at Mündener Bund und dem Verein Ausstellungspark, Munich, 1930, published in Munich, 1930. Original catalogue at the National Art Library, Berlin.

¹⁹⁵ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

¹⁹⁶ Marion Beckers, 'Eva Besnyö', Jewish Women's Archive online, 2005, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/besnyo-eva>, accessed March 2012.

rules of art.¹⁹⁷ The careful composition of the photograph as well as the attention to texture and shadow, like Renger-Patzsch's photographs, asserts her artistic capabilities. Breslauer also presents a creatively constructed image; she positions herself so that shadows conceal her dignity, but also uses the light to draw attention to the contrasting textures of hair, fabric and flesh. Jacobi's hope to associate herself with 'high art' is also evident through the quotation at the start of this section in which she contends: 'I am an artist not a commercial photographer'.¹⁹⁸ Here, Jacobi clearly demonstrates her awareness of the societal divide between high art photography and commercial photography. Similarly, Besnyö left the advertising studio of Ahrlé prior to her 1931 self-portrait, which scholars have suggested was due to 'her growing aversion to consumer advertising',¹⁹⁹ and decided to work in the less commercially orientated studio of Weller, whose work was displayed in the high-end Munich exhibition. As Jacobi's quotation suggests, female photographers were cautious of the negative connotations of commercial photography and Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer might therefore be considered as asserting their involvement with the New Photography through their carefully constructed self-portraits. Furthermore, the professional images Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer constructed notably contrasted with the common representation of women in the mass media, which will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁹⁷ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 214.

¹⁹⁸ Richard M. Bacon, 'Lotte Jacobi', *Yankee*, August, 1976, 64, in Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 9.

¹⁹⁹ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

The Mass Consumption of Photography

Images of women frequently appeared in Weimar magazines and illustrated papers. Many of these epitomised the 'New Woman', as can be seen on a 1927 front cover of *Die Dame* (fig.62). Typified by her masculine dress, sporty 'bubikopf' haircut, fashion-conscious attitude and independence, the New Woman also symbolised a 'lifestyle' that women often wanted to emulate. As Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg identify, '[p]opular Culture, fashion magazines, and illustrated press actively propagated a new lifestyle that was easy, forward-looking, and fun-filled.'²⁰⁰ The image of the New Woman was associated with female photographers such as Else Neuländer-Simon who established a photography studio under the name 'Yva', and published frequently in fashion magazines.²⁰¹ Yva's photography series across six pages in *Uhu* in 1930 signals the independence of the New Woman through her fashionable clothing, modern hairstyle, sport (golf and horse-riding) and driving (fig.63). The media's construction of the New Woman was also shaped by other female photographers, including Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer; as such, Carmel Finnan infers that female photographers 'were in a unique position to engage in the politics of representation.'²⁰² For example, Jacobi's published photographs of successful women identify with the typical pictorial characteristics of the New Woman. Her iconic photograph of Lotte Lenya, interpreted by Beckers and Moortgat as 'the prototype of the "New Woman"', presents a bold image of the actress with her

²⁰⁰ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, 'Visions of Plenty', *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1994, 655.

²⁰¹ Yva had a studio in Bleibtreustraße which specialised in fashion, Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 35.

²⁰² Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 120.

cropped pageboy haircut (fig.43).²⁰³ She is also depicted smoking a cigarette, which was often associated with the New Woman.²⁰⁴ In addition to Breslauer's photographs of Annemarie Schwarzenbach discussed in Chapter One (figs 41-42), many of her other portrait photographs resonate with characteristics of the New Woman. For example, Breslauer's empowering Images of Ruth von Morgen emphasise her confidence, independence and somewhat androgynous appearance through her hair and clothes (fig.64 and fig.65). Similarly, Breslauer's series from Sacrow shows fashionable young women with short masculine haircuts, smoking and enjoying their free time (fig.66).

Turning to the foci self-portraits, the way in which Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer chose to represent themselves demonstrates both the influence of, and response to, the representation of women in the media. Although some scholars identify the image of the New Woman as a mythical media construction,²⁰⁵ Finnan notes that the career of a professional female photographer 'promised a life that could bridge the gap somewhat between projected notions of the New Woman in the mass media and the lived experience of women in the growing and changing workplace.'²⁰⁶ As has been discussed, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer presented themselves in their self-portraits as confidently engaging with a new profession and in this sense, therefore, their images could be identified as similar to some of the images of New Women in the media, whereby women

²⁰³ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 62.

²⁰⁴ For example, in Otto Dix's painting of the journalist Sylvia von Harden (1926) she is also depicted as a New Woman holding a cigarette.

²⁰⁵ Lavin, [advertising] 'both promulgated and restricted myths about Weimar Germany's New Woman' in 'The Representation of Women in German Advertising 1929-1933' in *Clean New World*, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 2001, 50.

²⁰⁶ Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 125.

were often depicted at work. However, the way in which Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer engage with the camera is markedly different to media images of the New Woman.

Fashion-conscious New Women were seen as important consumers and were targeted through advertisements. Make-up, perfume and clothes were often promoted in advertisements, but cameras also became part of this commodity culture. As Larisa Dryansky identifies, the fashionable, light and easily portable Leica camera 'heralded the mass consumption of photography'.²⁰⁷ Despite the economic crash of 1929, consumer culture was still flourishing and cameras were heavily marketed during the years Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were producing their self-portraits (1929-1933). Maud Lavin has argued that German advertising was even more important during these years as it 'promoted a vision of a technological utopia and promised an improved lifestyle based on consuming mass-produced commodities.'²⁰⁸ A study of a number of camera advertisements in the illustrated press has revealed that women were frequently used in advertisements in the Weimar years. As a result, there were many images of women engaging with photographic apparatus in the printed press (figs 67-76). Whilst this does emphasise that women were encouraged to engage with photography, there is evidence to suggest that these advertisements focused on fashion and appearance rather than technical proficiency. Thus, cameras were promoted as essential items for the fashion-conscious New Woman. Arguably, camera advertisements in the illustrated press therefore further enforced the association of women with mass consumerism. There were numerous representations of women poised with cameras in advertisements from

²⁰⁷ Dryansky, *Ilse Bing*, New York, 2006, 13.

²⁰⁸ Lavin, 'The Representation of Women' in *Clean New World*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2001, 50.

popular illustrated journals; cameras such as the Cocarette, Thagee, Rolleiflex, Leica, Mentor and Kodak used the illustrated press as a marketing tool. As Nancy Martha West observes, advertisements can reveal the fantasies and ambitions of modern culture,²⁰⁹ and they provide a useful insight into how cameras and women were presented during the Republic.

Maud Lavin argued that the 'evolution of images of woman-as-commodity occurred hand-in-hand with the rise of advertising'.²¹⁰ The American camera company Kodak used women to promote their cameras, and the 'Kodak Girl', became a recurrent theme in their advertisements. Significantly, European photographers also shaped images of the Kodak Girl. József Pécsi, the photographer under which Besnyö trained in Budapest, produced an image of the Kodak Girl for a 1928 advertisement (fig.77). Pécsi's photograph is typical of the many sexualised images of the Kodak Girl, as his image shows an attractive and alluring young woman in a swimsuit holding a Kodak camera. Not only is the woman fashionably styled, but an influence from America was also considered fashionable in Weimar Germany, and this image would therefore have been appealing for consumers.²¹¹ By training under Pécsi, Besnyö would have been aware of how advertising used women to promote items such as this. Notably, the Kodak Girl in Pécsi's image is not actually taking a photograph but posing with the camera in hand, implying that by having a camera, women could appear fashionable, regardless of whether they have an understanding of how to use it. In contrast, Besnyö presents herself in her self-portrait as

²⁰⁹ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, Charlottesville and London, 2000, xi.

²¹⁰ Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, New Haven and London, 1993, 56. *BIZ* for example devoted 35% of the magazine to advertising between 1926 and 1932.

²¹¹ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 34.

clearly in control and fully able to use her photographic equipment (fig.2). Furthermore, her un-kept hair and arguably unflattering angle emphasise the attention being paid to creating the photograph as opposed to presenting a fashionable appearance. It could be argued that this was crucial for Besnyö due to the images of women in the media where the camera was presented as a fashion accessory. Besnyö stated herself 'I despise the idea of following fashion trends',²¹² asserting that, for her, photography was a professional choice. Furthermore, despite initially demonstrating an interest in advertising photography, she soon decided it was not an industry she wished to partake in, perhaps partly as a result of its sexualisation of women.²¹³

It is noteworthy that the presentation of the camera as fashionable was not unique to the Kodak Girl, but rather was a recurrent theme. Other advertisements aligned photography with female leisure time, which was critiqued by some photographers. For example, Karel Teige, a major figure of the Czech photographic avant-garde, criticised the 'well-to-do ladies who want to kill the time on their hands with Kodaks and Leicas.'²¹⁴ Berlin was a leading fashion city by the end of the twenties.²¹⁵ Thus, the media marketed the camera for its dual appeal: it was fashionable to be seen with a camera as well as being fashionable to see through the camera lens. In America the 'Vanity Kodak' was marketed by informing customers of matching accessories more so than the camera's specifications

²¹² Besnyö quoted in Diepraam, *Eva Besnyö*, Amsterdam, 1999, 72.

²¹³ Beckers and Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 2011, 216.

²¹⁴ Karel Teige, 'The Tasks of Modern Photography', 1931, in Christopher Phillips (ed.), *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings 1913-1940*, New York, 1989, 319.

²¹⁵ Finnan, 'Between Challenge and Conformity' in Schönfeld (ed.), *Practicing Modernity*, Würzburg, 2006, 122.

(fig.78).²¹⁶ Germany followed suit, and the amateur folding cameras in particular were created to have an aesthetic and fashionable appeal. A folding camera, possibly the Zeiss-Ikon Cocarette, is depicted in a 1925 fashion plate by Petra Fiedler, *Frühjahrskleidung* (*Spring Clothing*) (fig.79) where the camera is held casually like a handbag and appears as just another accessory among many for the fashion-conscious New Woman. Such cameras would often be available in different colours and finishes, as John Phillips describes, '[s]omehow it seems appropriate to the 1920s that the purchaser of a Zeiss-Ikon Cocarette should be able to choose between models finished in leathercloth, straight leather, black morocco 'unique inlaid' leather and 'russet brown leather with dull silver plate.'²¹⁷ A 1929 advertisement for the 'Cocarette' in *BIZ* declares it as: 'The Camera for the Fashionable World!'²¹⁸ The image shows the camera next to a pair of gloves, as if it is another part of a woman's collection of accessories (fig.80). Furthermore, by spelling 'Camera' in the English way, as opposed to the German 'Kamera', the advert signals Germany's Americanisation. This further emphasises the fashionable engagement with American modernity, encouraging Weimar New Women to aspire to the fashionable appeal of the American 'Kodak Girl'.

The self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer arguably critically respond to this association of cameras with fashion. Chapter one argued that the foci photographers depicted professional camera models in their self-portraits, which would distinguish their images from cheap 'fashionable' cameras such as the Cocarette. Furthermore, as was

²¹⁶ West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, Charlottesville and London, 2000, 109.

²¹⁷ John Phillips, *The Classic Rolleiflex: A Definitive Guide*, East Sussex, 2010, 19.

²¹⁸ 'Die Camera für die elegante Welt!', Zeiss Ikon Cocarette Advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 26, June 1929, page 1159.

outlined in the first part of this chapter, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer allude to the high culture of photography as a profession and an art form by asserting their awareness of the techniques of the New Photography and showing themselves as proficient users of their equipment. Arguably this was even more important due to the culture of promoting the camera as fashionable.

Whilst the self-portraits of Besnyö and Jacobi demonstrate a greater attention to the photographic process than they do their appearances, with their un-styled hair and working clothes, Breslauer presents a more glamorous depiction of the female photographer. In her striped designer dressing gown with her sleek styled hair, Breslauer's self-portrait has the look of a fashion photograph much like the type that appeared in magazines. For example, in Yva's photography series discussed earlier, a fashionable 'New Woman' wears a similar fur-trimmed coat (fig.81). Breslauer's interest in fashion was likely stimulated during her visit to Paris before producing her self-portrait. In Paris Breslauer was befriended by Helen Hessel who was the fashion correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.²¹⁹ Furthermore, after returning to Berlin, Breslauer was initially involved in fashion photography whilst working for Ullstein (fig.53). As a result of her fashionable appearance in her self-portrait, Breslauer appears as *both* a skilled photographer and a fashion model. Her self-portrait bears similarities to images of the New Woman in the media that presented the camera as fashionable, but crucially it also enforces how women can be skilled professionals and capable users of photographic

²¹⁹ Martin Gasser and Kathrin Beer, 'Marianne Breslauer, Photographs', Fotostiftung Schweiz Website, Pauline Cumbers (trans.), 2010, <http://www.fotostiftung.ch/en/exhibitions/past/marianne-breslauer/>, accessed September 2011.

equipment. As Martin Gasser and Kathrin Beer have highlighted, through Breslauer's inspiration from fashion, her images appear to blur the boundaries between artistic photographic portraiture and fashion shots.²²⁰ It can therefore be argued that Breslauer's self-portrait is particularly interesting as it points towards the complex and dialectical relationship of high art photography and mass culture.

Breslauer not only points towards fashion photography in her self-portrait but also high-end nude photography. In contrast to the longer dresses seen in fashion magazines in the early thirties (fig.82), in Breslauer's self-portrait we see quite the opposite.²²¹ Breslauer's exposing of her body makes a statement. Beckers and Moortgat identify that 'for the modern woman, removing one's clothes meant an act of self-emancipation, an expression of a new awareness of life'.²²² Although nude photography was fairly common during the Weimar years, it was quite unusual for this nudity to be the body of the photographer.²²³ Consequently, Molderings and Mühlens-Molderings have argued that this photograph is 'undoubtedly the most erotic self-portrait of a woman photographer of the 1920s and 1930s'.²²⁴ Conversely, I argue that Breslauer's self-portrait is more than simply erotic. In this photograph she has combined eroticism with fashion,

²²⁰ Gasser and Beer, 'Marianne Breslauer, Photographs', 2010,

<http://www.fotostiftung.ch/en/exhibitions/past/marianne-breslauer/>, accessed September 2011.

²²¹ Stephanie Kaul, 'Wer ist eigentlich an den langen Kleidern schuld?' ('Whose Fault is the Long Dress?') in *Uhu*, Issue 7, October 1931, 32-36 quoted in translation in Kaes, Dimendberg and Jay (eds), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1995, 671.

²²² Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Kathrin Beer and, Christina Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer: Photographs*, Francesca Gatenby and David Wright (trans), exhibition catalogue, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, 2011, Zoelmond, 2011, 29.

²²³ There are not many other examples of nude or semi-nude self-portraits by female photographers in the years of the Weimar Republic. A notable exception is Marta Astfalck-Vietz (fig.19).

²²⁴ Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mühlens-Molderings, 'Mirrors, Masks and Spaces: Self-portraits by Women Photographers in the Twenties and Thirties' in Gladys Fabre, *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat*, exhibition catalogue, held at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2004, published in Barcelona, 2004, 323.

professionalism and characteristics of the New Photography. Just as Breslauer's image might be read as drawing attention to, and perhaps challenging the equation of masculine prowess with artistic creativity in relation to previously discussed works such as Blumenfeld's, here, Breslauer's photograph functions in contrast to the objectified and sexualised images of the Kodak Girl. In her self-portrait Breslauer is both subject and object and she notably disturbs potential voyeurism by pointing the camera lens at the viewer.

The relationship Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer had with mass culture was not unusual for the time and other female photographers adopted a similar attitude of both involvement, and critical engagement, with the illustrated press. Photographers Ellen Auerbach and Grete Stern owned a commercial studio in Berlin, 'Ringl + Pit', from which they produced commercial photographs. Maud Lavin has argued how Auerbach and Stern deviated significantly from the accepted conventions of representing women in Weimar Germany; not only did they refrain from equating women with commodities, she argued, but through creating 'humorous nostalgic masquerades' they also developed alternative images of femininity.²²⁵ For example, in a photograph advertising shampoo, Auerbach and Stern used an exaggerated doll's head contrasted against a real human hand, which holds the bottle of 'Petrole Hahn' (fig.83). In the late Weimar years, Lavin has emphasised that 'in *Die Dame* and *Uhu*, there was a sudden proliferation of woman-as-mannequin images', which Auerbach and Stern parody in this photograph.²²⁶ Rather than presenting a 'woman-as-mannequin' Auerbach and Stern constructed a 'mannequin-as-woman';

²²⁵ Lavin, 'The Representation of Women' in *Clean New World*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2001, 51.

²²⁶ Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, New Haven and London, 1993, 57.

through this reversal they parody the problematic idealised portrayals of women frequently found in magazines. Furthermore, as opposed to presenting a glamorous and 'sexy' model, as was often found in contemporaneous magazines, the doll is actually dressed in Auerbach's mother's nightgown.²²⁷ This markedly contrasts with portrayals of women as up-to-date with the latest trends. Indeed, her fashionable 'Bubikopf' haircut is also undermined through the realisation that it is in fact a styled wig, which also suggests a sense of irony due to the fact that 'Petrole Hahn' is shampoo. Auerbach and Stern therefore contributed towards constructions of women in the illustrated press, but crucially they also critically responded to these idealised representations through the use of parody. Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were therefore part of a wider phenomenon of female photographers who occupied a complex dialectical relationship with the illustrated press, by both engaging with the press and subtly critiquing it through the way they chose to represent themselves. Whilst Lavin emphasises that women were frequently encouraged to aspire to look like mannequins,²²⁸ Breslauer in her self-portrait emphasises the ability for women to be more than thought-less inanimate wearers of the latest fashions, and instead promotes the ability for women to also be skilled professionals.

²²⁷ Lavin, 'The Representation of Women' in *Clean New World*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2001, 57.

²²⁸ Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, New Haven and London, 1993, 57.

Conclusion

In reference to female painters in Weimar, Meskimmon has argued that women worked on the interstices of fine art and mass culture.²²⁹ In this chapter I have shown how this was also significant for female photographers, particularly Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, who produced commercially orientated images for the illustrated press as well as engaging with the New Photography. Whilst male photographers also published images in the illustrated press, female photographers had an increased need to assert their engagement with the New Photography due to women's association with mass culture. It was common for female photographers to work between these high and low cultures, and Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are therefore indicative of a wider group of female professionals.

Through this chapter it has been argued that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer demonstrate both an influence from, and a response to, images of women and cameras that appeared in the popular press. Whilst chapter one argued that female photographers asserted their professionalism due to the restrictions that were still in place, this chapter has demonstrated that a further reason was because of the numerous images associating photography with fashion and leisure. The self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer emphasise their use of the camera as a professional tool as opposed to a fashion item. Whilst Dada artists are often recognised for engaging with

²²⁹ Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*, London and New York, 1999, 16.

both high and lowbrow culture, for example through photomontage,²³⁰ I have shown in this chapter that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer contributed towards a similar negotiation of the boundaries of the 'great divide' between high art and mass culture.²³¹

²³⁰ Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, New Haven and London, 1993.

²³¹ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1986, viii.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: SUBJECTIVITY AND REALITY

Writing in 1987 Jean-François Chevrier stated that the '[b]elief in the truth of the self and belief in the objectivity of the photographic record have perished simultaneously' and that even the simplest and apparently least staged photographic self-portraits still do not reveal a true self of the photographer.²³² Chevrier raises two important misconceptions that are central to this chapter: the perceived objectivity and reality of the analogue photograph and the self-portrait as a 'true' image of the self.²³³ The photographic self-portrait consequently presents a double expectation of a realistic depiction of its creator. In this chapter, the self-portraits of Lotte Jacobi, Eva Besnyö and Marianne Breslauer (figs 1-3) are examined alongside contemporaneous debates regarding photographic reality as well as postmodern discussions on subjectivity, informed by the work of Amelia Jones, in order to argue how their self-portraits construct identities.

Jones' analysis of contemporary self-portrait photography in *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (2006) is of particular relevance to this chapter in terms of its theoretical approach.²³⁴ I will use the terms 'performance' and 'performativity' in a similar way to Jones, building on Judith Butler's use of the term in

²³² Jean-François Chevrier, 'The Image of the Other' in James Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self: Self-portrait Photography 1840s-1980s*, exhibition catalogue, held at National Portrait Gallery, London, 1987 and other venues, published in Frome and London, 1986, 9.

²³³ I acknowledge that no image can ever be completely truthful as all images are in some way constructed. However, in this chapter, 'truth' and 'reality' are used to refer to the historical expectation of such 'reality' that was often believed by the viewer in Weimar Germany.

²³⁴ Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject*, London and New York, 2006.

Gender Trouble (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993),²³⁵ but in relation to identity in a broader sense rather than exclusively performing a gendered identity. Through a consideration of scholarship on postmodern self-portrait photography, it is possible to examine how female photographers during the late twenties and early thirties were starting to challenge and complicate the self-portrait. The performative nature of the photographic self-portrait has mainly been explored in reference to postmodern photography. However, a few case examples of photographers from the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, who experimented with subjectivity, have been studied. For example, Countess de Castiglione (1837-1899) and Claude Cahun (1894-1954).²³⁶ Cahun plays with appearances and costumes to create different personas in her self-portraits (fig.84). Whilst scholars have frequently discussed Cahun's deconstruction of fixed notions of identity,²³⁷ I argue that other photographer's self-portraits in the late twenties and early thirties were also playing with and questioning photographic identities, albeit perhaps more subtly.

The first section of this chapter will consider the relationship of photography and self-portraiture with perceived reality and objectivity. Through using the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer as case studies, I argue that Weimar female photographers

²³⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, New York and London, 1993; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London, 1990.

²³⁶ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'The Legs of the Countess', *October*, Vol. 39, Winter 1986, 65-108, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/778313>, accessed: March 2012; Katy Kline 'In or Out of the Picture: Claude Cahun and Cindy Sherman', in Whitney Chadwick (ed.), *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 1998, 167-183.

²³⁷ For example *Ibid.*, and Laurie J. Monahan, 'Radical Transformations: Claude Cahun and the Masquerade of Womanliness' in Catherine de Zegher (ed.), *Inside the Visible: An elliptical traverse of 20th century art*, exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1996, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 1996, 125-33.

were at the forefront of challenging historical attitudes towards photographic reality. By establishing how reality can never exist in the self-portrait or the photograph more generally, the second part of this chapter will examine how the self is constructed in the foci self-portraits, paying particular attention to how fashion can be used to construct identity. This chapter will conclude that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer demonstrate a playful engagement with the ability of photographic self-portraits to construct whatever identity the subject wishes.

Photographic Reality

‘Not everybody trusts paintings but people believe photographs’²³⁸
Ansel Adams

One of the earliest photographs ever produced was a self-portrait. Hippolyte Bayard, who invented the direct positive process in photography, created the photograph now referred to as *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* in 1840 (fig.85).²³⁹ In this image Bayard depicts his suicide. On the back of the photograph is a third person account describing how Bayard was disappointed by a lack of recognition for his role in the discovery of photography, which had ultimately led to him drowning himself. However, both the story

²³⁸ Ansel Adams (1902-1984) quoted in Lawrence Zeegen, *What is Illustration?*, Mies (Switzerland), 2009, 46.

²³⁹ Bayard (1801-1887) invented the direct positive process in early 1839, by using silver chloride and potassium iodide, upon which light acted as a bleach. It differed from the daguerreotype of Louis Daguerre in producing a positive image on paper rather than on a metal plate, and it differed from the invention of William Henry Fox Talbot in that it produced a positive image without the use of a negative. See Nancy B. Keeler, ‘Bayard, Hippolyte’, Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T007023>, accessed November 2012.

and the scene created in the photograph were entirely fictitious.²⁴⁰ From as early as 1840, Bayard's image highlights that photographic self-portraits are constructed. Bayard marked the beginning of staged photography and yet the medium and the self-portrait continuously struggled to form a distinction from recreating 'reality'; to a degree this is maintained in the present day as the above quotation by American photographer Ansel Adams indicates.²⁴¹

The issue of photographic reality was debated by contemporary theorists in Germany, and was a topic with which various German cultural critics and writers, including Walter Benjamin, engaged. In Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), he describes the photographer like a surgeon, cutting through reality, as opposed to the painter who maintains an element of distance from the patient/subject:

The painter, while working, observes a natural distance from the subject; the cameraman, on the other hand, penetrates deep into the subject's tissue [...] That is why the filmic portrayal of reality is of such incomparably greater significance to people today, because it continues to provide the camera-free aspect of reality

²⁴⁰ Bayard's self-portrait is discussed by Thomas Niemeyer, 'Photographic Stages: The Self as an Appropriation' in Michall Kröger (ed.), *That's Me: Photographic Self-Images*, exhibition catalogue, MARTa Herford, Herford, 2011, Bielefeld, New York, 2011, 102. Also discussed in Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, xv.

²⁴¹ Photography has often occupied a difficult relationship with reality. Whilst now it is recognised that photographs are always in some way constructed (perhaps photography manipulation programmes have encouraged an awareness of this), in the early years of photography the medium appeared to recreate such a strong likeness of its subject it was considered as recreating reality. Joanna Woodall states that 'The need for a transparent, scientific likeness also seemed to be met by photography, which was considered to guarantee an inherent, objective relationship between the image and the living model', *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Manchester and New York, 1997, 6.

that they are entitled to demand of a work of art precisely by using the camera to penetrate that reality so thoroughly.²⁴²

As is evident through the writing of Benjamin, by the mid-thirties, the complex notion of photographic reality was well established. Furthermore, the press throughout the twenties and early thirties reinforced the alignment of photography with reality. Photography became important for illustrating the news with documentary-style photographs. There was a transparency associated with photography in its ability to deliver the 'true' subject. For example, newspapers such as *BIZ* and the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* used documentary style photography and 'photo-essays' to tell a story or illustrate an event. For example, the photo-essay of Spanish streets referred to in chapter two attempts to provide an insight into everyday life in Spain. In these images we see people on the streets of Barcelona and Madrid, and the photographs have the 'look' of tourist snapshots (fig.48). In contrast to New Objectivity or Pictorialism, these images are not concerned with creative experimentation or painterly imitation, but rather achieving the 'look' of reality.

The 'reality' implicit in documentary photographs such as these was enforced further by the fact that they were often presented alongside a news article and were therefore intended to anchor this textual meaning further through images, and provide the viewer with an objective 'insight' into a particular event or story. As the editor of *BIZ*, argued in

²⁴² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), J. A. Underwood (trans), London, 2008, 25-26.

1927: the photo-essay would present an event 'in its full dimensions, in its total effect'.²⁴³

Historically, the photograph was presumed to render the 'true' physical likeness of its subjects due to its mechanical nature. Whereas painting was more readily associated with the artists' creative imagination, photography was seen as an objective reproduction of the subject before the lens. Furthermore, whilst paintings pointed towards the creative process, for example through brushstrokes, New Objectivity photography in particular was arguably less obvious, (to the untrained viewer at least), in its artistic construction. This also contrasted with the predecessor to New Objectivity, Pictorialism, which imitated the materiality of painting. Although New Objectivity and documentary photography were also often constructed, this was in a less obvious way. Whereas the Pictorialists associated photography with painting, it can be argued that New Objectivity photography contributed to the association of photography with reality.

The previous chapter outlined how the Pictorial Style tried to emphasise the artistic capabilities of photography by appropriating the principles of fine art.²⁴⁴ For example, the self-portrait by Rudolf Koppitz, *in the Bosom of Nature*, 1923 (fig.86) borrows components from classical representations of figures in painting and sculpture. However, with the rise of the New Photography, photographers no longer competed with painting, but celebrated the medium's objective characteristics. Photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch criticised the attempts of the Pictorialists to make photographs look like

²⁴³ Kurt Korff, 'Die illustrierte Zeitschrift' ('The Illustrated Magazine'), *Fünfzig Jahre Ullstein (1877-1927)*, Berlin, 1927, 279-303, quoted in translation in Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (eds), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Berkeley and London, 1995, 646.

²⁴⁴ Hope Kingsley, 'Pictorial photography', *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T067402>, accessed November 2012.

paintings.²⁴⁵ Instead, his objective capturing of overlooked subjects was interpreted as reproducing reality better than the human eye (fig.87).²⁴⁶ Renger-Patzsch also contributed to the use of photography for illustrations, which were in his words, 'true-to-life', and he argued that photographers demonstrated a 'greater precision and greater objectivity' compared to the artist.²⁴⁷ With many photographers engaging in New Objectivity, as well as documentary photographs appearing in the press, photography developed a new association with reality.

Cologne-based photographer August Sander also explored the potential of photography to produce images of the 'reality' of Germany. In his major project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the twentieth Century)*, Sander photographed archetypes of people, from farmers to New Women, in order to build up a 'realistic' representation of the individual identities that made up Germany's population. For example, Sander's image of three farm labourers from 1929 connotes realism through the natural poses of the men who are presented wearing their working clothes (fig.88). The hay on the floor creates the impression of these men being shown at the farm in which we presume they work, giving the impression of a 'natural' as opposed to constructed setting. In 1927, Sander stressed the importance of reality for his photography, when writing about his upcoming exhibition, he stated: '[n]othing seemed more appropriate to me than to render through photography a picture of our times which is absolutely true to nature...

²⁴⁵ Albert Renger-Patzsch, 'Photographie und Kunst' ('Photography and Art') in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1929, quoted in translation in David Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography 1927-33: Documents and Essays*, London, 1978, 16.

²⁴⁶ Carl Georg Heise, 'Preface' in Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Welt its Schön*, Munich, 1928, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁴⁷ Renger-Patzsch, 'Photographie und Kunst' ('Photography and Art') in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1929, quoted in translation in *Ibid.*, 15.

[s]o allow me to be honest and tell the truth about our age and its people'.²⁴⁸ Furthermore, in an essay from 1929, 'About Faces, Portraits and their Reality', which was an introduction to Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)*,²⁴⁹ German writer Alfred Döblin states that many photographers 'want to give as great a "likeness" as possible of the people who pose in front of them.'²⁵⁰ This appearance of reality in Sander's photographs is only just being deconstructed now. Through establishing how Sander was both influenced by, and influential upon, the art of the Cologne Progressives, Dorothy Rowe argues that despite the perceived reality of Sander's images, they were in fact carefully constructed.²⁵¹ However, Sander's photographs are often still interpreted in terms of this perceived reality. For example the recent exhibition 'Artist Rooms: August Sander' (2012-2013),²⁵² consolidates Sander's association with reality through the interpretation, suggesting his work was 'encyclopaedic' and represented 'specific realities'.²⁵³ Therefore, in Weimar Germany, photographers such as Sander and Renger-Patzsch fed into, and indeed to a degree reinforced, public perception of photographic reality in the popular press. The conscious attempt of photographers who engaged with the New Photography to move away from Pictorialism meant that reality or objectivity was often implicit in the photograph.

²⁴⁸ August Sander, 'Seeing, Observing and Thinking', 1927, Shaun Whiteside (trans), Document REWE library, Die Photographische Stiftung/SK Stiftung Kultur- August Sander Archiv, Köln, Germany History Docs (no page no.s): http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=4427, accessed September 2012.

²⁴⁹ Sander's first book, *Antlitz der Zeit: 60 Fotos Deutscher Menschen*, Munich, 1929.

²⁵⁰ Alfred Döblin, 'About Faces, Portraits and their Reality' in August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit*, 1929 quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 58.

²⁵¹ Dorothy Rowe, 'August Sander and the Artists: Locating the Subjects of New Objectivity', Tate Papers Issue 19, April 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/august-sander-and-artists-locating-subjects-new-objectivity> accessed July 2013.

²⁵² Curated by Sander's grandson Gerd Sander and Hugo Worthy.

²⁵³ 'Artist Rooms: August Sander', New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester, 2012-2013, exhibition gallery guide, 2012, 1-2.

Like Sander, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer also engaged with documentary style photographs, which are different to their self-portraits. Breslauer demonstrated an awareness of the ability for documentary photography to construct images of 'reality'. In an image of Beate Frese from 1928 taken during her time at the Lette Verein, Frese is shown laughing and clutching her face with her hands (fig.23). Whilst the photograph looks as if Frese is genuinely amused, it is possible to infer that her facial expression was in fact acted out for the photograph. Indeed, Breslauer comments in her memoirs, '[t]he image seems like a snapshot and we were both very happy with this concept.'²⁵⁴ Similarly, the published documentary-style photographs on social housing by Weller and Besnyö might have appeared as a set of 'realistic' snapshots of the situation (fig.49). However, the figure in the top left photograph is not one of the victims mentioned in the accompanying article, but was in fact Besnyö herself, added to the photograph by Weller to 'enliven the scene'.²⁵⁵ Like Breslauer's photograph of Frese, greater understanding of the way in which many documentary style photographs were taken at this time points towards their constructed nature.

Whilst the self-portrait requires the subject to be aware that the photograph is about to be taken, thus denying naturalistic 'snapshot' moments, many self-portraits from the twenties and early thirties deliberately pointed towards photographic reality through

²⁵⁴ 'Das Bild wirkt wie ein Schnappschuß, und wir waren beide ganz glücklich über diesen Einfall.' Marianne Feilchenfeldt Breslauer, *Bilder meines Lebens: Erinnerungen*, Nimbus, Wädenswil, 2009, 62.

²⁵⁵ Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Eva Besnyö: Budapest, Berlin, Amsterdam*, Paul Aston and Steven Lindberg (trans), exhibition catalogue, held at Das Verborgene Museum and the Berlinischen Galerie, Berlin, 2011-2012, published in Berlin, 2011, 217.

presenting the human eye and the optical eye as congruent. For example, Germaine Krull's and Ilse Bing's self-portraits (figs 9 and 10) depict the photographer with their eye through the viewfinder of the camera, highlighting concepts of 'photographic seeing' as the camera lens becomes a replacement eye. As was established in chapter two, debates regarding photographic vision were aligned with discussions of New Objectivity, emphasised by the title of Franz Roh's catalogue *Foto-Auge (Photo-Eye)*. Roh reinforced the idea of the lens and the eye being synonymous, arguing with reference to New Objectivity that, 'everything is brought out clearly' as opposed to the soft focus of Pictorial photography.²⁵⁶ As Molderings and Mühlens-Molderings infer, the notion that the camera lens could not only replace the human eye as a means of capturing the world visually, but also improve upon its ability to penetrate reality to its invisible depths, was paradigmatic of the new photographic aesthetic of the twenties, epitomised in Roh's catalogue.²⁵⁷ Conversely, the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer show a separation of the eye and the lens; in all three images the photographers are not looking through the viewfinder of the camera. As a result, the foci self-portraits do not point towards the 'photo-eye' that Roh identifies. They deny the camera lens as akin to the eye and oppose the idea that the camera sees the same 'reality' that the eye sees. The foci self-portraits do not conceal their photographic construction, as can be seen in documentary photography, but rather by including their cameras they draw attention to the processes involved in creating the image.

²⁵⁶ Franz Roh, 'Mechanism and Expression: the Essence and Value of Photography' in Roh and Jan Tschichold (eds), *Foto-Auge*, Stuttgart, 1929, quoted in translation in Mellor (ed.), *Germany The New Photography*, London, 1978, 32.

²⁵⁷ Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mühlens-Molderings, 'Mirrors, Masks and Spaces: Self-portraits by Women Photographers in the Twenties and Thirties' in Gladys Fabre, *La Dona, Metamorfosi de la Modernitat*, exhibition catalogue, held at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2004, published in Barcelona, 2004, 321.

In addition to the denial of the congruency of the lens and the eye, there are many further components of the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer that point towards an understanding of the construction of photographic reality and the use of mirrors is particularly significant. As has been demonstrated, during the Weimar Republic taking a photograph was equated with holding a mirror up to reality. Consequently, camera advertisements from the late twenties and early thirties often included the mirror motif in order to promote the ability of the camera to reproduce images much like a mirror. For example, a 1925 advertisement in *BIZ* (fig.89) shows the camera alongside a mirror, referencing the camera's reflecting abilities. Furthermore, there were also advertisements showing a woman looking into the camera lens like she would a mirror (figs 71-72.). *BIZ*'s circulation of over a million²⁵⁸ meant that images such as these would have been seen by a large audience, thereby continuing to reinforce the mass-perception of the camera as allied with reality. The mirror is also a central component of the mechanism of analogue photography, where a complex series of reflections and inversions are necessary, including the reflections that occur in the lens and the inversions from the negative to the positive. In the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, the image photographed in the first place is not of themselves but of their reflection in a mirror. This adds a further layer to the series of reflections that result in the final photographic print. The use of the mirror was an important and conscious decision by Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer as crucially it allowed them to include their

²⁵⁸ In reference to the twenties. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Department of Photographs, 'Photojournalism and the Picture Press in Germany', In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York, 2004, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phpp/hd_phpp.htm, accessed April 2013.

photographic equipment in their self-portrait, but I argue that this use of mirrors is also crucial in constructing further distance away from reality. This can be seen repeatedly in photography from the twenties and early thirties, for example Florence Henri used mirrors in multiple self-portraits (fig.20).²⁵⁹ Through photographing themselves in the mirror, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer emphasised not only the constructed viewpoint, but also their constructed identities.

The use of mirrors is just one way in which these foci self-portraits are constructed; they also demonstrate a careful consideration of the process of analogue photography that requires control by the photographer, including the exposure of light, the shutter speed and the aperture. We can see this control in the self-portraits, for example with Breslauer's image she has carefully considered the shadow that perfectly falls over her body in just the right place. Besnyö has also controlled the unusual angle of her self-portrait and how she would consequently include a glimpse of the studio in which she is working. Jacobi controlled the lighting to illuminate her face, drawing attention to the main subject, whilst the rest of the photograph is in dramatic shadow. Furthermore, alterations could be made after the photograph was taken, as is evident through Besnyö cropping her self-portrait (discussed in chapter one). Control over the final print was also possible by adjusting the amount of time the photographic paper was exposed to light through the negative, subsequently altering the contrast in the image. Whilst Sander's documentary style photographs would also have been carefully controlled and

²⁵⁹ See Melody Davis for discussions on Henri's use of mirrors in her self-portraits: 'Androgyny and the Mirror: Photographs of Florence Henri, 1927-1938', *Art History* online journal (City University of New York), 2002, http://web.gc.cuny.edu/arhistory/part/part8/articles/davis_print.html, accessed January 2012.

constructed, they differ from the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer in that they conceal their construction and have an appearance of reality. The construction and staging in these three self-portraits challenges the perceived objective reality often associated with modernist photography and reinforced by the press, and rather brings the construction involved in photography to the viewer's attention. By pointing towards how the photograph is constructed, the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer also notably draw attention to how identity can be constructed, as will be explored further in the following section.

Constructing Identities

'...[in self-portrait photographs] we never "know" the subject behind or in the image'²⁶⁰
Amelia Jones

As Amelia Jones has identified, postmodern artists' investigations of the self have complicated the belief in the self-portrait image as 'incontrovertibly delivering the "true" artistic subject to the viewer', a belief that was central to modernist discourse on photography.²⁶¹ Self-portraits do not reveal identities; but I argue that in the late twenties and early thirties photography's association with reality resulted in the general expectation of a 'true' self as inherent in the self-portrait. I contend that the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer started to challenge this idea. Whilst art historians such as Amelia Jones and James Lingwood have acknowledged that self-portraits are often

²⁶⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, 43.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

carefully constructed and staged,²⁶² scholars still often fall into the trap of interpreting self-portraits 'simply' in terms of the identity they appear to reveal. For example, although Robert Sobieszek acknowledges how photographic self-portraits can play with identity, he also states that 'self-portraits have for the most part stayed remarkably true to their traditional values of unmasking the artists ego or persona'.²⁶³ I argue, conversely, that although some self-portrait photographs reveal the construction of identity more obviously than others, all self-portraits perform and construct identities.

The notion that self-portraits reveal the identity of the author is still used as an interpretive method today. For example, Beckers and Moortgat describe Jacobi's self-portrait as 'probably a truthful image of the way she felt about herself in her profession at the time'.²⁶⁴ Moreover, they suggest that Jacobi 'confesses something of her state when she focused on herself and released the shutter'.²⁶⁵ I argue that these self-portraits are not confessions but constructions. As Jones has highlighted, the development of photography kindled our desire for 'the image to render up the body, *and thereby the self* in its fullness and truth'.²⁶⁶ However, the depiction of the body and the depiction of the self do not necessarily occur in tandem; the body signifies the self rather than being the

²⁶² Jones and Lingwood discuss the performative nature of self-portraits throughout their texts: Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006; Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self*, exhibition catalogue, Frome and London, 1986.

²⁶³ Robert Sobieszek 'Other selves in Photographic Self-portraiture', Sobieszek (ed.), *The Camera I: Photographic Self-portraits*, exhibition catalogue, held at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994; Akron Art Museum, 94-95; Det Nationalhistoriske Museum på Frederiksborg, Hillerød, 1995, published in Los Angeles and New York, 1994, 23.

²⁶⁴ James A. Fasanelli, 'Lotte Jacobi: Photographer', *Lotte Jacobi*, Danbury NH, 1978, 14 in Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi, Berlin, New York*, Karen Margolis, Kevin Michael Madden and Taryn Toro (trans), exhibition catalogue, Das Verborgene Museum, Berlin, 1997, (English edition) Berlin, 1998, 42-44, footnote 66.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁶⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, xiv.

self. Consequently it seems that because self-portraits depict the body of the photographer, they have often been interpreted in terms of the identity of the subject.

The dualist conception of identity distinguishes between identity and the material body.²⁶⁷ In the early twentieth century, photography was seen to 'close the gap' between identity and the body, as Joanna Woodall describes, 'the portrayed body no longer represented the sitter, it was the (trace of) the sitter'.²⁶⁸ The bodies of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer appear in each self-portrait but this does not necessarily mean that their identities are equally depicted. Taking Woodall's point, I argue that these self-portraits would have been understood in Weimar Germany as depicting the body and therefore the self simultaneously. In the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, the promise of the image to deliver its creator in some capacity to the viewer, 'a promise central to our attraction to self-portraits', is seemingly fulfilled.²⁶⁹ We see the photographers at work with their cameras; however, as was emphasised in chapter one, the photographers 'play up' to their profession in these self-portraits. Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer emphasise their photographic paraphernalia to assert their capabilities, whilst arguably other characteristics of their identity remain concealed. Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer perform their professional identities in their self-portraits and present themselves how they would like to be seen. Their professional identity is just one facet of themselves and

²⁶⁷ Woodall, 'The crucial point about dualism was the stress on the distinction between identity and the material body', 'Introduction: facing the Subject' in *Portraiture*, Manchester and New York, 1997, 10.

²⁶⁸ Woodall, 'In photography, on the other hand, the idea was scientifically to close the gap between 'external' likeness and the depicted person her- or himself...so that difficult questions of the relationship between personal identity and the body simply did not arise.' 'Introduction' in Woodall, (ed.), *Portraiture*, Manchester and New York, 1997, 11.

²⁶⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, 43.

it is the one they choose to emphasise in these self-portraits in their construction of their public image.

Breslauer's earlier 1929 self-portrait also demonstrates performative qualities (fig.4). In contrast to her 1933 self-portrait, this photograph portrays a somewhat troubled image of the young photographer who appears deep in thought. The image encourages the viewer to question what may have caused her saddened expression. However, as Beckers and Moortgat argue, there appear to have been no events in Breslauer's life at this time that relate with the production of such a melancholic self-portrait.²⁷⁰ As such, we might surmise that this image could be understood as performative. Breslauer constructs this emotion in her self-portrait and it is not a 'true' reflection of herself and her inner thoughts, she plays a character and acts an identity in a similar way to the photographic subject of laughing discussed earlier.

Beckers and Moortgat describe Breslauer's early photographs as demonstrating a 'fantasy-led, playful photographic staging'.²⁷¹ Indeed, Breslauer stated in a later interview that the 1929 self-portrait was inspired by an illustration by Arthur Rackham of one of Grimm's Fairytales 'The King of the Golden Mountain' (fig.90).²⁷² In this drawing, a young boy kneels on the floor with an expression of worry, as he looks at the personification of the future in the form of a small monster. As Beckers and Moortgat conjecture, there are

²⁷⁰ Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, 'The Photographer's Eye', in Kathrin Beer and Christina Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer: Photographs*, Francesca Gatenby and David Wright (trans), exhibition catalogue, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam, 2011, Zoelmond, 2011, 26.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁷² Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, *Children's fairytales collected by the Brothers Grimm*, (40 colour illustrations by Arthur Rackham), Munich, 1913, 158. Rachel E. Feilchenfeldt-Steiner asked Marianne Breslauer about the 1929 self-portrait and learned of the influence of Rackham's drawings, *Ibid.*, 31, footnote 29.

certain similarities between this drawing and Breslauer's self-portrait.²⁷³ From 1929 then, Breslauer was already experimenting with performance, fictions, staging and the possibilities of the photograph to recreate what may appear as 'true' emotions of the subject. Taking this interest in performance and play into consideration, it might be argued that her 1933 self-portrait was also a response to these interests and her acknowledgement of the playful potential of self-portrait photography.

It can be inferred that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer all demonstrated a keen interest in fantasy and fiction through their engagement with film and drama. As has been mentioned previously, Jacobi enjoyed drama and performance from an early age, and wanted to become an actress.²⁷⁴ Although Jacobi did not pursue this career, it clearly influenced her photographic subject matter as she took numerous photographs of actors and actresses, theatre performances and dancers. For example, her portrait of actress Tilla Durieux in 1930 uses the prop of a bird in her hand, hinting towards a sense of narrative and staging (fig.91). Photographs such as these led Van Deren Coke to describe Jacobi's photographs as including a 'strikingly theatrical' quality.²⁷⁵ This can also be seen to influence Jacobi's 1929 self-portrait; she performs her role as the successor to the family business and draws on this tradition through her inclusion of the old-fashioned plate-backed camera (discussed in chapter one) and the original studio setting. Jacobi plays up to her role as professional photographer presenting herself 'in action' and her expression appears as if she is inquisitively assessing her photographic subject. Beckers

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

²⁷⁴ Kelly Wise (ed.), *Lotte Jacobi*, Massachusetts, 1978, 8.

²⁷⁵ Van Deren Coke, *Avantgarde Photography in Germany 1919-1939*, Munich, 1982, 29.

and Moortgat also note that Jacobi's 1929 self-portrait was made after her unsuccessful attempt to become an actress and therefore allows a glimpse into her desire to play different roles.²⁷⁶ However, Beckers and Moortgat do not suggest what 'roles' this may involve. I argue that in this self-portrait Jacobi asserts her role as a member of the next generation to take over the Jacobi studio by constructing a professional image of herself.

Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer were also avid filmgoers. Besnyö was 'fascinated by Russia film'²⁷⁷ and Breslauer refers to films she saw in her autobiography.²⁷⁸ It is likely that Jacobi also engaged with the cinema due to her frequently photographing actors and actresses, as well as her studio being in an area where these forms of entertainment flourished. As has been readily acknowledged by cultural critics of Weimar Culture such as Siegfried Kracauer, whilst for some audiences film had the perceived appearance of reality,²⁷⁹ for the critical filmgoer during the twenties and early thirties, it was clear that this was constructed through actors and scripts. This sense of construction appears less evident in photography where the subjects were often assumed to be 'real' people rather than actors. It seems likely that this interest in the ability of film to construct subjects,

²⁷⁶ Beckers and Moortgat, *Atelier Lotte Jacobi*, exhibition catalogue, Berlin, 1998, 7.

²⁷⁷ Marion Beckers, 'Eva Besnyö', Jewish Women's Archive, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/besnyo-eva>, accessed March 2012.

²⁷⁸ For example, seeing the first Chaplin film with Paul Citroen, Marianne Feilchenfeldt Breslauer, *Bilder meines Lebens: Erinnerungen*, Nimbus, Wädenswil, 2009, 60. Breslauer's interest in film influenced her photography, for example the photo-essay *Free time of a Working Woman* (Fig.92) (1933) resembles film stills. Breslauer also stated in an interview that if she had remained a photographer after leaving Berlin, she would have turned to the medium of film, Dorothea Strauss, 'Orchestrating Reality, Creating Plausibility' in Beer and Feilchenfeldt (eds), *Marianne Breslauer*, exhibition catalogue, Zoelmond, 2011, 99.

²⁷⁹ Siegfried Kracauer comments on the overlap between reality and fiction in regards to cinema in 'The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies' in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Thomas. Y Levin (trans and ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1995, 292.

identities and realities would have influenced the photography of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, as they became actresses when they turned the camera on themselves.

An important component of the foci self-portraits is the way the photographers respectively construct their appearances. In Breslauer's 1933 self-portrait, she presents herself concurrently as a professional photographer, erotic woman and magazine-style fashion model (fig.3). Breslauer also exaggerates her femininity, through props such as the dressing gown with its fur trim and her styled glossy hair. This 'femininity' appears in contrast to other images of Breslauer, including her 1929 self-portrait mentioned earlier (fig.4). Here, Breslauer's un-styled hair falls over one eye whilst her work shirt identifies with the masculine characteristics of the New Woman. This could be interpreted as demonstrating the changing fashions; in 1929 the masculine New Woman was seen as the epitome of modernity, but by the early thirties, more feminine fashions had returned.²⁸⁰ However, it also demonstrates Breslauer's construction of identity through clothing. The work shirt connotes the New Woman: independence, confidence and income, whilst the designer dressing gown signals glamour, femininity and eroticism. This emphasises Breslauer's awareness of the potential for clothing and dressing up to signal different identities.

Other female photographers working in Weimar Germany were also exploring the importance of clothing and appearance. Bauhaus photographer Gertrud Arndt, for example, used clothes to create various guises, posing as different identities in a more

²⁸⁰ For example, as can be seen from this image in *Die Dame*, 1931, (Fig.82).

exaggerated mode of performance. Arndt's series of 'Mask Portraits' produced in 1930 consisted of 43 self-portraits, which show her use of costumes to produce different identities (fig.17). These images were all taken in the same room in Dessau, but Arndt would change the background using different materials and combined her clothes with various accessories.²⁸¹ These images show a more obvious example of this use of clothing to construct different identities, as Anja Guttenberger argues, these mask photographs 'are not self-portraits that probe the photographer's identity', but 'they are early pioneering examples of the kind of self-dramatization [sic] also seen in the work of Cindy Sherman and Gillian Wearing'.²⁸² Arndt, like Cahun, points towards female photographers' awareness of the potential for clothing and appearances to construct identities before the camera lens.

Susan Butler highlights the close connection of clothing and identity in her essay 'So How Do I Look? Women Before and Behind the Camera', in which she writes:

When I rummage through my wardrobe in the morning I am not merely faced with a choice [of] what to wear. I am faced with a choice of images: the difference between a smart suit and a pair of overalls, a leather skirt and a cotton frock, is not just one of fabric and style, but one of identity. You know perfectly well that you will be seen differently for the whole day, depending on what you put on you

²⁸¹ Gertrud Arndt (1903-2000). Anja Guttenberger, 'The Mask Portraits', 2012, Bauhaus magazine online, <http://bauhaus-online.de/en/magazin/artikel/she-originally-wanted-to-be-an-architect-gertrud-arndt>, accessed April 2013.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

will appear as a particular kind of woman with one particular identity which excludes others.²⁸³

Here, Butler highlights the ability to use appearance to negotiate identity, and also social status. The choice of clothing affects both the way the subject performs their identity and how others perceive their identity. For Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer this is particularly important as their self-portraits were carefully considered in terms of how they presented themselves to the public: as women, as creative photographers and as professionals. Breslauer's designer dressing gown becomes an important component of her constructed identity akin to a fashion model. Jacobi and Besnyö, on the other hand, use their clothing to highlight their professional status, for example Besnyö's shirt and gloves highlights her being busy at work.

As has been discussed in chapter two, the illustrated press and early consumer culture in Germany turned the body of woman into a commodity. John Tagg highlights how photographs of people have contributed to systems of commodification of the human subject.²⁸⁴ The emergence of the illustrated press in Germany in the twenties can be seen to play a key role in this commodification through photographs. Amelia Jones contends that '[t]he self-portrait photograph is an example [...] of this way in which technology not only *mediates* but *produces* subjectivities'.²⁸⁵ I argue that the images of women in the illustrated press, as discussed in chapter two, provide a further example of this

²⁸³ Susan Butler, 'So How Do I Look? Women Before and Behind the Camera' in Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self*, exhibition catalogue, Frome and London, 1986, 56.

²⁸⁴ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, Amherst, 1988, 37.

²⁸⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, 44.

production and construction of subjectivities. This subsequently affected the identities of women in Weimar Germany as well as the self-portraits produced by women. Breslauer's performed identity in particular can be seen as being influenced by, and responding to, images of women in the illustrated press.

Conclusion

This final chapter has continued a line of enquiry that has developed throughout this thesis regarding the construction of identity in the foci self-portraits. Chapter one argued that the foci photographers constructed a professional identity using their high-end equipment in contrast to cheap mass-produced cameras. Chapter two explored this relationship further, arguing that this professional image was even more important due to associations of photography with fashion. In this final chapter, I have examined how the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer demonstrated an awareness of the potential for photography to construct identities despite having the appearance of 'reality'.

This chapter has not attempted to deduce the identity of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer from their self-portraits, as I hope I have demonstrated that such a task remains impossible. Indeed, Amelia Jones emphasises, that in self-portrait photography the 'question of who the "subject" even is in the first place... is never answered'.²⁸⁶ The photographic self-portrait appears at the outset to reveal its creator, but in the case of

²⁸⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, London and New York, 2006, 51.

Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer, their images present a complex construction of subjectivity and identity that was never intended to 'reveal' the subject but to perform an identity. From the twenties onwards, photographers would continue to use the self-portrait to call into question how the subject can be captured, challenged and deconstructed through artistic means. The ideas presented in this chapter do not exclusively relate to the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer and can be extended to other photographic self-portraits across genders and periods. Although in different ways and to different extents, all photographic self-portraits may depict the body, but the self and identity remain unable to be captured in the photograph. However, due to the contemporaneous debates regarding photographic reality and Pictorialism in Weimar Germany, the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer are particularly interesting for their use of the self-portrait genre shows how *both* the photograph *and* consequently how identity is constructed. The self-portrait actually conveys whatever identity the subject wishes, and at a time when women still had to assert and prove their professional capabilities, the possibilities of photography and performance were clearly appealing.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown how the occupational self-portraits of Lotte Jacobi, Eva Besnyö and Marianne Breslauer were carefully constructed in order to assert their capabilities in the professional sphere of photography. As the first in-depth study of female photographers' self-portraits during the Weimar Republic, I have shown how the foci images point towards wider debates regarding female professionals, the New Photography, the mass media, images of women in the illustrated press and contemporaneous debates regarding perceived photographic reality. Whilst previous studies of photographic self-portraits have considered a wide time-span across multiple locations,²⁸⁷ I have emphasised how the specific social developments regarding female photographers in Weimar Berlin influenced the way these women chose to represent themselves.

I have examined how Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer constructed their self-portraits, and I have suggested reasons as to why they presented themselves in this way. The first chapter argued how the three photographers used the occupational self-portrait to create an image of themselves as capable professionals by including specialist equipment. In doing so, I contended that Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer responded to the contemporary negative connotations surrounding cheaper mass-produced cameras. Furthermore, their assertion of professional capabilities was necessary in light of on-going

²⁸⁷ As outlined in the introduction, studies on self-portrait photography tend to be very broad, for example James Lingwood (ed.), *Staging the Self: Self-portrait Photography 1840s-1980s*, exhibition catalogue, held at National Portrait Gallery, London, 1987 and other venues, published in Frome and London, 1986 and Erika Billeter (ed.), *Self-Portrait in the Age of Photography: Photographers reflecting their own image*, Rommel, Birgit and Schelbert, Catherine (trans.), exhibition catalogue, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, 1985 and other venues, Bern, 1985.

difficulties that existed for women seeking to establish themselves as successful photographers with equal proficiency to their male counterparts. The second chapter reemphasised the importance of professionalism, by examining how the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer related to images of women in the media. I argued that women were aligned with mass culture, of which cheap cameras also became part. In contrast to images of women in the media, Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer used their self-portraits to show how they were active users of professional equipment. In the final chapter, I examined this construction of a professional identity further, as I argued it complicated historically perceived notions of photographic reality. By deliberately revealing the construction of a professional 'identity' and eschewing the alignment of the camera-eye in their works, the self-portraits of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer challenged widespread belief in the 'truth' inherent in the photographic medium. Through examining Amelia Jones' theoretical debates regarding identity in postmodern photography, I argued how these self-portraits do not reveal the identity of the photographer, but in fact point towards how identities are constructed. All three chapters have also significantly demonstrated the close, but often difficult, relationship Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer had with the illustrated press: contributing to, yet critically engaging with it.

This thesis has contributed to growing areas of research on female photographers in the Weimar Republic and the photographic self-portrait. Scholarship on female photographers has been increasing since the 1970s, but many significant practitioners are still neglected. Besnyö and Breslauer remain largely unknown to English-audiences and their self-portraits are just one part of their oeuvres. By focusing on the self-portraits of

these photographers, this thesis addresses an important scholarly gap, as well as identifying the important role self-portrait photography played for women themselves in Weimar Germany. There are, however, many more female photographers who produced self-portraits that warrant further attention, which this thesis has signalled, for example Germaine Krull, Ergy Landau, Marianne Brandt, Gertrud Arndt and Marta Astfalck-Vietz. Other female photographers such as Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach, who ran the 'Ringl + Pit' studio also deserve further exploration beyond Maud Lavin's interesting discussion on their advertising images depicting women.²⁸⁸ This would be beneficial in further understanding the complex relationship between female photographers and mass culture in Weimar. Ute Eskildsen has identified that the majority of female photographers during the Weimar Republic were Jewish,²⁸⁹ meaning that many were forced to leave Germany and have since been forgotten. A further interesting way in which the visual construction of identity by Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer might be explored by future scholarship is therefore through this question of Jewish identity amidst the rising political tensions and anti-Semitism of the late Weimar Republic. Moreover, women continue to be active producers of photographic self-portraits in the present day, particularly as the postmodern era has seen an increased fascination with the self. The photographic self-portrait has moved on considerably since the late twenties and early thirties, leading Amelia Jones to use the term 'self-image' rather than 'self-portrait' in order to emphasise

²⁸⁸ Maud Lavin, 'The Representation of Women in German Advertising 1929-1933' in *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, and Graphic Design*, Cambridge (Mass.), London, 2001, 50-67.

²⁸⁹ Ute Eskildsen, *Fotografieren hiess teilnehmen: Fotografinnen der Weimarer Republik*, exhibition catalogue, held at Museum Folkwang, Essen, 1994-1995; Fundació 'La Caixa', Barcelona, 1995 and The Jewish Museum, New York City, 1995, published in Düsseldorf, 1994, 62-63 in Mila Ganeva, 'Fashion Photography and Women's Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Autumn, 2003, 4, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317007>, accessed December 2011.

this new direction for self-portrait photography.²⁹⁰ This thesis has shown how postmodern self-portraits are helpful in re-considering more traditional modes of self-representation, which has led to new interpretations regarding the self-portraiture of Jacobi, Besnyö and Breslauer.

²⁹⁰ Amelia Jones, '[w]hile not all of these images and projects are "self-portraits" in the traditional sense, all of them enact the self [...] All of them, then, participate in what I call "self-imaging" – the rendering of the self in and through technologies of representation', *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject*, London and New York, 2006, xvii.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Dimensions have been provided where available. Where no dimensions are available it can be assumed that photographs from the twenties and thirties are no bigger than approx. 30 x 30 cm.

Image details provided in the following order:

Photographer/artist/author, title, location photograph was taken, date, medium, dimensions, location of photograph now.

Fig.1: Lotte Jacobi, *Self-portrait*, Berlin, 1929, gelatin silver print on baryt paper, 25.2 x 19.5 cm, Jewish Museum, Berlin.

Fig.2: Eva Besnyö, *Self-Portrait*, Berlin, 1931, gelatin silver print, 22.5 x 28 cm, Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét.

Fig.3: Marianne Breslauer, *Self-portrait*, Berlin, 1933, gelatin print, 30 x 24 cm Marianne Breslauer Estate, Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur (Zürich).

Fig.4: Marianne Breslauer, *Self-portrait*, Berlin, 1929, photographic print, private collection (Walter Feilchenfeldt).

Fig.5: Marianne Breslauer, *Self-portrait*, Amsterdam, 1938, photographic print, Marianne Breslauer Estate, Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur (Zürich).

Fig.6: Eva Besnyö, *Self-Portrait*, probably Berlin or Amsterdam, 1932, photographic print, location unknown.

Fig.7: Eva Besnyö, *Self-portrait*, Budapest, 1929, gelatin silver print, Maria Austria Instituut, Amsterdam.

Fig.8: Lotte Jacobi, *Self-portrait*, New York, 1937, photographic print, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Fig.9: Germaine Krull, *Self-Portrait (with Ikarette)*, Berlin, 1925, photographic print, 18 x 24 cm, collection Galerie Agathe Gaillard.

Fig.10: Ilse Bing, *Self-Portrait in Mirrors*, Paris, 1931, gelatin silver print, 26.8 x 30.8 cm, the Ilse Bing Estate, the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig.11: Ergy Landau, *Self-portrait*, Paris, 1932, photographic print, Collection APH (C. Bouqueret).

Fig.12: Man Ray, *Self-portrait with Gun (or Suicide)*, Paris, 1932, gelatin silver print, 21 x 14.5 cm, Man Ray Trust, New York/ADAGP Paris.

Fig.13: Yva (Else Neuländer-Simon), *Self-portrait*, Berlin, 1926, photographic print, Collection Diethart Kerbs, Berlin.

Fig.14: Werner Rohde, *Man with Mask*, Germany, 1928, gelatin silver print, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Fig.15: Marianne Brandt, *Self-Portrait with Camera*, Dessau, 1928/9, photographic print, 18 x 24 cm, Bauhaus archive, Berlin.

Fig.16: Aenne Biermann, *Self-Portrait with Silver Ball*, probably taken in Gera, 1931, gelatin silver print, 17.5 x 23.2 cm, private collection.

Fig.17: Gertrud Arndt, *Maskenphoto no.3, (self-portrait)*, Dessau, 1930, gelatin silver print, 22.3 x 14.3 cm, Alexandra Bormann-Arndt, Darmstadt.

Fig.18: Lotte Beese, *Self-portrait*, Germany, 1927, photographic print, 8.4 x 6 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Fig.19: Marta Astfalck-Vietz, *Untitled (Self-portrait with Blindfold)*, Berlin, date unknown (c1920-1936), Berlinische Galerie, Berlin.

Fig.20: Florence Henri, *Self-Portrait*, Paris, 1928/29, photographic print, 18 x 24 cm, collection Musée National D'art Moderne, Paris.

Fig.21: Unknown Photographer, *Erich Wolfsfeld's Class*, Berlin, 1925, photographic print, private collection, Sweden.

Fig.22: Marianne Breslauer, *Umbo, Walter Menzel, Paul Citroen*, Berlin, 1927, photographic print, Marianne Breslauer Estate, Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur (Zurich).

Fig.23: Marianne Breslauer, *Beate Frese* (apprentice piece), Berlin, 1928, photographic print, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin.

Fig.24: József Pécsi, pages from *Photo und Publizität*, Berlin, 1930.

Fig.25: Eva Besnyö, *Self-Portrait*, Berlin, 1931, later photographic print from original negative, Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét.

Fig.26: Ilse Bing, *Self-Portrait*, Frankfurt, c1925, photographic print, Ilse Bing Estate.

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Fig.28: Zeiss Ikon Cocarette 1926-1929.

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Fig.33: 'The Camera that thinks for you!' Rolleiflex Advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 19, May 1929, page 833.

Fig.34: Erwin Blumenfeld, *Self-Portrait*, Amsterdam (Zanvoort), 1930, photographic print, 30 x 40 cm, location unknown.

Fig.35: Erwin Blumenfeld, *Marianne Breslauer*, Amsterdam, 1937, photographic print, private collection (Walter Feilchenfeldt).

Fig.36: Umbo (Otto Umbehr), *Self-portrait at the Beach*, c1930, photographic print, the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig.37: Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Self-Portrait*, 1928, published in *Uhu*, Issue 1, 1929, page 35.

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Fig.39: Archipenko with students in his New York studio, *Der Querschnitt*, August/October 1929.

Fig.40: Broadway star Marilyn Miller, *Der Querschnitt*, September 1931.

Fig.41: Marianne Breslauer, *Annemarie Schwarzenbach*, Germany, 1931, photographic print, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Fig.43: Lotte Jacobi, *Lotte Lenya*, Berlin, 1928, gelatin silver print, 19 x 24 cm, private collection (Dr. Steven Schuyler).

Fig.44: Eva Besnyö, *Charley Toorop painting 'Reclining Female Nude'*, Bergen, Noord-Holland, 1932, photographic print, Iara Brusse Collection, Amsterdam.

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Fig.46: Martin Munkácsi, *Greta Garbo, Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Number 33, August 1932, front cover.

Fig.47: Andre Kertesz, photograph published in *Uhu*, Issue 1, 1929, page 36.

Fig.48: Emery Kelen, 'Spanische Strasse zwischen 6 und 7 uhr' (the Spanish street between 6 and 7 o'clock) *Münchner Illustrierte Presse*, 13 October, 1929, page 1380.

Fig.49: Dr Peter Weller, 'Unter den Zelten' ('Beneath the Tents') (with five photographs by Eva Besnyö), *Deutsche Frauen Zeitung*, Issue 41, 1930/31, page 10-11.

Fig.50: Marianne Breslauer, *November (Berlin, Lützowufer)*, 1930, published in *Der Querschnitt*, Volume 12, Issue 11, November 1932, page 768.

Fig.51: Photograph of a boxing match (European champion Max Schmeling), *Der Querschnitt*, December 1927.

Fig.52: Photographs of Modigliani, *Frau im Hemd* (left), *Das Abendkleid* (right), published in *Der Querschnitt*, July 1926.

Fig.53: Marianne Breslauer, *Mannequins at Joe Straßner's*, Berlin, 1932, published in *Die Dame*, Issue 12, March 1933.

Fig.54: 'How Hollywood changes German actresses', *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 11, 1930, page 437.

Fig.55: Marianne Breslauer, *Galerie Lafayette*, Paris, 1930, photographic print, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin.

Fig.56: László Moholy-Nagy, *Photogenic: Double Portrait (László and Lucia)*, Germany, 1923, photographic print, Estate of László Moholy-Nagy/SODRAC.

Fig.57: Lotte Jacobi, *Sunset* (photogenic), America, c1950, gelatin silver print, Currier Museum of Art, New Hampshire.

Fig.58: Albert Renger-Patzch, *The World is Beautiful (Die Welt is Schön)*, book front cover, Munich, 1928.

Fig.59: Eva Besnyö, *Train Station*, Berlin, 1931, photographic print, Iara Brusse Collection, Amsterdam.

Fig.60: Werner Gräff, *Es Kommt der Neue Fotograf (Here Comes the New Photographer)*, Berlin, 1929.

Fig.61: Invitation to an Eva Besnyö Exhibition, 11 to 30 March 1933, Kunstzaal van Lier, Amsterdam.

Fig.62: The New Woman, *Die Dame*, Issue 17, 1927, front cover.

Fig.63: Yva (Else Neuländer-Simon), 'Lieschen Neumann will Karriere machen', photo series, *Uhu*, Issue 6, 1930.

Fig.64 and Fig.65: Marianne Breslauer, *Ruth von Morgen*, Berlin, 1933 or 1934, photographic print, Marianne Breslauer Estate.

Fig.66: Marianne Breslauer, *Untitled*, Sacrow, 1934, photographic print, Marianne Breslauer Estate.

Fig.67: Zeiss Ikon camera advertisement, 'Meine beste Freundin', *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 24, June 1929, page 1051.

Fig.68: Agfa 6 x 9 camera advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 2, No. 26, June 1930, page 1160.

Fig.69: Kodak Eastman Company, Ciné Kodak Advertisement, *Die Dame*, Issue 21, 1931, page 47.

Fig.70: Thagee 6 x 9 camera advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 24, June 1929, page 1063.

Fig.71: Voigtländer Skopar advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 13, March 1930, page 556.

Fig.72: Zeiss Ikon Camera advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 2, No. 50, December 1929, page 2251.

Fig.73: Kodak Advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 21, May 1930, page 928.

Fig.74: Agfa camera advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 10, March 1929, page 395.

Fig.75: Zeiss Ikon Ikonta advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 2, No. 39, September 1929, page 1735.

Fig.76: Zeiss Ikon Ikonta advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 2, No. 32, August 1929, page 1433.

Fig.77: József Pécsi, *Kodak Camera Advertisement*, Budapest, 1928, vintage pigment print, 27 x 19.5 cm, Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét.

Fig.78: Eastman Kodak Company, *Advertisement for Vanity Kodak*, 1928.

Fig.79: Petra Fiedler, *Frühjahrskleidung*, Berlin, 1925, pen and watercolour on paper, Lipperheide Costume Library, Berlin.

Fig.80: Zeiss Ikon Cocarette Advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Volume 1, No. 26, June 1929, page 1159.

Fig.81: Yva (Else Neuländer-Simon), 'Lieschen Neumann will Karriere machen', photo series, *Uhu*, Issue 6, 1930.

Fig.82: Gerhard, *Ein Vergleich, Die Dame*, Issue 15, 1931.

Fig.83: Studio Ringl + Pit (Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach), *Petrol Hahn (shampoo advertisement)*, Berlin, 1931, gelatin silver print, 23.8 cm x 28.3 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California.

Fig.84: Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait (Standing Japanese Doll)*, France, c1928, photographic print, Galerie Berggruen, Paris.

Fig.85: Hippolyte Bayard, *Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man* (and 'suicide note' on the back of the photograph), France, 1840, direct positive 18.7 x 19.3 cm, Collection Societé française de photographie.

Fig.86: Rudolf Koppitz, *In the Bosom of Nature (Self-Portrait)*, 1923, 58.2 x 48.2 cm, private collection.

Fig.87: Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Buttons*, Germany, 1928, gelatin silver print, 23.5 x 17.1 cm, Wilhelm Arnholdt Estate.

Fig.88: August Sander, *Farmhands*, Germany, 1929, photographic print, August Sander Archive, Cologne.

Fig.89: Ica Cameras advertisement, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, no. 38, 1925.

Fig.90: Arthur Rackham, *The King of the Golden Mountain*, 1913, illustration, private collection (Konrad Feilchenfeldt).

Fig.91: Lotte Jacobi, *Tilla Durieux*, Berlin, c1930, photographic print, Lotte Jacobi Estate, New Hampshire.

Fig.92: Marianne Breslauer, *Freizeit eines arbeitenden Mädchens* (freetime of a working woman, series), Berlin, 1933, photographic print, Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur (Zurich).