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**The Untaken Photograph: Framing Women in Hugo Hamilton's Fiction**

*La Photographie non-prise : des femmes hors cadre dans la fiction de Hugo Hamilton*

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# The Untaken Photograph: Framing Women in Hugo

## Hamilton's Fiction

*La Photographie non-prise : des femmes hors cadre dans la fiction de Hugo Hamilton*

Helen Penet

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- 1 While our contemporary understanding of photography is almost purely visual, both the newly-coined word “photography” and its immediate forerunner “daguerreotype” remind us, etymologically, that when this new technique was first invented, “photography was originally promoted as a replacement for writing as well as a rival for painting” (North 4). Photography appeared to allow for perfect mimesis in a way that realist literature could not compete with. However, early commentators on the technology very quickly noted “its tendency to frame particular points of view and to isolate one moment from another” (North 3). Since then, theorists and practitioners of photography, from Garry Winogrand to Susan Sontag, have insisted on photography’s lack of narrative ability. The clearest image of this lack of narrative ability is the frame itself, which highlights the selective and discontinuous nature of photography.
- 2 The German-Irish author, Hugo Hamilton, whose bilingual upbringing through German and Irish, in the English-speaking Dublin of the 1950s, and whose childhood memoir *The Speckled People* foregrounds the exclusion of a framed photograph of his paternal grandfather, seems particularly well-placed to explore framing as a means to exclude the outsider in both Germany and Ireland. This article focusses on how Hamilton’s fiction addresses the treatment of German women who were raped during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War as well as the treatment of Irish women who fell pregnant outside of marriage in the twentieth century. Hamilton’s writings highlight the lack of narrative ability of photography, and insist on the power of stories to include all those whose photographs were not deemed worthy of being taken.

## Untaken photographs of rape in post-war Germany

- 3 In his seminal work on photography, *La chambre claire*, Roland Barthes insists on the evidential value of the photograph, the undeniability expressed by Barthes as “Ça-a-été” (Barthes 120). In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a plethora of photographers were dispatched to Berlin and other German cities to report on and provide just such photographic proof of the destruction wreaked upon them by the Allies’ aerial bombings. The work of these photographers is discussed by the theorist of photography, Ariella Azoulay, in an article entitled “The Natural History of Rape”: “Destroyed cities were quickly crowded with photographers, some of whom acted as if nothing could stop them as they journeyed through the destruction, seeking out sights that constituted prime objects for the photographic gaze” (Azoulay 167). In this article, as well as in her book, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Azoulay deconstructs the role of photography in providing proof, and questions the choices which lead to some photographs being taken, while others are not. She advocates an approach to photography which calls into question “the sanctity accorded to the frame as the boundary that determines which photographic narratives can be written” (Azoulay 168).
- 4 In “The Natural History of Rape”, she uses the image of the frame to comment on each individual photographer’s decision to capture the destroyed buildings (“prime objects for the photographic gaze”), but not to capture other equally ubiquitous elements of immediate post-war Germany. She insists on our misunderstanding of these (and other) archival photographs according to which “‘what was there’ is made equal to what made it into the frame” (Azoulay 169). That which did not make it into the frame is the rape of (up to) two million German women at the time.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Referring to a photograph of two photographers in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, she says:
 

In the center of this photograph [...], we can see a photographer holding his camera ready in his left hand; but in a broader sense, we also discern an interest in the photographer as a figure who is always already ready, as this same photographer becomes the subject of another photograph being taken by the photographer featured to the right. This attention to the presence of photographers in zones of war and violence is of course reinforced by still another photographer, the one who took the photograph that pictures these two photographers in front of a tank and the destroyed Brandenburg gate. But in the context of the alleged absence of photographs of rape, we can look at this photograph slightly differently, and ask, where are the photographs of rape that these photographers could have been taking in a city plagued with rape? Did they not witness these rapes first-hand, or did they choose not to use their cameras when women were raped in front of their eyes? Until the moment we encounter a ‘photograph of rape’ in post-WWII Berlin, we can use this photograph as a placeholder in a photographic archive in formation, and relate to it as a particular species: the untaken photograph of rape. (Azoulay 167-168)
- 6 She goes on to explain that “a popular axiom held that Germans had to pay for Nazis’ crimes, and women, for their part in the new world order, had to relearn the lesson of rule by men” (Azoulay 166). As the long passage quoted above makes clear, as there are no photographs of this subjection of women to “rule by men”, it has not, in Azoulay’s words, “made it into the frame”.

- 7 The title of Azoulay's article, "The Natural History of Rape" echoes that of W.G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction*. In this text, Sebald describes post-war Germany as both "looking and looking away at the same time" (Sebald 2). He makes use of reproductions of photographic images of the destruction wrought by Allied air raids but comments that "the images of this horrifying chapter of our history have never really crossed the threshold of the national consciousness" (Sebald 11). Azoulay takes this analysis one step further and relates it directly to the absence of photographs of rape when she says:

A threshold can be crossed only when the violence documented in such photographs is reconstructed as universally unacceptable, no matter who the victims and who the perpetrators are, and no matter what the different justifications for this violence were. It is unlikely that Sebald didn't know about the mass rape of German women in this mesmerizing décor of destruction, or about the controversy in Germany every time women sought to publicly raise the issue of those rapes and how they were silenced, as if the numerous children to whom they gave birth after these events living in Germany simply did not exist. (Azoulay 173)

- 8 The silence surrounding violence against women, and indeed the denial of the possible existence of the children to whom they gave birth is not unique to post-war Germany. These issues were, however, familiar to German-Irish author Hugo Hamilton, and a number of his works focus on women's suffering in wartime Germany. Other texts acknowledge that a not dissimilar suffering could be found in twentieth century Ireland, in particular in the treatment of unmarried mothers. Hamilton's texts demonstrate very clearly that this suffering has only very recently, and indeed only partially, "crossed the threshold of the national consciousness".

## An unacknowledged photograph and an untold rape

- 9 Sebald's description of people in post-war Germany both looking and looking away at the same time could equally be applied to the treatment of women in post-independence Ireland. Fintan O'Toole's recent book *We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Ireland Since 1958* describes over half a century of Irish history using "the single most important aspect of Irish culture in these decades: the unknown known. Ours was a society that had developed an extraordinary capacity for cognitive disjunction, a genius for knowing and not knowing at the same time" (O'Toole 168). O'Toole's point is that, while child sexual abuse at the hands of the clergy or the existence of Magdalene laundries and Mother and Baby Homes were common knowledge, that knowledge was willingly kept at arm's length, and no group has been knowingly kept out of the Irish frame more systematically than women.
- 10 These silenced women's stories have finally started to come to the fore in Ireland with recent revelations about the incarceration of thousands of women in Magdalene laundries and the forced adoptions from Mother and Baby Homes. Both institutions have been the subject of official commissions of investigation, and they have since been addressed in Irish creative practice, as different artists attempt to lift the veil of silence on the suffering of women in these institutions through different art forms. The first works to address these issues date back as far as the 1990s, with Patricia Burke Brogan's 1994 play *Eclipsed* or June Goulding's 1998 book *The Light in the Window*, an account of the year the author spent working at the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home.

- 11 The first novel to explore these institutions was Dermot Bolger's 1993 novel *A Second Life*, which follows the protagonist, who was born in what the novel does not yet call a Mother and Baby Home, on his quest to find his birth mother. Interestingly, as more and more information about the Magdalene laundries began to come to light through the 2000s, Dermot Bolger re-issued *A Second Life* in 2010, explaining in the foreword that when he had written the novel in 1993, "adopted children desperately tried to unearth the truth about their birth mothers and to understand the plight of those young mothers who felt they had no option left but to sign away their children born out of wedlock" (Bolger vii). By the time the 2010 "renewed novel" had come out, a much greater understanding of the Magdalene laundries had been reached, but the official report on the mother and baby homes more directly addressed by Dermot Bolger in the novel(s) was still ten years away. The protagonist and narrator of *A Second Life*, Sean Blake, is a photographer, who also seeks to use his art so that the gap in the photographic record of the convent's uses may be filled. When he visits the convent, his attention is drawn to the "framed photographs of former students receiving awards" (Bolger 198). None of these framed photographs show the occupants of the convent from the time of his birth, as Sean points out angrily: "I'm another of St Martha's past pupils, though you are unlikely to stick my photograph on your wall. But how about a photograph of all the scared girls who were locked away behind these gates?" (Bolger 199).<sup>2</sup>
- 12 More Irish literary works addressing these issues continue to emerge, from Rachael English's novel *The Paper Bracelet* (2020) to Claire Keegan's novella *Small Things Like These* (2021). This article will now focus on some of the earlier work of German-Irish author, Hugo Hamilton, as it touches not only on rape in post-war Germany, but also on the fate reserved to unmarried mothers in twentieth century Ireland, and on how both of these histories have been silenced, or kept out of the photographic frame.
- 13 Hugo Hamilton wrote two volumes of childhood memoir, *The Speckled People* (2003) and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (2006), which both use the device of the photograph as a means to identify that which can be accepted and that which cannot. Both of these texts describe how Hamilton's fervently nationalistic father had a very clear idea of what could and could not "make it into the frame" of the new Irish Republic. Two examples of things which needed to be kept firmly outside the frame were the framed photograph of his own father, Hugo's grandfather, wearing a Royal Navy uniform, and the English language, which was banished under his roof. The two languages spoken in Hamilton's childhood home were Irish, the "father tongue", and German, Hamilton's mother tongue.
- 14 In the first volume of Hamilton's childhood memoir, *The Speckled People*, the Hamilton children rummage through their father's wardrobe and come across "a big black and white picture of a sailor" (Hamilton 2003, 11). References to this photograph, which remains concealed in the parents' wardrobe throughout Hamilton's childhood, recur throughout the text. The child narrator returns repeatedly to the photograph, describing it in almost photographic terms, as if zooming in on certain elements, or imagining it being framed differently, depending on who might be behind the camera:
- He was dressed in a sailor's uniform with square, white lapels over his tunic and a rope lanyard hanging down over his chest. He had soft eyes and I liked the look of him. I wanted to be a sailor, even though I had no idea what this sailor was doing in my father's wardrobe. [...] Some things are not good to know in Ireland. I had no idea that I had an Irish grandfather who couldn't even speak Irish. His name was

John Hamilton and he belonged to the navy, the British navy, the Royal Navy. [...] 'Who gave you the right to look at my things?' he said, because he didn't want any of us to know that he had a father in the navy who could not speak Irish and once stood with the British in a war against the Germans, when his own country was still not free. (Hamilton 2003, 11-34)

- 15 The re-concealment of the photograph also highlights the role photography plays in memory-formation and the stories families tell about themselves, as discussed by Marianne Hirsch: "photography quickly became the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation – the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated, by which the family's story would henceforth be told" (Hirsch 6-7):

The medals were taken off and put away. The picture of the sailor with the soft eyes disappeared and we never saw him again after that. Nobody mentioned him. I had no way of keeping him in my head because he was gone, back into the wardrobe where nobody could rescue him. We didn't know how to remember him, and like him, we lost our memory. (Hamilton 2003, 11-150)

- 16 Returning to the term Azoulay used to describe an untaken photograph, the disappeared photograph of Hamilton's paternal grandfather can be seen as a "placeholder" for a reality which someone, in this instance, the narrator's father, wants kept out of the frame.
- 17 Hugo Hamilton's paternal grandfather's employment in the Royal Navy, and therefore his participation in the British imperial project is not unique, and indeed the inconvenient photographic truth of the existence of such a family member is not unique to the Hamilton family. In a 2021 article entitled "Photographic Ubiquity: Remembering Bobby Sands" written for the *Writing the 'Troubles'* blog, Katherine Side comments on the most well-known photograph of Bobby Sands:

A single colour photograph of Sands circulated widely as a commodity throughout the republican movement and its international coverage. This image still endures. It has been painted successively in murals on Sinn Féin's Sevastopol Street office; it appears on book covers; it has been reproduced on paraphernalia including a football jersey with the number 81 on the reverse. It is even the logo of a burger bar named after Sands on the street named in his memory in the Iranian city of Tehran. (Side)

- 18 This photograph of Bobby Sands, cropped from a larger photograph of a group of republican prisoners at Long Kesh in 1975, is remarkable for being the only one which has reached such iconic status. Katherine Side's interest in the ubiquity of this single photograph stems from the fact that a family photograph would have revealed an inconvenient truth, not unlike that which Hugo Hamilton's father is so keen to conceal:

This particular image embedded Sands in the history and mythology of republican struggle. Childhood photographs, family photographs, and those of Sands' adolescent sporting participation arguably complicate the story of him as republican hero. Family photographs, for instance, would have located Sands' childhood residence in Belfast's mixed suburban neighbourhoods, thus rather removed from staunchly republican, poorer areas such as the Falls Road and Ballymurphy. They would have also exposed a lineage that includes mixed marriage and Presbyterian ancestors, among them Sands' paternal grandmother and his British naval veteran father. (Side)

- 19 Both in the case of Bobby Sands and in that of Hugo Hamilton, the uncomfortable photographic truth of the participation of Irish people in the British navy is deliberately removed from the photographic record.

- 20 The child narrator of *The Speckled People* is very much aware of the truth that photographs convey, and the desire of some to prevent them from conveying those truths. He may or may not have been aware of the lack of photographic evidence of the rapes inflicted on German women after the war, but both his memoirs and several of his novels make it clear that he was acutely aware of the existence of those rapes. Hugo Hamilton's mother, Irmgard Kaiser, was born and raised in the German town of Kempen, until she left Germany in 1949 to undertake a pilgrimage to Ireland, where she met and married Hugo's father. *The Speckled People* is as much the story of Hugo's father's linguistic intransigence as it is the story of Irmgard's efforts to use the written word to tell, and attempt to come to terms with, her own wartime rape. One of her difficulties in formulating her experience is not dissimilar to that described by Ariella Azoulay: Irmgard's is the untold story of rape, where Azoulay comments on the untaken photograph of rape.
- 21 Hamilton was aware of his mother's experience, and her often thwarted desire to put this experience into words. *The Speckled People* repeatedly foregrounds Irmgard's efforts to write about her wartime experience: "she's downstairs again, clacking on the typewriter, putting down all the things that she can't say to anyone, not even my father. Things you can't say in a song, or a story, only on the typewriter for people to read later on sometime, on their own, without looking into your eyes" (Hamilton 2003, 88), "I can hear my mother clacking downstairs on the typewriter, putting everything down on paper for later. She can't stop what's happening, but she can write it down instead, how she struggled to keep Herr Stiegler away from her" (Hamilton 2003, 151), "My mother tells stories like that because there are other stories she can't tell. When it's silent, she thinks of all the things she has to keep secret. She wishes that she could have resisted more" (Hamilton 2003, 203). Hugo Hamilton shows his mother's struggle because her experience of rape had never been told, and his writing it (and his writing about her rape) is a way of bringing it back into the frame, and acknowledging it for the first time.
- 22 Hamilton's memoirs tell of his childhood and touch on his mother's wartime experience, but he has also written ten novels, and many of these have been inspired both by events of his own life and that of his mother. Two of his novels in particular, *The Last Shot* (1991) and *Disguise* (2008), explore the rape inflicted on women in Germany both during and in the immediate aftermath of the war.
- 23 The protagonist of *Disguise*, Gregor Liedmann, who was born in the early stages of the Second World War, is tormented by doubts and suspicions about his origins, believing himself to have been a Jewish child substituted for a German son killed in an air-raid. His suspicions take over his life and prevent him from living in the present. His good friend Martin suggests that he is far from the only child born around this time to have doubts about his paternity:
- 'Look,' Martin said, 'I want to tell you something. I have always had a suspicion that my mother was raped by my father. He was in the Russian Army and I have a feeling that at least it was not entirely voluntary on her part, that she went along with him because there was no alternative at the end of the war. (Hamilton 2008, 154)
- 24 When Gregor asks why Martin is confiding in him, Martin answers "What can I do about it? I can prove nothing" (Hamilton 2008, 154). Once again we are confronted with the absence of proof: if no photographer chose to frame such events, no photograph or any other form of documentary evidence exists to confirm it having happened.

25 Similarly, Hamilton's 1991 novel *The Last Shot*, which Hamilton dedicated "für Irmgard" (Hamilton 1991, 1) recounts another suspicion surrounding paternal identity following a rape in the final days of the war. The novel follows Bertha Sommer, the female protagonist, and her lover, Franz Kern, as, like millions of displaced persons across Europe at the time, they flee from their abandoned German garrison in Czechoslovakia, and attempt to return to their home towns in Germany. The title of the novel foregrounds it as a quest to discover the exact moment when the final shot of the war was fired, and suggests that it was the shot fired by Franz to kill the refugee who was attempting to rape Bertha. The narrator, Bertha's son, has spent his life wondering if his father was Franz, or an anonymous rapist. Again the novel focuses on the difficulty of ascertaining the truth in such instances, for lack of evidence. Ariella Azoulay specifically mentions the absence of rape from photographs of the flight of post-war refugees:

Sebald is attentive to the movement of refugees, 'numbering one and a quarter million, dispersed all over the Reich, as far as its outer borders' (p. 29), but oblivious to what happened to them on the roads, in the woods, in the refuges they found in their homes or along the way in tattered buildings. [...] Visual documents of rape are not missing [...], [such a photo] can no longer be read as another photo of destruction, but rather as a photo of an arena of rape. (Azoulay 173)

26 Both of Hamilton's "German" novels explored the unsaid, undocumented, unphotographed subjection of women to what Azoulay called the "rule of men" in the context of the war and its immediate aftermath.

27 After writing a number of historical novels set in Germany, Hamilton returned to writing about contemporary Ireland in 2010 with the novel *Hand in the Fire*, but he continued to explore how women had been forced to "learn the lesson of rule by men", in the very Irish story of the exclusion from public record of the unmarried mother.

## Extending the frame

28 It is only very recently, with the publication on 12 January 2021 of the Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes that the extent of the mistreatment of unmarried mothers in post-independence Ireland has begun to come to light. The stories of these women and their children were kept firmly out of the frame until the tireless work of local historian Catherine Corless brought to light the burial of 796 children in an unmarked mass grave at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home, County Galway, which led to the creation of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes in 2015.

29 While the publication of the report of the Commission of Investigation had been eagerly awaited, and seen as an important step towards the telling of a history which had previously been untold, the report itself has proven problematic, and suggests a continued reluctance to allow the historic abuse of women and children cross the threshold of the national consciousness. The publication of the report has been met with dismay on the part of survivor groups, whose witness statements were "lost" by the Commission, subsequently found, but never adequately acknowledged in the writing of the report, as one journalist points out:

I'd like to dedicate this space to some of the witnesses who gave evidence to the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes but whose words failed to make any impact on its findings.



We are still no closer to understanding why that happened, but their experiences and their testimony deserve an airing, alongside the findings that so clearly ignore them. (Finn)

- 30 Written at a time when much of what we now know about the Mother and Baby Homes was beginning to come to light, Hamilton's 2010 novel does not address the institutional nature of the treatment of unmarried mothers in Ireland, but tells the story of one victim of Ireland's twentieth century approach to pregnancy outside of marriage. Vid Cosic, the narrator of *Hand in the Fire*, is a Serbian carpenter living and working in Dublin who befriends a Dublin barrister, Kevin Concannon and his family. Intrigued by a Concannon family story that most of the family would prefer remained uninvestigated, Vid goes in search of the truth of the story of Máire Concannon, otherwise known as *Bean Bháite*, the drowned woman, an unmarried pregnant woman who died of drowning off the west coast of Ireland after being denounced from the altar. Three slightly different versions of her story are given in the novel, first Kevin's version, then Kevin's girlfriend Helen's version, and finally Kevin's father Johnny's version:

Nobody knew if she drowned herself or whether she was drowned by somebody else. She was the subject of controversy at the time. She was pregnant and not married. The priest in the local church denounced her from the altar. He said that if the men in the area were not men enough to drown her, then perhaps she would have the decency to drown herself. (Hamilton 2010, 88)

Her version was more heartbreaking. Perhaps she told it from the woman's point of view, how the words of the priest must have terrified the pregnant girl, how the people must have turned to look at her as she was being denounced.

'If there is no man here in this parish fit enough to marry her', was the way she said it, 'then the best she can do is to drown herself.'

Did she get that wrong? Or was she trying to make it seem less cruel, by putting in the word 'marry' instead of 'drown'? (Hamilton 2010, 111)

He confirmed the same details, how exactly she was denounced from the altar. The way he had heard it from his mother. The priest had put it up to the men in the congregation to drown her. Because every man in the whole of Connemara was under suspicion while she was walking around with a baby in her belly and no husband by her side. And if there were not men enough to do that and clear their own names, so the story went, she should have the decency to drown herself. (Hamilton 2010, 167)

- 31 The three versions of the story, while all very similar, do show some variations. Reading them is the fictional equivalent of looking at three different photographs of the same scene, taken by three different photographers, each choosing to frame the picture according to their own perception of what they are seeing. Vid, the novel's narrator, goes to Connemara in search of the truth, but, unsurprisingly, no records have been kept of the woman – no proof, photographic or otherwise, can be found of her life or death. Indeed, she is kept so firmly outside the frame that even her dead body is excluded from the graveyard: "There were some stories going around that she was brought to the edge of the cemetery and buried outside the walls, unrecognised by the church" (Hamilton 2010, 168). If no man could be framed for the paternity of Máire's child, she needed to be removed from the frame.
- 32 Azoulay's work on the "untaken photograph of rape" is part of a wider exploration of the relationship between potential and actual subjects of photography. Potential subjects of photography – whether they be rape victims in 1945 Berlin or unmarried mothers in twentieth century Ireland – who do not become actual subjects of

photography are thus excluded from what Azoulay calls the “cizenry of photography”.

- 33 Hamilton’s own story as it is explored in the two volumes of his childhood memoir *The Speckled People* and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* is one of exclusion – an Irish and German-speaking boy surrounded by an English-speaking country:

When you’re small you’re like a piece of white paper with nothing written on it. My father writes down his name in Irish and my mother writes down her name in German and there’s a blank space left over for all the people outside who speak English. We’re special because we speak Irish and German [...] But you don’t want to be special. Out there in Ireland you want to be the same as everyone else. (Hamilton 2003, 7)

- 34 This awareness of not corresponding to societal norms, and not belonging informs all of Hamilton’s work: many of his narrators are outsiders, like Vid in *Hand in the Fire*, or Alan Craig, the narrator of Hamilton’s first novel, *Surrogate City* (1990), who is an Irishman in Berlin. The titles of his 1996 collection of short stories, *Dublin Where The Palm Trees Grow* and 2019 novel, *Dublin Palms*, expose a persistent feeling of being one of “the oddities, the blow-ins that live in Ireland” (Hamilton 1996, 74). Perhaps because of this feeling of exclusion, Hamilton’s novels often attempt to extend the frame to include those who had previously been excluded, to capture through writing, compensating for the lack of narrative ability of photography, those scenes and those people whose lives had not been previously recorded. They are the literary equivalent of the enlargement of the cemetery outside of which Máire Concannon’s body had been buried as happens with the cemetery walls in *Hand in the Fire*: “There were some stories going around that she was brought to the edge of the cemetery and buried outside the walls, unrecognised by the church. There were stories that she lay in that spot outside the walls for many years until the cemetery was enlarged and she may have found her way back in after a long time alone, slipping inside quietly, included at last” (Hamilton 2010, 168, emphasis ours).
- 35 The repetition of “stories” in this passage echoes that in the extracts of *The Speckled People* in which Irmgard desperately tries to write the story of her own rape. This and other stories written by Hamilton palliate the lack of narrative ability of photography to provide a narrative space for some of these forgotten women’s stories to be “included at last”.

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## NOTES

1. "Over the course of several weeks, anywhere between a few hundred thousand and two million German women were raped, including in urban spaces from which cameras were not absent, to say the least, as the destruction of buildings was carefully recorded in numerous trophy photographs" (Azoulay 167).
2. Further discussion of the role of photography in *A Second Life*, which is beyond the remit of this article can be found in Penet, Helen, "From ghostly presence to haunting absence: Photography in Hugo Hamilton's *The Speckled People* and Dermot Bolger's *A Second Life*", *Ireland: Specters and Chimeras. Mélanges en l'honneur de Claude Fierobe, Imaginaires* No. 23 (2021), ed. Sylvie Mikowski, Marine Galiné et Françoise Canon-Roger, 20-29, and Mianowski, Marie, "Challenging Containment in Dermot Bolger's *A Second Life: A Renewed Novel* (2010)", *Post Celtic Tiger Landscapes in Irish Fiction*, London, Routledge, 2017, 28-42.

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## ABSTRACTS

Photography theorist Ariella Azoulay's study of the absence of photographic evidence of women being raped in post-war Germany prompts a reassessment of our understanding of photography, moving away from that of a purely evidentiary medium to one which reflects a choice. That which does not make it into the photographic frame is not necessarily that which did not happen, but may be that which has not been acknowledged. Hugo Hamilton's childhood memoirs

foreground writing as a means to tell the previously untold story of his mother's rape in Germany during the second world war. His German novels also lift the veil of silence on stories of wartime rape. Hamilton uses his own experience of exclusion in his 2010 novel *Hand in the Fire* to take on the silence around the plight of unmarried mothers in post-independence Ireland, and bring their stories fully into the frame.

Le travail d'Ariella Azoulay, théoricienne de la photographie, sur l'absence de preuves photographiques de viols de femmes dans l'Allemagne de l'après-guerre, nous incite à repenser notre conception de la photographie. Celle-ci n'est plus un support qui fournit une preuve, mais un support qui reflète un choix. L'événement qui n'entre pas dans le cadre photographique n'est pas nécessairement celui qui n'a pas eu lieu, mais peut être celui que l'on ne veut pas voir. Les mémoires d'enfance de Hugo Hamilton mettent en avant l'écriture comme moyen de raconter l'histoire, jusqu'alors restée sous silence, du viol de sa mère en Allemagne pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Ses romans allemands lèvent également le voile du silence sur les histoires de viols en temps de guerre. Hamilton se sert de sa propre expérience d'exclusion dans son roman *Hand in the Fire* (2010) pour s'attaquer au silence persistant sur le sort des mères célibataires dans l'Irlande du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et faire rentrer leurs histoires à l'intérieur du cadre.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** photographie, viol, témoignage, mémoire, Allemagne, Seconde Guerre mondiale, Irlande, cadre, mère célibataire

**Keywords:** photography, rape, witnessing, memory, Germany, World War II, Ireland, frame, unmarried mother

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Helen Penet is a lecturer at Lille University. Her research field is Irish Studies, with a focus on twentieth and twenty-first century prose writing. Her work focuses on the links between literature and photography in texts by authors including Hugo Hamilton, Dermot Bolger and Henrietta McKervey.