AGAINST INDEXICALITY

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A FORMATION OF THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

Guided by the question of what does photography bring into being, 'Against Indexicality' is a proposition to rethink the foundation of the philosophy of photography – to rethink the supposed relation of truth between the photograph and the world. Taking Indexicality as a messy and convoluted conceptual field comprised of the notions of pointing, stillness, and fragmentation, this study works to untangle the three from each other, separately challenging each individual notion. In analysing each of the three through their conceptualisation by prominent thinkers, including Charles S. Peirce, Susan Sontag, Henri Bergson, Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, Rosalind Krauss, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes, and examining them against and through examples of photographic images, this study points to the imprecisions, insufficiencies, and incompatibilities of Indexicality in relation to the photographic image and form. Undoing Indexicality as a field, this study resists Indexicality as a paradigm, proposing a new theoretical framework for photography: rather than looking at photographic images as truth bearers that can evidence the photographed, it proposes to look at photographic images as formations that form a thought out of the photographed. In that, this study works to remedy the Indexicality fever, or compulsion, which it identifies as the root cause of theoretical mess within the philosophy of photography. By evincing that Indexicality is a wrong, albeit necessary, solution to a problem that is to do with identifying the relation of the photograph to the world, it not only lifts photography out of a Procrustean bed in which it was never comfortable, but also allows for a new solution to develop. This solution is the theory of photo-*poiesis*: a move beyond the materiality and away from the referentiality of photography towards its being in the world and the thought that it forms and brings-forth – towards thinking.

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There are not only wrong answers; there are also wrong questions.

– Slavoj Žižek, 2013

Everything must be started over; one can never begin to get it over with, unless it be by getting it over with before starting. And for that, as you see, it's already too late.

– Jean-Luc Nancy, 1988

STARTING OVER WITH PHOTOGRAPHY: AN INTRODUCTION

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At first look, all I see is white; but then, it is never truly white, but an array of dirty, transparent greys, cold, frosted, and crisp, with an occasional bright sparkle marking the faring of the horizon [Figure 1]. I follow it with my eyes. Orienting myself is a hopeless and endless task: for a moment, I tell myself I can distinguish skies from ice, white from white, shine from shine. An undulated movement leads me into a swirl, a roll and then a swell; I try to reach for it, I want to feel it thaw under my touch. I position the photographic image as instructed, and look deeper onto the flattened surface; the photographic image hangs between us, and by now, all directions blur into a large grey screen, and I begin to doubt it *ever* was, it *even is* the way I see it.

Here is what you expect photography to show me: this place exists. It is real. I cannot go there – I am not invited – but I can look at it, look as it refuses to thaw, safeguarded from the heat of recurring touch. This place that is all white is here, in these lines, in this excess of colour, in this presence of figures that take shape. The figures point back to it, to the photographed form in the world, they are informed by the world through an indissoluble bond, marked by it, so that the world leaves its very physical trace in the photographic image, depositing its look with it, in a dimensional imprint that is an existential connection. The world remains in this photographic image, stilled in this mould that was formed around it. The photographic image traces the world – it *is* its trace, a slice of it.

But looking at this photographic image – at *any* photographic image – I see something different, entirely different. I see what *it* shows me: I see *poiesis*, I see becoming, I see a *pro*duction into being, I see a thought. But how can I make *you* see it? How can I make you see *everything* in this white?

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PHOTO-*POIESIS*, OR, POSING THE RIGHT PROBLEM

Naturally, I open with Indexicality.[1] A thing is called natural when, as an attribute, it is intrinsic or inherent. A starting point that is natural is determined by the discourse that it inhabits, assuming the condition of being fundamentally inevitable. In being natural, it is common and constant: roundly expected – anticipated, even, in the sense that something is being looked forward to, or being made apparent in advance of its appearance. In that, it is copiously adopted in a quasi-instinctive, at times semi-automated manner. From its very beginning, the natural starting point for photographic inquiries was, and continues to be, Indexicality – a formal relation between the photographic image and the photographed thing. The answer to all photographic problems.

As a conceptual form, Indexicality folds within it a twofold condition: that the photographic image is still, and that it is a slice of something else. And it is here, at this

[1] As I demonstrate, the concept of Indexicality, as it is employed in photographic thought, goes far beyond the scope of Peirce's 'index', from which it derives its name. For reasons of clarity, I differentiate the two on the lexical level; for reasons that will become clear in the first chapter, I mark this differentiation by referring to Peirce's term with a lowercase i (index/indexicality), and to the concept at large with a capital I (Indexical/Indexicality).

common and constant point that all major photographic thinkers – at times discrete and disparate by all accounts but this – converged half a century ago. John Szarkowski famously sees photographic images as 'thin slices of time'.[2] John Berger approaches them as selected moments that preserve 'instant appearances'.[3] Susan Sontag refers to photographic image as 'a neat slice of time'.[4] Martha Rosler, in her criticism of documentary photography, invokes the photographic image as 'the explicit trace of the comprehensible in the living world'.[5] And for Victor Burgin, every photographic image is an ideological construction that presents a 'fragment of the spatio-temporal continuum' that is 'frozen'.[6]

But nothing about Indexicality is natural. Although this starting point of photographic scholarship *is* inherent – in that it is inherited, passed from one generation of thinkers to another – and despite its recurring repetition and reaffirmation, what seems as an inescapable threshold is not an innate intrinsic locus, but a simulated, scholarly-made, distorted condition. This is my move: to resist Indexicality. Not because I fear it,[7] but because Indexicality is not only the wrong answer, it is also the wrong question. But in resisting it, I, too, cannot but begin with it, assuming it as *my* natural starting point: opening with it, is how I open *it* – tracing it, unfolding it, dissecting it, taking it apart, so that its internal contradictions are laid bare. The first part of this study is dedicated to Indexicality, and its very first chapter is 'Questioning Indexicality'.

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[2] John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* [1966], (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 10.
[3] John Berger, 'Understanding a Photograph' [1968], in *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Penguin, 2013), 52.
[4] Susan Sontag, 'In Plato's Cave' [1973], in *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 2002), 17.
[5] Martha Rosler, 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)' [1981], in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (London: MIT Press, 2004), 188.
[6] Victor Burgin, 'Photography, Phantasy, Function,' in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 190.
[7] David Green, 'Indexophobia,' in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (London: Routledge, 2007), 244–48.

Dismantling Indexicality is dismantling the theoretical discourse that has produced it: it is dismantling some of photography's most profound theorisation, including Vilém Flusser, Susan Sontag, Peter Wollen, Henri Bergson, Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, Rosalind Krauss, Jacques Derrida, and – of course – Roland Barthes. Indexicality has many starting points, and my tracing departs from all of them, leaving them behind. Historicised accounts of conceptual progress are speculations: views seen through a mirror placed in front of a thing too vast for it to return its shape undistorted. Eluding the lure of a chronicle that moves from ideation to the present day, I follow, instead, a non-narrative schematisation, a surveying movement across the surface of a theoretical field comprised of the vast body of art historical and philosophical texts around the notion of photographic Indexicality. Rather than an optic path of observing change through reflection, I follow a haptic one of tracing and sensing differences through encounters. After all, what better way might there be to comprehend this pointing, moulded trace-like impress than by pressing my fingers against the extension of the texts around it – texts that are experienced as texture, weaved together in their own structural impression. Indeed, the conceptual field of Indexicality, as the movement across its surface shows, is not a smooth extension, but a coarse, tortuous expansion. Focusing on texture rather than on direction, allows me to examine these humps, knots and fissures as they appear across the theoretical surface. Coming in direct contact with the sensed fabric of Indexicality is the first step in resisting it.

My tracing moves through texts on and around Indexicality, following their course, charting and outlining them: from the index pointer that operates through a register of signification, to the death mask mould that assumes a face, to the trace into which remains are pressed and projected. One of them functions within the register of a logical sign – a semiotic sphere of reference. The other two are an ontological attribute

– vested in their function by their essential condition. As I demonstrate, although there may be ways in which those notions could be said to coincide, the three are not conceptually consistent: the limit between them may be relative rather than absolute, but it does exist – they may not exist in contradiction to each other, but they *are* in a state of contrariety. In discussing these differences as they are encountered, my move is to individually distance each of the notions from the photographic form and image, presenting the internal disagreement that dwells within the theories of Indexicality, and its entire incompatibility with photography.

What comes out of this tracing, however, is not as indication as to *how* to argue against Indexicality. As I demonstrate, the case against the naturality of Indexicality is clear, and constantly growing. What comes out is a question: why, despite the existence of several – more and less known, and more and less successful – attempts at tearing apart photographic Indexicality, are those met with such firm resistance? *Why does Indexicality keep returning?* In his 1966 *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault observes that the historic moment in which hermeneutics and semiology were overlaid to form a unified discourse of similitude is the sixteenth century, and that as of that moment 'To search for meaning is to bring to light a resemblance'.[8] Foucault's is an endeavour into the history of resemblance, and the centrality of man as a subject: a path that passes through the study of literature, myth, and painting. And in many ways, this observation remains true for photography, for since its very beginning, photography was both revered and abhorred following the shade of meaning it was coloured in by the observed resemblance between the photographic image and the photographed. Resemblance *is* the by-now 'natural' meaning of photography, and Indexicality is the

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[8] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966], trans. unknown (London: Routledge, 2002), 33.

theoretical tool through which it is observed – understood not only as detected or remarked, but also as conformed to, complied with, and ceremonially carried out.

But even more than a dogmatic devotion, I suggest that this observation of Indexicality is a *fever*: a state of burning yearn, a thirst that can never be satisfied, and that demands, as such, a constant increase in attention. This theoretical fever is not *of* Indexicality, but *for* it: it is what calls for Indexicality into the photographic discourse, and what allows for its control over it, as a natural force that cannot be denied. But if it is a fever, then Indexicality's mode of theoretical recurrence is an urge, not a necessity: it is a case and not the problem. Indexicality, I demonstrate, is a pathological epidemic – a fever with which the philosophy of photography is burning, and from which it can convalesce.

The first distancing I perform is from the index itself, the existential sign that points through a logic of physicality, and the originary term from which Indexicality is derived. In the second chapter, 'Indications Against the Index', I unfold this semiotic discourse, as it is often challenged with an empirical objection of a technological nature: that photography is not indexical because it can be digital. Confronting this famous objection, I claim that arguments which move against the index by circumscribing it into an analogue discourse which does not apply to digital photography are not only physically and conceptually incorrect, they are also counterproductive. Taken as a logic of indication, the index cannot and should not be disproved: but being right, does not mean being the right approach. While the logic of the index holds true, resemblance, correspondence, or verification do not follow, and consequences that *can* be drawn from it are useless. The common and constant attempt to employ the index, conflated in Indexicality, towards a question of being – to draw an ontological argument out of a semiotic analysis – is part of what entangles Indexicality further in on itself.

As I demonstrate, and despite the common opinion, nothing about Indexicality is clearly defined. But rather than a singular instance, this state of instability and variability is symptomatic of photographic philosophical theory in general. As Sabine Kriebel's premise to the 2005 publication of James Elkins's seminar on *Photography Theory* states, photographic theory is 'a messy and unsettled field'.[9] Theorisations on photography initiated soon after its invention, and frequently depended on contemporary technology, and the material objecthood the photographic image assumed as a result. As the technical process of photography and the materiality of the photographic image changed, so did the writings and concepts that were meant to elucidate them. The ontological question around what is a photograph has, therefore, come to have an array of answers, with each of them engaging with parts of Indexicality in a slightly different manner, and none of them truly managing to untangle its ends from each other, moving past their fever towards it. The situation was aggravated over the last three decades. Following the establishment of digital photography, and the many new forms of photographing it enabled – this plurality of conflicting positions became particularly sensed, with the core of Indexicality becoming ever more volatile and inconstant.

But despite being symptomatic of it, the mess of Indexicality is not a symptom of photographic theory – rather, it is the condition that brings it about: not an indicator, but the disease itself. Indexicality fever and its derivations *are*, as I show, the mess of photographic philosophical theory. Discussing and pulling apart what I identify as an Indexicality fever, I attempt to move towards a remedy of its effects in the form of an alternative proposition. I do this by exposing the origin of the photographic fever

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[9] Sabine T. Kriebel, 'Theories of Photograph: A Short History,' in Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 42.

towards the Indexical – that is to say, of the process of becoming through which it emerges, and of the relation that one wishes to express, and for which they might recur to Indexicality. Like all theoretical solutions, Indexicality was adopted into the philosophy of photography for a reason, as an instance of a certain photographic problem. My movement to dismantle it – piece by piece – is by unveiling the theoretical purpose it was instrumental towards, and demonstrating it is, in fact, conceptually unfit to serve that very purpose.

At its core, Indexicality is a concept that refers to the ways in which the photographic image relates to the world. This is why, in their photography seminar, Elkins and his fellow discussants suggest beginning unravelling the 'messy and unsettled' state of photographic theory by focusing on the base question of the relations between the photographic image and the world. Similarly, Kaja Silverman's rethinking of the history of photography in her 2015 *The Miracle of Analogy, or, the History of Photography, Part 1* proceeds through a proposed re-examination of the relation between image and world. For Elkins and his discussants, this interrogation results in pointing to the many conceptual shortcomings of Indexicality; but no alternative is proposed. For Silverman, this results in moving past Indexicality, towards a conceptualisation of the photographic image as an analogy, that operates through the 'the authorless and untranscendable similarities that structure Being',[10] positioning photography as 'the highest form of *poiesis*';[11] but while this statement seals the argument of the first – and as of now, only published – part of her historic trilogy, no theorisation of photography *as poiesis* is offered. Like Elkins and Silverman, I structure my argument around the relation between photograph and world, and like both of them, I uphold the necessity

[10] Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, or, the History of Photography, Part 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 11.
[11] Idem, 159.

to rethink the notion of Indexicality. Picking up where Elkins left off, my attempt is centred around proposing an alternative; picking up where Silverman left off, the question guiding my alternative proposition is phenomenological: an approach to phenomenology *as* ontology.

The notion of phenomenology as ontology is one developed by Martin Heidegger in his 1927 *Being and Time*. Through an etymological analysis of the Ancient Greek roots *φαινόμενον* [phainómenon] and *λόγος* [lógos], Heidegger arrives at a definition of phenomenology, which see it as '[letting] that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself'.[12] Phenomenology, in this approach, is 'the science of the Being of entities…a fundamental ontology', where things can 'show themselves'.[13] More concretely, phenomenology is the study of things that are in the world, through their very relation to the world. All being (Dasein), as Heidegger recalls, is a being-in-the-world: all being is a being in a '"relationship" towards the world', and the study of the relation between being and the world *is* phenomenology.[14] The fever of photography surrounding the relation of the photographic image to the world, makes phenomenology an ideal philosophical framework for its investigation. At the same time, photography is also the ideal subject of a phenomenological investigation, since the photograph, as I claim, *is* a relation in and to the world.

Within phenomenology, the question that guides my investigation is one of *poiesis* – one of art. Photography, I suggest in the third chapter, 'The Question Regarding Photography', is *poietic*. But mine is not a question of art as an investigation of the ways in which photographic images can or should participate in a certain aesthetic category.

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[12] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [1927], trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 58, and see more broadly: '§7 The Phenomenological Method of Investigation,' 49–63.
[13] Idem, 61.
[14] Idem, 84.

Rather, it is a question of art as an investigation of bringing into being. To be sure, *poiesis* is *not* a natural starting point for a philosophical inquiry into photography. While it does make a rare and isolated appearance in an article, where Heidegger's conceptualisation of *technê* and *poiesis* is considered aside analytical philosopher Kendall Walton's ideas on photography – photography, it is claimed there, does not qualify as *poiesis* in Heidegger's terms.[15] My claim is precisely the opposite. It is precisely as *poiesis* – and precisely as it is understood by Heidegger – that one must look at and think of photography: looking to see what photography reveals, brings-forth, brings into being, and brings into presence. Rather than as a conclusion, I propose this as a *new starting point* – an invitation to reconsider the paradigmatic assumptions around photographic Indexicality through a set of new questions.

The old question – indeed, the *oldest* question in the book – is as to what is a photograph. But the question is changing, and the reply cannot be, as with Barthes, a pensive image,[16] that is a field of signifiers that are to be read,[17] and whose ultimate connoted message is death.[18] In this study, I suggest rephrasing the question to: *what is produced and brought into being through photography*? This is the right ontological problem: a problem of *poiesis*. With this rephrasing, my aim is to propose *a new theory of photography* – a theory that goes beyond Indexicality: outside its conceptual field, against its paradigm, and in response to its fever; a theory of photo-*poiesis*. Starting by exploring photography through *poiesis*, I pose the question of what does photography bring into

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15 Diarmuid Costello, 'The Question Concerning Photography,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70:1 (2012): 101.
16 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 38.
17 Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' [1964], in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 32–51.
18 There are numerous accounts of Barthes's obsession with death in *Camera Lucida*. Perhaps most telling is *The New York Times* review of that book from August 1981, the title of which reads 'Death in the Photograph', where the word death appears 14 times, and see: Andy Grundberg, 'Death in the Photograph,' *The New York Times*, 23 August, 1981, accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/23/books/death-in-the-photograph.html?pagewanted=all.

being. What photography brings into being, I propose, is a thought. Photography, I claim, is not pensive, as it *forms thought* – it *thinks* through its photographic form.

The fourth chapter, 'What Makes a Photograph', provides the necessary foundation to support the claim of photographic thought formation. By taking a step backwards and looking at the photographic form and image in general, it enables a view of photography possible only from afar. If the claim is that photographic form brings thought into being, then the question arises as to that very form. In order to see where in the photograph thought is formed, I take apart the photographic image into its phenomenological parts, as those are identified by Edmund Husserl, concluding with a theorisation of the photographic relations between those parts. There are two main photographic relations that I individuate: a semiotic relation of representation, and an internal ontological relation of becoming. These relations, I claim, *are* the photographic form: they *are* the photograph. And it is through these relations that I propose re-examining the remaining parts of Indexicality: by allowing me to see what the photograph is *not* – namely, not still and not a slice – the photographic relations also lead me towards what it *is*: a resolution of Indexicality fever – an ontology through phenomenology.

Having separated the index from Indexicality, and shifted the problem into a phenomenological inquiry, I return to the traditional ontological attributes photographic philosophical theory is rife with: the mould and the trace. The second part of this study is dedicated to challenging the notion of the photographic image being a death mask mould. I open it with the fifth chapter, 'Presenting Stillness', in which I move from a literal reading of the death mask, towards a rejection of the analogy it puts forward. The challenge to the literal photographic denotation as a death mask is grounded in the condition of flatness which photography bestows upon its

photographed turned image subject: the photographic image cannot be seen in terms of a death mask of the photographed, since it displaces its form into a figure, at the expense of its depth. The form is colligated with roundness, three-dimensionality and presence in space: a form is a body, a part of the world. The figure, per contra, is a flat image, associated with two-dimensionality and the plane: a figure is a shape, a compositional component. The photographic image is unable to be an actual mould of its photographed because it does not maintain its form. But the death mask mould, I claim, fails as an analogy as well, for it disregards the significance of the flatness of the photographic image, while leading to false inferences with regards to the photographic image and form: the mould calls for stillness, and the photographic form and image, I demonstrate, are not still.

Further unpacking photographic stillness, I suggest two ways of understanding it: as a remark on arrested movement in space, and as a remark on a timeless rest in calm. The sixth chapter, 'Arrested in Stillness', is dedicated to the former. I begin with a comparative historical survey, in which Bergson's conception of stillness is juxtaposed and measured against that of Benjamin. Examining the stability of these different forms of photographic spatial arrest against and within photographic images, I demonstrate the many ways in which they come apart.

In the seventh chapter, 'Stilled into Rest', I turn to the second form of photographic stillness: a being that is timeless. I begin the chapter by unfolding Barthes's *noeme* of that-has-been, which I claim to be the formula of photographic timeless stillness. But the formula, I show, fails: it fails to describe the photograph, and it fails photography, dragging it down a path of tenses, aspects and temporal designations. Stillness of rest, I suggest, does not belong with photography: it is a mode imported into photography from painting.

In the eighth chapter, 'Stillness Through Time', I elaborate on why stillness does not belong with photography. There are three ways the timeless can be understood: as an atemporal mode – a being without time; as an extratemporal mode – a being outside time; and as an eternal mode – a simultaneous being throughout all of time. When examined alongside photographic relations, however, none of the three holds true for the photographic form.

Closing the second part is the ninth chapter, titled 'Time Present'. There, my rejection of the still as a necessary derivative from the mould is revealed as not only a rejection of the cause, but also an opening up to a new proposition, one that is arrived at through *poiesis*. The first part on temporality concludes with a new theorisation of the photograph: from the still to the unstill, from the linear to the stratigraphic, from the that-has-been to the *is*, from the past to passing presents. Freed from its shackle of stillness, photography is freed not only from the Indexicality of the mould, but also from its lock into pensiveness. It may be revealed as a *thinking* image: bringing thought into being, forming thought through its mutable form.

The third and final part is dedicated to the trace. It opens with the tenth chapeter, 'The Trace and the Splinter', where I unpack and challenge Derrida's and Bazin's conceptions of the photographic trace. It is, however, Krauss's conception, in which the photographic image is a splinterred fragmented, that I argue is the most consequential to the mess of photographic theory. I present the photographic splinter in its threefold form of a slice of time, a slice of life and a slice of the real, and dedicate the eleventh chapter, 'Breaking the Splinter', to arguing against it.

But this conception of the photographic image as a splinterred slice is more than a central component of the Indexical paradigm – it is also an indication of the origin of

its fever. In the twelfth, and final chapter, 'Splitting Through', I move from the notion of the slice to the alternative propostion of photogrpahy as a slicing through. A slice through is a cut or a crack performed on the whole, causing it to split. The slice might move on the surface of the whole, or permeate its flesh, dividing its very core. Photographing, I argue, is slicing and splitting through the photographed. In the action of cutting into it, the slice marks the whole, leaving a negative presence of itself – a sign of the splitting through. Rather than the photographic image bearing the marks of the photographed, it is the photographed that bears the marks of photography: *photographic Indexicality is turned on its head, transformed negative-to-positive*.

Rather than as a taking away – freezing movement, slicing away moments – I suggest turning to look at what photography brings to the world – what it adds to it. The photographic image is not a removed slice of the photographed, but what comes out of its slicing and splitting – a progeny formation photography brings into the world. A progeny formation that *belongs* to the photographed, subjugated to it. John Tagg insists that '*every* photograph is the result of specific and, in every sense, significant distortions which render its relation to any prior reality deeply problematic', which, for him, intimates that 'the indexical nature of the photograph…is therefore highly complex, irreversible and can guarantee nothing at the level of meaning'.[19] Tagg is discussing documentary photography, its usage of visual rhetoric, and the subsequent status of its truth claim, but his observation carries its weight into a different context: *every* photograph is the production of a new thing whose relation to the world is complex and problematic. It is this complex relation of belonging between the photographed

[19] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 2–3.

progenitor and the photograph that photography forms out of it that is at the heart of Indexicality fever.

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Out of the white, Betty Richter's look is directed away from me, as she twists her shoulder towards me, in a sharp torsion of her torso [Figure 2]. It is a portrait that has no face, and many looks. This photographic image comes out of a postcard where Betty appears: a postcard, which is itself a photographic image that comes out of a photographic image, painted by Gerhard Richter. Painted/photographed, then photographed again, printed, and photographed again. Photography *en abyme*: the looks it offers multiply. I look at Betty through the postcard. The photographic image is not transparent, but its material is: it allows light to come through it. I look at her through the camera, capable of slicing through her many images, and pulling out her look. I look at her in a mirror look – a reversal, a turning around that is a re-placing of her look in the world.

The image calls for Betty. Removed, remote, bleached out of sight, and veiled by the white fog of the photographic image material, pale and discoloured Betty looks away – she fades away, and Indexicality cannot hold her.

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In this study, I approach Indexicality in three entwined ways: as a field, as a paradigm, and as a fever. The first approach sees Indexicality as a conceptual surface comprised of modules: this approach traces the texture of Indexicality through a topological survey of photographic philosophical theory, passing through the pointing index, the still mould, and the sliced trace. The second approach looks at Indexicality as a

methodology, evincing its establishment as an axiomatic model of photographic philosophical analysis. The third approach sees Indexicality as a compulsion: it refers to Indexicality as a mode, describing its performance within the philosophy of photography.

In not one of these approaches, however, do I proceed through an ordered chronological account of change measured over time. The work I propose in this study is not historical but philosophical: it moves not through a before and an after, but through lines of flight, to borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – a movement through a multiplicity in an attempt at eluding its flattening into a single plane. I draw on very early writers and recent contemporary accounts on a par, moving backwards and forward, and bringing together thinkers who may have never met until this page. Weaved into each other like weft and warp are two possible categories of texts: those written by theorists, and those by photographers. While this apparent difference could seem worth exploring, the taxonomic distinction is, in fact, both artificial and forced: it is safe to assume that the theorists in question might have photographed (even if not professionally), and it is obvious that the photographers in question theorised – that is, after all, why they are currently considered. Moreover, it is unclear what the scope of such a Platonic differentiation might be. For if one were to follow the path opened by Plato in his tenth book of *The Republic*, suggesting that the flute-maker, he who creates with only vicarious knowledge, and the flute-player, he who has first-hand usage-based knowledge of the thing, are essentially and substantially different,[20] is one not then bound to arrive at a reversal, where the theorist is the player, while the photographer the maker? For it is not photography as a technical

[20] Plato, *The Republic*, Book X, 601c–602c.

process that is in question – a situation which would position the photographer as the user, and the theorist as a side observer – but *the photograph itself*, where the photographer is the maker, and the theorist the user. Such hierarchisation would locate the photographer in a position of disadvantage: a claim I believe is important to resist.

To be sure, not all philosophers who wrote on photography had a positive disposition towards it. Derrida, for instance, exercised extensive caution in the dissemination of his own photographic portrait for over two decades – a discretion that was as ideological as much as it was personal.[21] But on 12 September 1990, a few years after his first portrait was made public, Derrida was posing for photographer Steve Pyke. On that occasion, Pyke asked him for a 50–100 word summary to accompany the grainy, deep shadow, black and white portrait that was to be published in a compilation book dedicated to the photographic portraits of philosophers. 'The philosopher', replied Derrida, 'should start by meditating on photography, that is to say the writing of light before setting out towards a reflection on an impossible self-portrait'.[22] And indeed, while his individual disposition towards photographic portraits of himself remained deeply ambivalent,[23] his writings on the subject of photography proliferated in the final decades of his life. For Derrida, photography was deeply embedded within the fabric of deconstruction, through mutual concerns that include translation, repetition, iteration, and inscription.[24]

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[21] Jacques Derrida, 'The Three Ages of Jacques Derrida,' interview by Kristine McKenna, *LA Weekly*, 6 November, 2002, accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.laweekly.com/news/the-three-ages-of-jacques-derrida-2135553.

[22] Steve Pyke, *Philosophers* (London: Zelda Cheatle, 1995), n. p.

[23] For an in-depth examination of Derrida's positions on the photographic portrait see: Ginette Michaud, *Veilleuses: Autour de trois images de Jacques Derrida* (Québec: Nota bene, 2009).

[24] Gerhard Richter, 'Between Translation and Invention: The Photograph in Deconstruction,' in Jacques Derrida, *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography* [2000], trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), xix–xx.

Like many aspects of visual culture, photographic images lend themselves to multiple approaches, which stem out of different interests, and give rise to different modes of being invested in photography. Repeating a conversation with a friend, Graham Smith recounts having his approach to photography being called that of an 'antiquarian'.[25] While Smith only partially accepts such denomination – probably because both he and the said friend see this as a denunciation – I believe such disciplinary distancing can be of great value. Geoffrey Batchen, for instance, is an archaeologist. His investment in photographic research is one of exposing and unearthing what lies within the image, handling the image as if it were an excavation site out of which sediments of pasts can be retrieved. Sontag, on the other hand, is a pirate: looking at the photographic image as a map, she engages with its surface, and the depositions history leaves on its edges, looking for the treasures that can be revealed through such topography. Barthes's photographic practice is that of esotericism. Seeking answers and guidance in and from the photographic image, he hopes to reveal what is otherwise obscured from sight. Burgin is an astrologist, for his reading of the particular form that a photographic image presents to its looker, and its political consequences, is also a reading of the future through the constellation of the present.

My own investment is that of the cartographer: looking at photographic iterations, I follow the images as they guide me through my research, calling – through their very photographic form – for the thinking and conceptualisation. Neither as a treasure map nor as a crystal ball, my approach to the photographic image is as the *territory*. In turn, my writing is a schematic engagement with that expanse, but it is only an option – one way of imaging and imagining the image that the territory draws out of itself. Within

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[25] Graham Smith, transcribed in 'The Art Seminar,' in Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 177.

that process, it is never my intention to unveil a hidden truth, only to point to an alternative proposition. Continental philosophical research moves within the realms of the abstract and the thinkable, not in search for evidence or proof. The question, as Brian Massumi puts it in the foreword to his English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'is not: is it true?' – the *right* question is 'what new thoughts does it make possible?'.[26] In this sense, my doctoral project is a Deleuzian endeavour: a pursuit after the unthought, and an invitation to open up towards new ways of thinking about photography, and new thoughts photographic images may present.

Not only in this sense – and albeit being conceived and written in English – this study wishes to position itself as a *traditional* work, where the tradition is that of French continental philosophical thinking and writing about art. It is conceived as such, and written in that manner. In the words of Elkins, as he assumes the task of responding to Barthes: 'I adopt the French-style alternation of overly long and surprisingly short sentences. I employ apostrophes. I indulge in asides. I make sure my parenthetical remarks are slightly obscure, but never really opaque'.[27] Yet my self-insertion into this tradition is constrained to the aesthetic of writing, the methodology of pursuit, and the critical ideology of thinking the unthought: within this traditional premise, my goal is *opening new discussions* on photography, not saying the final word in an existing one.

There is also a sense in which my work is an attempt to perform a Cartesian de-construction of photography. In the second part of his 1637 *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes is questioning his own beliefs and assumptions, wondering how can he start

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[26] Brian Massumi, 'Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy,' in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. Brian Massumi (London: University of Minnesota Print, 2005), xv.
[27] James Elkins, 'Camera Dolorosa,' *History of Photography* 31:1 (2007): 24.

his thinking process from its very foundation. He goes on comparing the knowledge accumulated in the sciences to architectonic structures.[28] While he admits that he cannot simply take down all of the existing edifices in the scientific field (just as one would not go about taking down all the buildings on their street with the sole purpose of reconstructing them in a better way), Descartes insists that he must take apart and rebuild his own house of knowledge and beliefs, testing whether its foundations are solid and trustworthy. Four years later, in the first of his 1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes recalls his realisation around the flawed and unstable foundations upon which all his knowledge was built, the doubt this called into his mind, and how he decided he must demolish the old and shaky structure, and begin anew, bottom-up, if he were to construct anything of value. He writes: 'once the foundations are undermined, the building will collapse of its own accord, I shall straight away attack the very principles that form the basis of all my former beliefs'.[29] This form of taking down, or de-constructing the flawed foundations of one's knowledge is the mark of my exploration into photographic philosophical theory.

THE METHOD, ITS STYLE & THEIR IMAGES

Benjamin opens the Epistemo-Critical Prologue to his 1928 *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, by observing that 'philosophical writing…must continually confront the

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[28] René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* [1637], trans. Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12–20, esp. 13–14.
[29] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies* [1641], trans. Michael Moriarti (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

question of representation'.[30] 'Method is digression', he continues, and 'Representation as digression…is the methodological nature of the treatise'.[31] Writing philosophy, Benjamin claims, cannot escape representation – it cannot escape the digression of the method, for *the method is in the writing*. Put differently, writing philosophy cannot escape the digression enacted by the analysis of all the previous moments of thought that lead up to this very moment of thought: to this very method. Published in the same year is his collection of aphorisms and philosophical snippets, *One-Way Street*. There, in a section titled 'Post No Bills', and subtitled 'The Writer's Technique in Thirteen Theses', Benjamin states that the correct order of composition is that of idea, followed by style, finished with writing, seeing that 'style fetters the idea', and 'writing pays off style'.[32] Writing, I maintain together with Benjamin, is what releases the idea out of the shackles of style: the method is in the writing, and it is the writing itself that sets the idea free.

In his 2015 *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*, Alva Noë argues that 'A philosophical piece of writing *is* the philosophy, not a report of it',[33] seeing that philosophy – like art – is a practice, where 'method and result are one'.[34] In response to this statement, delivered at a panel presentation with Noë, I raised the possibility of philosophy being a form of practice-based research, where the practice is that of writing.[35] More than any other form of writing, I claim, writing philosophy is a practice that uses words as malleable matter – matter that calls for thinking, that creates space for the thought to

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30 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [1928], trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), 27.
31 Idem, 28.
32 Walter Benjamin, 'Post No Bills,' in 'One-Way Street' [1928], in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 65.
33 Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 235.
34 Idem, 236.
35 Anita Paz, 'Philosophy as Practice-Based Research,' presented at the *International Conference on Artistic Research*, The Hague (28–29 April 2016).

expand and experiment, and invites thought to come into the discursive – even if only to assume a form that it would soon discard. Writing is what allows for the philosophical mode of the unthought coming into thinking.

In my response, I suggest that the forms through which the practice of writing philosophy – that is to say, of doing research in philosophy, or thinking philosophy – comes about are varied, and include etymological association, *jeu de mots*, metaphorical chains, and the 'atlas-principle' of vocabulary resemblance. What these forms have in common is shaping thought into words, while having, at same time, the words themselves shaped to carry the weight of that very thought. And while all writing is an injury to the self – a definitive taking of a form that is also an opening up to vulnerability,[36] and an inventible betrayal to thought – writing philosophy is even more, for wording is both the confinement of the thought, and the condition of its infinitude. For it is precisely in inhabiting and resisting those letter-made bars, that thought pushes itself further. Written down, the thought assumes a form, and it is from that form that it may – that it *does* – philosophically form itself. It is that form that allows for further thinking, and for furthering one's thinking. It is *through* that form that new thoughts are called for, and *in* that form that they are encountered. Writing philosophy, or better yet, *wording* philosophy, *is* the research process. It is *in* and *through* words that philosophical concepts come to be. And it is not although, but *because* each word is bound by boundless context – a thing, that is, whose meaning may never be restrained from further expansion, a thing that *exists as expansion* – that philosophy is infinite, incessantly regenerative: self generating itself.

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[36] Judith Butler, 'On Linguistic Vulnerability,' in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1–41.

There are multiple modes that writing on photography can assume. The standard 'historic' form is the linear account that proceeds through analysis, where images serve as illustrations, or objects in which something may be encountered in its visible form. The rhizomatic form, favoured by artist writers, is an account that forms its written part as a core stem out of which image may offshoot to form new roots. Sending out images from its nodes, the rhizomatic form is open and vital, dilating itself in the field, but also diluting the relation between image and word, by allowing images to come out of words, without imposing the necessity to lead back to them. Another far travelled mode may be found in Barthes's consuming account in his – by now dogmatic – 1980 *Camera Lucida*. While the latter attempts to disguises itself as a linear gesture of analysis rife with illustrations, its true movement is that of an incessant circumvention: a circular motion where the text is an insistence that moves around an unreachable image which sits at its centre, like a devotee circling around the holy remains that rest underneath the altar, but may never lay his eyes on them – that may never come closer than the ambulatory wall that guides their course.

The mode of writing which seemed most appropriate for this study is yet a different one. The goal of the historian is to understand the showing of a set of images, or to answer a question through what these image show: images are proof, they serve as evidence. The artist writer, or any other individual who chooses the rhizomatic form, has their goal as the seeding of ideas that give root to more ideas. Images, in this form of writing are the shoots that carry these ideas into new potential ways of thinking: they are not part of the argument, but loci out of which new arguments are to flourish. Barthes's goal was to remain close to his deceased mother, at once keeping her sufficiently close to be in his present, and sufficiently remote to avoid admitting her presence is one of absence: his image is a relic that may dissipate, if one comes too

near. My own goal is to *write the photographic image*: to explore and encounter it for what it is *as a photographic image*, and bring that into words – words that will serve as a map, a possible path back into the image, and an invitation for others to explore it. As a writing mode, it is punctuated and pierced through with visual ruptures, where the images break through the text, but are also the guides that gather it back together. The visual argument – often ekphrastic, and always interruptive – comes out of my written text, and leads back to it while, at the same time, existing as a hole that is punctured in it. The image is a discontinuity, a suspension, an unassimilated moment, a lag, an advancement, a disruption – in short, it is a Benjaminian 'time differential',[37] the sort of stoppage of which Agamben speaks as 'the power to interrupt' that is a 'revolutionary interruption':[38] a place for change. The method is in the writing, and the argument must be *in* the images; voicing it – literally, spelling it out – is a way for me to near it, to leave my written text, and write *the image*, so that the image feeds back into the text.

Photographic images are the territory of this work, but at first sight the territory might appear uneven. Jungjin Lee's photograph, *Unnamed Road 045*, is part of the *This Place,* מקום זה, هذا المكان commission, taken by her between Palestine and Israel, and dates to 2011. Viviane Sassen's *Prosper* is part of the series *Flamboya*, which was taken as part of her tour across Africa in 2006. Michael Wolf's *Untitled #04*, from *asoue (a Series of Unfortunate Events),* is a Google Maps screenshot capture from the comfort of his home in 2010. The question arises as to what common grounds might these images share. The question may also be put more pointedly in different terms: what constitutes a visual consistency? The answer to this question lies in the mode in which these

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[37] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* [1927–40], trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 867 [Q21].
[38] Giorgio Agamben, 'Difference and Repetition: On Guy Debord's Films' [1995], trans. Brian Holmes, in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (London: MIT Press, 2002), 316.

photographic images are viewed. One way to look at them is as a photographic image taken by a Korean photographer, and printed on handmade Korean mulberry paper; a photographic image taken by a Dutch photographer using a Mamiya 6x7 film camera; and one taken by an American photographer on a computer screen. Emphasising this geographic, cultural, and material aspects puts into question whether a possible relation does indeed exist. Yet Lee often uses surfaces other to the traditional Korean paper, and other photographers on the same commission were from different provenance, and delivered entirely different visions of the same land. Sassen, on the other hand, delves into commercial fashion photography, shot with a digital camera, often assisted by a large production group. For Wolf, capturing screen shots started as a departure from his prevailing mode of urban photography. Although these are but three instances of almost 40 photographic images that appear in this study, the point towards which they lead is one shared by them all. Choosing to look at each photographic image through the external prism of the photographer, their provenance, their culture, their education, their technique, and their other practices leads towards the inevitable reduction of each image to a sum of its contexts – any address to which results truncated and lacking, discarding certain specificities in favour of others.

Recognising that no photographic image can be ascribed into a specific restrictive context without that being a reduction – that no image is a representative product of the context within which one wishes to view it – is an opening up towards a different way of looking. Rather than narrowing the images into discrete contexts, I suggest expanding them into a unifying realm where they exist, side by side, as visual thoughts: where it is as *photographic images* that they may be viewed. In this way, they are *what comes out of photographic becoming*, not products of a photographer's context – they are similar as images that come out of photographing, rather than different as images that come out

of different places, at different times, on different surfaces, by different people. In this sense, the images in this study form a corpus: a body of works, a 'place of existence' to use the words of Nancy, that '*makes room* for existence', and calls for thinking.[39]

Almost all photographic images written in this study are contemporary. It is a compromise: a way of resisting the contextual without erasure of historic scholarship. Challenging the theoretic paradigm results in challenging the visual one as well. Rather than writing paradigmatic images – a mode that would have inevitably entangled me in elect oblivion – I choose to write the current, the recent, the unconventional, the insubordinate, the recusant, the radical, the insurgent. Michael Wesley's *29 July 1996 – 29 July 1997, Office of Helmut Friedel* is a photographic image that comes out of a hand build apparatus whose shutter remained open for a 366 days-long exposure in the office of a German art historian. Assaf Shaham's *FR (90 DEG from right to left)* is a digital image that is part of the 2012 series *Full Reflection*, for which the photographer used two office scanners, emitting light from the one, and receiving it through the other. Idris Khan's *St. Paul's*, *London* (2012) is a photographic superimposition of dozens of images of the Cathedral. Together with other images I write in this study, these are perhaps not what one might call 'straightforward'. Instead, they resist, refuse to submit to the theory: they are at the margin – both technically and conceptually, both materially and ideologically – drawing the line around their own corpus, holding out. In being marginal, they are in a position to show what otherwise may elude the eye. Some of them are photographic images taken without a photographer, without a camera, or without a photographed thing: photographic images that discard with

[39] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Corpus,' in *Corpus* [2000], trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 15.

elements of photography, demonstrating *them* to be marginal to the photographic form and thought.

There is one type of photographic image that is absent, and that may, therefore, appear to be missing – namely, technical images. No X-rays. No spectrograms that reveal the look of sound. And no confocal microscopy, using lasers to generate a fluorescent response, that is then recorded, generating images that are layered on top of each other, either.[40] The exclusion is deliberate. While technical, computational and scientific visual practices yield images that may be called photographic, these fall under imagining techniques rather than photographic *poiesis*. An imaging technique is a visualisation tool: it *may* be photographic – it may bring into being – but it is not necessarily so.

Photographic images bring-forth the look of what may otherwise never be revealed, but the condition of this bringing-forth – where in the world might they be looked at, in what kind of room, on what floor and with how many other looking eyes and identities, when in the day or in the year, how strong is the light that illuminates them, and what is its source and direction, what is the size of the image, and through what media is it encountered, what state of mind does the surrounding entail, and what physical positioning does it allow, in what political atmosphere are they being viewed, with which critical position, and which special permissions or letters of introduction, who is invigilating the showing, and how closely are they monitoring – bears an effect only in as much as it affects *my own* perception. Encountering these photographic images, I become a looker – my look is embodied. Some of them I held at the Erna

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[40] The last two examples are taken from James Elkins, ed., *Visual Practices Across the University*, (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007).

and Victor Hasselblad Photography Study Center at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. It was a small, poorly ventilated room, on the fifth floor of their administrative building, in the heart of Manhattan. I wore white gloves on my hands, and the light was a crisp bright florescent that reflected off the image's surface. After a detailed explanation, the coordinator permitted me to remove the acrylic lining from a photographic image that seemed significant. I did not use it in this study. Other images I handled inside the historic rooms of the Biblioteca Panizzi in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to which Luigi Ghirri left his photographic archive. It was incredibly hot and humid, and I was pleased to be looking at these negatives and test positives through the warm light that came through the wooden windows. There are images I wrote that I only ever saw as a digital projection on a screen. Images I looked at while walking on the wooden floor of a small gallery, with my heels knocking the room into urgency. Images I presented to my students. Images I have hanging in my studio. Images I took.

I present these photographic images as a corpus of curated images that stand for the others. For all others. Interchangeable, but not arbitrary. Chosen, but encountered by chance. Indeed, for the reader of this study, all images are encountered in the form of a small curated exhibition, whose venue is the little booklet that is attached. This is not to say that by creating this closely controlled and meticulously arranged space I can pretend to have levelled the conditions of viewing. Those will inevitably vary. And for each reader, with every reading, it draws out a different perception, open different questions, and call for different thoughts. This is what photography is capable of being: a philosophical schema – an image that forms thoughts, the writing of which is an opening to thinking new things.

PART ONE

INDEXICALITY

ONE

QUESTIONING INDEXICALITY

There is an inescapability, an inevitability inherent to writing about photography, to writing *with* photography, to writing the photographic image: a load pressing down on any such attempt, constraining it into a scheme that is given and predetermined. The name of that load is Indexicality (capitalised and canonised). And so, it appears, not for the first time, and not for the last. A load that is a turbulence, an instability, a restlessness – a fever. I do not mean this in a Derridean way. Unlike the Derridean archive fever, which is an intensity of disturbance that originates out of a death drive as it meets the archive drive of conservation,[1] the Indexical fever is not an infirmity, but a ferment. It is a state of restless disquiet, a fervent unrest that brings about germination and multiplication. And unlike with the Derridean archive, where the fever is symptomatic of the archive, in the case of photography, the fever is aetiological of Indexicality: it is a fever *for* Indexicality rather than a fever of it. It is not the fever that is an inseparable part of Indexicality, but Indexicality that is brought about by the fever: the fever is the origin of Indexicality. But most importantly, unlike the Derridean archive fever, Indexical fever is an urge rather than a necessity: a compulsion that is not compulsory – that is not, as I demonstrate, essential to photography.

Originating from the index, a technical term used to denote the pointing of a sign that signifies through a logic of constraint, Indexicality – taken as a conceptual field – has since spread and accreted additional meanings, far beyond the intentions of the semiotic index: namely, a still mould that is shaped to the look of the photographed,

[1] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression' [1994], trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25:2 (1995): 9–63, esp. 19.

and a sliced off trace that remains of the photographed, carrying fragments of it in it. As such, Indexicality came to carry a variety of meanings, including a verification of existence, an indication of occurrence, and a remainder from an actuality. With the term 'index' I refer solely to the semiotic function specified in the originary theory, which I will shortly present and analyse; with 'Indexicality' I refer to the many – as I show, mostly erroneous – ways in which the term 'index' was employed in the discourse: as either a pointer, or a mould, or a trace, or any conceivable permutation of the three. Well-known and well-rehearsed, Indexicality, I demonstrate, came to be an ineluctable and self-evident point of departure, roundly accepted and only recently challenged as an axiomatic state of the photographic image. Beginning by unfolding the Indexical field into the pointer, the mould and the trace, I turn to question not only its necessity, but also the need it fulfils, building towards the argument of its reconceptualisation.

TEXTURAL IMPRESSIONS: POINTER, MOULD, TRACE

In his 1983 book, *L'acte photographique*, Philippe Dubois advances the idea that the photographic act – the physical motion in the world that results in a photographic image – operates epistemologically within the logic of the index, and leaves a trace that is ontologically inseparable from the taking place of the act itself.[2] In this relatively early, and not exceptionally influential account (especially not within the Anglophone world), Dubois performs an intersection of two photographic Indexical conceptions: a lacing of the semiotic with the ontological. For Dubois, the photographic image is a

[2] Philippe Dubois, *L'acte photographique* (Paris: F. Nathan, 1983).

sign that references through the indexical order – a mark that signifies through a logic of pointing; and, at the same time, it is a trace – a mark whose very being cannot be viewed separately from the process that brought it about. The first is a pointer, a gesture, an arrow, a guide, a signal – a connection created through the motion of signification; the second a vestige, a relic, an immobile remnant, a part of something bigger, a dimensional taking on of appearance – a connection that is grounded in being. Although Dubois is neither the first, nor the last, nor even the most famous to muddle the two into each other, Dubois's account is exemplary, for while the photographic image can often be found theorised through the twofold lens of both conceptions, this duality was not the case all along.

As a relational logical category, the term 'index' was coined by Charles S. Peirce at the turn of the previous century. Describing the indexical sign as a thing that is 'really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object',[3] Peirce puts forward a definition of indexicality as a denotation achieved through an existential connection of contiguity. 'The index', according to Peirce, 'asserts nothing; it only says "There!"':[4] a sign that signifies indexically does nothing but denoting through deictic pointing, leading towards that which left its mark.

The larger discourse framing Peirce's work is a semiotic inquiry around signs and their signification, and two of the other most quoted classes in his triad of potential relations are the icon, which functions by visual resemblance, and the symbol, which functions through an application of an abstract rule. It is discussing the icon, that Peirce affirms the visual likeness of the photographic image to the photographed thing, but continues

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[3] Charles S. Peirce, 'Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism,' *The Monist* 16:4 (1906): 495.
[4] Charles S. Peirce, 'On the Algebra of Logic: A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation,' *American Journal of Mathematics* 7:2 (1885): 181.

to note that photographic images resemble what is photographed because they 'were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection'.[5] For Peirce, this 'physically forced' correspondence brings about an existential connection, which leaves the photographic image in a state of bearing an imprint of the thing to which it is said to refer. But it is *as a sign* – following its deictic logic – that the (analogue) photographic image is to be seen as a participant in the logic of the index, bearing a forced relation to the photographed, through a physical connection that is photonic registration on a sensitive surface. And while it may be put forward that rather than being reduced to the singular logic of the index *or* the icon, the photographic sign is, in fact, both at once – an index that is iconic, or an icon that functions indexically[6] – Peirce's theory cannot be used to make a statement as to the *nature* of the photographic image *qua photographic image*. What Peirce is offering is a semiotic reading of the photographic image, not an ontological statement around its nature.

The notion around the traced ontological condition of the photographic image which Dubois refers to, on the other hand, originates from an ostensibly marginal annotation, a footnote, in which Bazin famously asserts that 'the moulding of death masks…likewise involves a certain automatic process. One might consider photography in this sense as a moulding, the taking of an impression, by the manipulation of light'.[7] What Bazin suggests is that the marks left by photonic activity on the sensitive film or surface (of the analogue photographic image) are akin to a

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[5] Charles S. Peirce, 'b. Icon' [1895], in 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,' in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 106.
[6] Jean-Marie Schaeffer, 'l'Icône indicielle,' in *L'image précaire: Du dispositif photographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 59–140.
[7] André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' [1945], trans. Hugh Gray, *Film Quarterly* 13:4 (1960): 7, second footnote, marked by a dagger.

death mask: physical marks of absence that are formed around, and carrying the form of its subject. The photographic image is therein equated to a casting taken directly off the object, so as to allow the latter to deposit its facet within the material structure of the former. It is a mould, an opening in a receptive matter that is transformed. Despite there being a resemblance to certain indices in the death mask's assuming of the form of the thing with which it has an existential connection (namely, a resemblance to the famous case of the footprint in the sand), and despite Wollen's suggestion that there is an underlining Peircean influence in Bazin's writing on the photograph,[8] a significant relation between Bazin's death mask and Peirce's semiotic system remains deeply contested.[9]

It is likely that Bazin borrows the image of the death mask from an entirely different context, namely Heidegger's 1929 'Kantbook'.[10] Analysing Immanuel Kant's notions of image and schema, Heidegger uses the example of a photographic image of a death mask to demonstrate a layering of looks: a case in which one can see the specific thing (*the* death mask taken off someone's visage), the general thing (*a* death mask), a specific image of the thing (*the* photograph), and a general image of a thing (*a* photograph).[11] Bazin's usage of the death mask in the photographic context is entirely different: finding a befitting home in his rhetoric scheme and preoccupation with demise, the discourse around the death mask shifts from a case example in a phenomenological analysis to the subject of an ontological one.

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[8] Peter Wollen, 'The Semiology of the Cinema,' in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1969), 125–26.
[9] Daniel Morgan, 'Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics,' *Critical Inquiry* 32 (2006): 441–81; and Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs,' in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 35–36.
[10] Louis Kaplan, 'Photograph/Death Mask: Jean-Luc Nancy's Recasting of the Photographic Image,' *Journal of Visual Culture* 9:1 (2010): 45–62.
[11] Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* [1929], trans. Richard Taff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 65–68.

Commencing as an almost lateral afterthought in Bazin's writing, the notion of the photographic image as a death mask quickly gains prominence, becoming a rigid 'image of thought':[12] a powerful visualisation of the photographic image that consumes the discourse, trapping it within the death mask. A famous example is Sontag's influential assertion that the photographic image is 'something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask'.[13] For Sontag, the photographic image is tactually marked by the object whose visual memory it carries, for its material is a malleable matter – a soft substance ready to be shaped by the photographed. Although drawing on the simile of the footprint, her usage of what is now a classical example of a Peircean index, must not be read with a semiotic intention: rather, Sontag's footprint performs in the text in the same spirit as Bazin's death mask – an ontological observation that regards the nature of the photographic image.

Further echoes of the death mask can be heard reverberating in many writers' work – including, perhaps unexpectedly, Deleuze, whose deep dislike of photography I present in greater detail in the following chapters. Influenced by and indebted to Bazin's writing on cinema, Deleuze's own distancing from photography as a philosophical subject of inquiry is at least partially due to their shared conception of the photographic image as a mould. For Deleuze, the understanding of photography as 'a kind of moulding' that gives place to an 'immobile section', is what sets apart the photographic image from the cinematic one, which is, according to him, one of modulation, or a constant process of modification.[14] What Deleuze brings forward is a

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[12] In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze discusses the image of thought as a dogmatic image of what 'everybody knows' – an image that hinders new philosophical thought. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 171–221.
[13] Susan Sontag, 'The Image-World' [1977], in *On Photography*, 154.
[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* [1983], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 28.

dimensional and temporal consideration of the hollowed physical mark – be it a death mask, a footprint or any other kind of moulding. Through palpable impress, the physical mark forms around its subject and is, in turn, a dimensional manifestation of its look, extending in length, width, and depth. As Deleuze demonstrates, in the case of the photographic image, this moulded dimensionality occurs in a static temporality: if held immobile in the form of a death mask, the photographed is frozen by and in the photographic image, deposited in a state without change or continuity. The death mask necessarily leads to stillness.

* * *

Now, the girl is looking at me. In a discoloured photographic image, a torso is suspended above the shoulders, repeating and duplicating the neckline of a headless white blouse, adorned in a Peter Pan collar [Figure 3]. Waves move through her: an iridescent swell that distorts the face, and ruptures the body, whose parts are left afloat at irregular intervals. Rainbow-like gleams colour the image in reds, greens, blues and yellows, marking the points where the figure breaks, splits and cracks through light, dissolved by the outbursts. If you insist on reading this photographic image as if it were a sign, then its referring will be to a young girl who turned her head away from the camera, and a scanner whose gleaming light interrupted her presence. You could say the image presents them, girl and scanner; that it points to them through a logic of undeniable connection: the photographic image is of them. A girl sat refracting light, and a scanner was operating, emitting light; that girl and that scanner came before the image, their light has left its mark on the photographic image, and now, their looks remain in it, pointing back to them, to their necessity, to their existence. This is the claim of the index.

But if moulded around the photographed and assuming its form, this scanned photographic image becomes a death mask of light. The face it continues to carry is that of the brightness emitted from a moving lamp, whose path it holds as interruptions, as scars on a face. It is a cast formed around mirror reflections of luminous beams – an impress of glow. It is what remains of light, what remains of shine. It is the look of that shine, materialised into a still appearance that endures, carrying it in it, holding it in, allowing it to be beheld. This is the claim of the mould.

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Both the Peircean pointer and the Bazinian death mask had immediate prominence in the photographic discourse. But it wasn't until 1977, when Krauss publishes her now canonical duo of articles colloquially known as 'Notes on the Index', where, with references to Duchamp, Man Ray and Peirce himself, she suggests that the photographic image is a 'type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relation to its object',[15] that the photographic image *becomes* an indexical mould-trace: an Index. Indeed, while Peirce's work is directly drawn upon, bestowing upon his technical text a warm embrace from the leading art theorist of the time, Krauss's conception of 'indexical' is not purely Peircean, but also Bazinian: referring to Bazin's essay as one that 'describes the indexical condition' of the photographic image,[16] Krauss conflates the logical pointing with the ontological state. To this mixing, she adds a third condition – a trace-like nature: Indexicality, according to Krauss, is a relation based on the photographic image being an 'empty' trace, that is caused by the photographed, and subsequently filled by it.[17] As a result, it is precisely 'the order of the

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15 Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,' *October* 3 (1977): 75.
16 Ibidem.
17 Idem, 80.

natural world that imprints itself' on the photographic image,[18] so that the image carries this imprint on its very body, which is, in turn, created and generated out of it. The photographic image that results is a sign that points indexically, a trace that is created tactilely, and an empty mould that is filled with the presence of the photographed, indicating its existence: a 'transfer off the real…a kind of deposit of the real itself'.[19]

Despite the presence of the conceptual seeds of the trace in Bazin's mould, Krauss's addition is significant. For Krauss, the photographic image is a trace not only inasmuch as it logically points to something else, or shaped around something else, but also inasmuch as it *is* what is left of that something. Its very being is that of a vestige. For Bazin, the photographic image is a physical formation that is moulded around its photographed – a relic whose Indexical holiness is achieved through touch. Krauss adds: it *is* in and of itself a part of its photographed, a remnant that endures after the photographed, a residue that remains. In other words, the photographic image is a *splintered slice* of the photographed, a fragment of the photographed that is left after the photographic process takes place. Formed from the photographed, the photographic image is a slice of its look, a slice shaped to its look, a slice shaped to the world, carrying it in itself.

In the history of art history, this is a moment of thickening and swelling, followed by an immeasurable multi-directional expansion – a sprawl that trails and spills across the conceptual plane. Although appearing in different forms and other terms in chronologically preceding photographic accounts, it is following Krauss's teaching that the notion of the photograph as a pointing sign and a trace of the real that is moulded

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[18] Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2,' *October* 4 (1977): 59.
[19] Rosalind Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism,' *October* 19 (1981): 26.

around the real, or a still image that bears the marks of the real, being a sliced splinter of it, becomes the absolute fever ruling over photographic discourse and scholarship: not simply a voguish expression or a regarded bon ton of the academic community, but truly a hegemonic concept, that reigns high above any other competing theory. As Peirce's index becomes Indexicality – a concept that, while originating from his terminology, gathers and holds additional meanings that exceed the limitations set by Peirce – Indexicality becomes the very paradigm of photographic studies, allowing the logical to collapse onto the ontological. Following Krauss's Peircean reference, the notion of the pointing index spreads and expands; following her Bazinian and personal augmentations, the notions of the mould and the trace thicken and solidify, upholding ideas of the still and the slice, a reference of factual existence. The pointing sign, the mould, and the trace become central and recurring motives of analysis and modes of approach, wrapping themselves each around the other, each warping the other, and forming together the conceptual field of Indexicality.

This integration of the three is immediately observable. In his 1963 notable account of the phenomenology of the photographic image, for instance, Hubert Damisch re-asserts that photography establishes a connection between the photographed and its photographic figure through means of inscribing, stressing that 'Imprinted by rays of light on a plate or sensitive film, these figures (or better perhaps, these signs?) must appear as the very trace of an object or a scene from the real world'.[20] This process of imprinting, according to Damisch, is at the heart of the paradoxical condition of photography: it enables the deceptive quality of the photographic image, which declares itself real by virtue of its supposed direct and existential relation to the world

[20] Hubert Damisch, 'Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image' [1963], in 'Photography,' special issue, *October* 5 (1978): 71.

while, in fact, being a product of human labour. But in building his argument around what he calls the photographic paradox, Damisch begins by referring to the photographic image as being at once a pointing sign, an imprinted mould and a remaining trace: it is both a sign and a vestige – a referring negative trace of a non-present entity. Indexicality becomes the paradigm of analysis, and it is inescapable.

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Looking eastward, the view of Lake Casitas in California allows me not only the shine of the man-made reservoir, but also the thickness of the Los Padres National Forest, inside which it was created [Figure 4]. I look at the lake, as it shines bright, fogged in a thick pink, yellow, and red nebula: the discoloration carries through. The colorscape in front of me is dazzling, with radiant flashes of white gleam that seem to move across the image, mimicking the spark reflected off of the water. These bright flashes denote a lump, an arching of the image surface that bends and twists to the liquids that ran through it: little bubbles of materiality, plastic and pliable, I press them through, inverting their curve, as a soft cracking sound pulls me back into the water.

I follow the paradigm. Being a photographic image, it supposedly shows me: this place should exist, it does exist, it must exist. The image was probably taken from Route 150, and so I am to say that what it shows me is a view that is, or at least was, visible from there. The photographic image points to that view, it is a sign of it – of the shine and the thickness. But it is also a trace, inasmuch as the lake and its surrounding woods left their image on it – existentially marking the photographic image, leaving themselves in it, and forcing it to refer back to them. As it points to the lake, another aspect shines through: this image is a form whose essence is determined by that connection, moulded by it. Bathed in that very water, the image bears its signs: disfiguration,

discoloration, distortion. This photographic image is a part of that lake, it takes on its form from its waters, its colours from its minerals, it exists as its vestige. It is a slice traced off the lake, a still rendering moulded off of it. On each of its registers, it is an index and a trace and a mould, a sign and a remainder and a dimensional form. So is the hybrid concept of Indexicality: a logic that follows physicality, and leads to a still state, that is also a necessity of being part, and an undeniability of being real. It is an abundance in reference, a profusion of ways of pointing, of being, of remaining, an excess that when teased, leaks out and overspills, revealing its convoluted state.

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TWO

INDICATIONS AGAINST THE INDEX

As I trace the theoretical surface of Indexicality, a sharp slip through the holes that permeate it becomes inescapable. Vast, stretched and pulled, the conceptual field of Indexicality has formed in uneven accumulations of lumps altered with flattened extensions of little consistency, with its inherent fissures easily manifest: little splits and cracks ingrained in it, creating larger cavities as the surface continues to expand and spill over, filling the land. As the field of Indexicality continues to grow, knots are formed: the pointing index, the mould, and the trace interlink, becoming inseparable. But each such node presents its own opportunity: to untangle Indexicality, to take it apart.

Becoming paradigmatic, photographic Indexicality rose to a status of undeniability: it became an axiom. Composed as it is from the pointer, the mould, and the trace, Indexicality was never demonstrated to be true, but that is no surprise: an axiom does not simply require no proof – it is fundamentally unprovable (if it were provable, then it would no longer be an axiom, but a theorem). However, despite being taken as self-evident, Indexicality, as I show, can be *disproved*: shown as untrue through casting doubt, calling into question, and eventually debunking what might currently appear as undeniable. Indexicality, I demonstrate, is a false axiom, an ostensibly self-evident truth that is, in fact, a misconception, a fallacy, a Procrustean bed to the size of which photographic images are either stretched or severed. To that end, I begin by analysing the place of the index itself – Indexicality's originary term – in photographic philosophical theory, evincing its complete inaptitude for the role it is often cast to play.

TAKING THE INDEX APART

It is well known that there exist already several – largely, unsuccessful – attempts at challenging the theoretical outcomes of Indexicality fever; while I address a number of the more directed amongst those as my argument unfolds, I begin my disproving account by drawing attention to an objection of originary nature, that is to do with the commencement of photographic philosophical theory. Overarching and historiographic, it focuses on the contexts of Indexicality – moving against the very *idea of it* rather than the ideas elaborated within or through it. In a comprehensive account examining the history of Indexicality as a conceptual field, Laure Blanc-Benon maintains that the notion of Indexicality entered the photographic discourse following an early and lasting misconception with regards to the photographic image. According to Blanc-Benon, it was the fact that photography was invented in black and white – a *choice* rather than a technological necessity – that brought about this theoretical bias.[1] In the Western philosophical tradition, colour has been associated with deceit since at least Plato's epistemological criticism of painting in the tenth book of *The Republic*; by contrast, with the advent of monochromatic photography, black and white image making, associates with a lack of colour, became the bearer of truth claims. And this status of the monochromatic photographic image as a visualisation of truth carries into popular culture: think of the black and white murder photograph, compared with the colourful images that come out of the fashions shoot in Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 *Blow-Up*. Blanc-Benon demonstrates that it is precisely this *constructed* contrast which is at the origin of the accounts that are at the basis of Indexicality, including Peirce, Bazin, and Krauss. The problem, according to her, is that this construction

[1] Laure Blanc-Benon, 'What if Colour Photography Had Been Invented First?,' paper presented at the *Thinking Colour* Conference, Trinity College, University of Oxford (24 June 2016).

relies upon photographic images being monochromatic: it does not encompass photography as a whole, and as such lends itself to an epistemological rejection.[2] The conceptual field of Indexicality, it follows, does not belong with the photographic image – it could only ever become part of the discourse following a conscious distortion around the nature of photography. The only reason the axiomatic paradigm appears self-evident, is that the evidence has been constructed so that it leads to it. Indexicality entered photography as part of a fever.

Coming out of a false construct, Indexicality became the paradigm of photographic analysis, consolidating as an undeniability. The question arises as to why: why this fervent compulsion towards Indexicality? What function does Indexicality fulfil in photographic philosophical theory? But in order to answer it, I must begin at the origin of Indexicality, with the index itself. Tackling a similar question focused specifically on the Peircean index, Elkins claims that photographic theory makes recurring appeals to a strikingly selective reading of Peirce's semiotic theory, truncating it to the extent that 'it becomes unclear in what sense they are citations of Peirce's semiotic at all', where in fact, 'the work indexicality has been made to do could often have been done without any reference to Peirce'.[3] While Elkins does not refer to the complications Peirce's term has experienced and its resulting warping, he does notice that the index is often instrumentalised towards conceptual and theoretical work for which it is either redundant or insufficient. Using Elkins's analysed examples, it may be concluded that, in the case of photography, the 'work' exploiters of Peirce's doctrine are set to do using

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[2] Laure Blanc-Benon, 'Colour Versus Black and White: An Inquiry into the History of Photography,' presented at the *Philosophy of Photography Workshop*, Institute for Philosophy, London (13–14 February 2015).

[3] James Elkins, 'Critical Response: What Do We Want Photography to Be? A Response to Michael Fried,' *Critical Inquiry* 31:4 (2005): 938, footnote n. 1; For a discussion of these qualifications, see: James Elkins, 'What Does Peirce's Sign System Have to Say to Art History?,' *Culture, Theory, and Critique* 44:1 (2003): 5–22.

his index surrounds a set of relations viewed as photographically defining, namely the relation between the photographic image and the photographed.[4]

This work, I would add – perhaps stating what by now may be obvious – is of ontological nature: to do with the nature and the modes of being of the photographic image. Peirce's index, I therefore suggest, is not simply 'unnecessary' to the understanding of photographic relations, but is utterly *unsuited*, for it is used towards purposes that exceed its doctrinal limitations, in ways that result in a complication of what is an ontological question with semiotic analysis. It does not work. Not only do invocations of Peirce in this context betray his theory, they also hinder any possibility of understanding the photographic image and its relation to the world. What I propose is a separation: an untangling of the index from the conceptual field of Indexicality – that is to say, of the semiotic term origin from the ontological observations that became its consequences.

This smoothening out of the theoretical surface is necessary because any attempt to address Indexicality without breaking it down to its semiotic and ontological components, inevitably results in a further knotting and cracking of it. Joel Snyder's argument, for instance, that if one were to angrily smash the wall with a hammer, 'there is no reason to conclude that the dent *must* bear a resemblance to the head of the hammer',[5] does precisely that. Presented in the form of an analogical argument, the inductive process that follows compellingly leads to the conclusion that if the photographed *does* mark the photographic image through an existential relation, then that mark must not assume the form of the photographed: that is to say, that the trace

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[4] Elkins, 'Peirce's Sign System,' 9–11.
[5] Joel Snyder, 'Picturing Vision,' *Critical Inquiry* 6:3 (1980): 507.

of the pointer is not necessarily a mould. While the term 'index' is never named, Snyder positions his argument in the context of the supposed 'natural connection' between photographic image and photographed that he is contending, arguing that while certain photographic images are maintained and perceived as 'realistic', the visual experience they enable and present fails to correspond to that of human vision, defying it.[6] In an earlier essay, co-authored with Neil Walsh Allen, the two claim that while a 'mechanical connection' between photographic image and photographed does exist, making the image 'a reliable index of something that *was*', it does not necessarily stipulate a visual connection, or a visual correspondence between the photographic image and what would have been visible to a human.[7] Snyder's interest is in the indexical sign, but his dealing with it is through the mark of the mould and the remains of the trace: a knot that ties the notions further in on themselves rather than finding a way out. In failing to untangle the conceptual knots prior to arguing against individual notions, objections such as this one interlace them even further, causing a subsequent consolidation and solidification within the surface of Indexicality rather than its weakening and separation.

The occurrence of conceptual knots, created through the thickening, flattening and intersection of the logical pointing of the sign with the ontological state of the mould and the trace, results not only in an external integration of the three into Indexicality, but also in the internal doubling of the Peircean index itself. The function of the indexical sign, for instance, is reconceptualised as *both* a pointer that gestures towards

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[6] Ibidem.
[7] Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, 'Photography, Vision, and Representation,' *Critical Inquiry* 2:1 (1975): 149.

the occurring, and a trace that denotes that very occurrence.[8] Inhabiting a state of being at once a denotation and a gesture, the photographic image comes to be 'bound into the an ever receding past' [*sic*], while also 'occupying the horizon of a continual present': a relation that suggests the tying of the index to Barthes and his temporal concerns around stillness.[9] Indeed, a knot where the pointing of the index meets the temporal stillness of the mould, and photographic philosophical theory is even further obfuscated, for despite its rhetoric of affirmative existence, Barthes's dictum around photographic presence remains as remote from the notion of an indexical relation between photographed and photographic image, as his interests remain distinct from the notion of the existential pointer.[10]

WHY CHALLENGING THE INDEX IS FUTILE

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In a photographic image of a mountain range, another landscape opens up to me – a fault-block plateau that dominates a ridge of sharp rising peaks [Figure 5]. Animals do not dwell there: not a single buck, not an eagle in sight. No pair of lungs fills with its air, no thirsty throat quaffs its waters, no teeth grind its greens, sucking on it for energy. It glows at dawn, and disappears right after dusk, but no eyes are left to witness. No ears to hear the silence that embalms it. This is the land that remains after all livings have perished. Arid, barren, thorny, deserted, encrusted by prints that are

[8] David Green and Joanna Lowry, 'From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality,' in *Where Is the Photograph?*, ed. David Green (Brighton: Photoforum; Maidstone: Photoworks, 2003), 56. For a short discussion of this proposed relation see: 56–57.
[9] Idem, 57.
[10] Kriebel, 'Theories of Photograph,' 22.

fossilised around the absence of the life that left them behind. This land was created to wither, so that no living body would ever feed from it, so that no living body could ever be in its presence.

The mountain range does not exist, but this photographic image is not Photoshopped, either; nothing about this mountain range exists, and yet, it is photographed. It is not drawn on a design software, but photographically formed by an algorithm in power of regenerating a landscape out of its map – a military tool of accurate precision. Run through this algorithm, this photographic image does not come out of a map; it comes out of another photographic image taken and used as a map. The mountains are mapped out in reverse, forcing a computer programme to interpret a photographic image of a landscape *as if it were* a map. In this process of photographic orogenesis, the formation of the topographic relief proceeds not through the folding and faulting of the earth's crust, but through the forcing and crumpling of the photographed photographic image. Through photography, the landscape forms – it forms out of a photographic form. You might want to say that digital photography is allowed where only painting was previously been given access: the invented landscape, the never seen landscape, the landscape outside reality, outside of this world.

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By separating the index form the field of Indexicality I mean looking at the Peircean notion for what it is, independently from the mould and the trace, and challenging it on the basis of its own logic of denotation. One such obvious challenge is a notable repetition: an objection to the Peircean semiotic logic of deictic pointing through a technological observation of an empirical nature. Following the arrival of the Dycam Model 1 – the first digital camera released for commercial use in 1990 – and the Kodak

DCS 100 – the first digital single-lens reflex camera (SLR), released in 1991 – non-analogue photography became a favourite amongst camera users. Just over a decade later, in the early 2000s, digital photography overtook analogue, and today the vast majority of photographic images produced in the world come from a digital device. With the advent of digital photography, the process of photographing changed significantly: instead of the direct imprint of light on a sensitive surface, an electronic photodetector processes and digitally records the image captured by the lens as information. Ostensibly, this change in the technological process of photography can also be stated in terms of a change in the relation between the photographed and the photographic image: the photographic image is not existentially connected to the photographed, and thus loses the concomitant indexical relation to the photographed it no longer points to.

Several scholars attempted claiming so much before. The 'inherent mutability' of the digitally achieved photographic image, for instance, is claimed to challenge the very possibility of a Peircean semiotic analysis, as it brings photography into the realm of the 'dubitative' – previously reserved to the painted image alone.[11] Following this line of argumentation, the change to a digital process of recording and storing photographic images, together with the possibility of digitally manipulating them through readily available software such as Adobe Photoshop, means that the rupture between the photographic image and the photographed is complete, and that 'the photograph is no longer an index of reality'.[12] Indeed, for many, technological progress abrades the index, eating away at its form, until it pulverises itself into a cloud of dust

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[11] Peter Lunenfeld, 'Art Post-History: Digital Photography and Electronic Semiotics,' in *Photography After Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age*, ed. Hubertus von Amelunxen et al. (London: G&B Arts, 1996), 94–95.
[12] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 88–89.

that sets on the theoretical surface, gradually cleaned away. As Mary Ann Doane puts it, 'The index makes [its] claim by virtue of its privileging of contact, of touch, of a physical connection. The digital can make no such claim and, in fact, is defined as its negation'.[13]

But the index is resistant. In Peirce's semiotic schema, indexicality is a logic of denotation, a function of the sign in relation to that towards which it is pointing. And although Batchen would like to limit the referability of digital images, claiming that these 'may still be indices of a sort', but they are 'not so much signs of reality as they are signs of signs',[14] such limitation contradicts the nature of indexicality. Seeing that the index is *a logic of reference* rather than an object or a medium, 'it makes no sense to say…that a traditional photograph is more (or less) indexical than a digital image since one cannot quantify the number of ways in which a given thing can serve as a sign'.[15] The function of the index is indefinite, immeasurable and unrestrained: the elimination of contiguity does not limit the index. Digital images, for instance, may be proclaimed signs pointing towards their creative algorithm through a 'law of computational execution', which stipulates that a computer will necessarily execute the algorithm's commands – it is *forced* to do so by a certain law: an expansion of Peirce's 'physically forced to correspond' into the realm of computation, which concludes that a digital image could be a deictic reference of a computer programme.[16] There is even a claim that photorealistic images, synthetically rendered through statistical simulations, signify

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[13] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity,' in 'Indexicality: Trace and Sign,' special issue, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18:1 (2007): 142.
[14] Geoffrey Batchen, 'Ectoplasm: Photography in the Digital Age,' in *Over Exposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers (New York: New Press, 1999), 19.
[15] Marc Furstenau and Martin Lefebvre, 'Digital Editing and Montage: The Vanishing Celluloid and Beyond,' *Cinémas: Revue d'études cinématographiques* 13:1–2 (2002): 98.
[16] Braxton Soderman, 'The Index and the Algorithm,' in 'Indexicality: Trace and Sign,' special issue, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18:1 (2007): 153–86, the discussion on the 'law of computational execution' can be found on 161–63.

through the logic of the index.[17] Moreover, as Lev Manovich argues, the very notion of digital photography is paradoxical, and in fact 'does not exist' as a difference – be it conceptual or physical – in relation to the analogue photographic image.[18] My point is this: an objection to the index that is rooted in an empirical anecdote around a technological change is chronologically circumscribed at best, dubious at worst, and counterproductive either way. Differentiating digital photography from the analogue chemical-based procedure results in a potential negation of the indexical condition of the former, accompanied by an inevitable affirmation of it in relation to the latter: if it is *because* it is now digital rather than analogue that the photographic image is *no longer* indexical, then when it was analogue, it was *exactly* that. In order to argue against the pointing index, it is not enough to show that the principle does not hold for the special case – it must be shown that the principle fails for all photographic images, regardless of the technology through which they were formed.

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A third landscape follows in a constellation of lights that shines above a full glowing moon over a desert dune [Figure 6]. Looking at it, I smell the arid desert air, as a warm gush of wind moves through my hair. I have been there before, a long time ago, and I remember that night. My memory is not in or through this photographic image, but looking at this image, it appears before me, different to all the other times I saw it before my eyes: a layered image of change over change. I do not know how I can ever unsee those luminous bodies, whose shine passed above me, and continuous to pass; how I can ever look at them and not be forced to remember. In my own nostalgia for

[17] Sam Burford, 'Searching for Traces of the Indexical Within Synthetically Rendered Imagery,' in 'Shadow Without Object,' special issue, *Philosophy of Photography* 7:1–2 (2017): 115–37.
[18] Lev Manovich, 'The Paradoxes of Digital Photography,' in von Amelunxen et al., *Photography After Photography*, 59.

the light, I see bodies of my past, as they shine at me through these stars. Then, my knowing of this image overtakes, pushing back whatever memory I attempt to dress it with. *This* photographic image was taken at no place, at no time, with no camera, and no sight. It is nothing but emulsion: an expired sheet of Defender Argo paper directly poured over with liquid developer. The speckles of light are latent blushes of mould formed on the surface, and the skies are residue of humidity that runs through the century old sheet. But even though I know this landscape is nowhere, it remains so familiar, so recognisable. Indeed, like the digital mountain range, the non-digital photographic image can reach to and bring back the never seen landscape outside reality: it forms it through its (analogue) photographic form. But this is not enough; it points to no place, and yet I cannot escape from admitting that it is 'physically forced to correspond': to the dust that accreted on it over generations, to the holes in the package that let light and humidity through, to the chemical liquids in which it was bathed. It is no less or more indexical than a photographic image of a landscape I have walked, no more or less indexical than a photographic image of a landscape that is formed out of a non-existing map. No more, no less, because the logic of indexical pointing is immeasurable.

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The problem with a strategy calling to oust the Peircean index from its paradigmatic position for its incorrectness, is that it is, in fact, not incorrect. By Peirce's own definition, the photographic image points indexically to the photographed. What it *is*, however, is meaningless: an inconsequential observation, an empty term that says nothing of either the photographic image, or photography itself. As Doane puts it, coming out of a comparative analysis where the Peircean index is examined against its contemporary notion of the afterimage – a residue that remains on the retina following

a prolonged gaze on a luminous object – the index is a 'hollowed out sign', whose referentiality, rather than being a photographic specificity, is 'available to a range of media'.[19] In fact, as Richard Shiff demonstrates further, if one was to suggest that photographic images are indexical signs in the sense of pointing towards a thing in the world, then one is compelled to accept that paintings too, for instance, may be located within a range of images that are indexical, as they may be considered an index of 'objects of vision'.[20] Both Doane and Shiff put forward substantial arguments against the position Peirce's index occupies within photographic philosophical theory in the analysis of any photographic image, not only the digital or post-analogue one. In either case, the idiosyncrasy of photography as a medium – if one chooses, together with promulgaters of the index, to adhere to such a distinction – is lost.

To be sure, analogue photographic images bear marks of photonic activity: they are 'mechanical deposits of light', as Rudolf Arnheim dubbed them.[21] And while many continue to be of the opinion that these analogue marks are indexical deictic pointers to something that is existentially connected to the mark, and other continue attempting to disprove it,[22] just like the attempts at disproving digital indexicality, this debate is barren. Even if the photograph image – analogue, digital, or other – is an indexical sign, it is by no means enough to claim for a meaningful relation between it and the photographed, between it and the world. Indeed, the analogue marks may be of light refracting off the photographed and hitting the sensitive surface, and the digital ones of a programme, but this is not to suggest that the photonic course or the sensed

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[19] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 230–31.
[20] Richard Shiff, 'Phototropism (Figuring the Proper),' *Studies in the History of Art* 20 (1989): 170.
[21] Rudolf Arnheim, 'On the Nature of Photography,' *Critical Inquiry* 1:1 (1974): 158.
[22] The suggestion around analogue photonic marks being indexical has been challenged through an observation around the mechanics of analogue photography, and see: Snyder and Allen, 'Photography, Vision, and Representation.'

information brings about a meaningful relation of truth or existence between the look of the photographic image and the photographed thing in the world – it is only to suggest that a chemical or computational process took place.

Despite arising as the index became Indexicality, notions of realness and existence are entirely foreign to the logic of the index: vain attempts to cast ontological meaning into the semiotic. They are foreign, in fact, to photography in general. Barthes's usage of photographic images in his canonical writing on photography, for instance, is itself enough to suggest that. Take the famous Winter Garden photographic image, which he refers to and describes, and around which he circles his entire argument, for instance. Although there are those who imagine spotting it in a 1979 portrait of him at his Paris desk,[23] it is very likely that it never even existed,[24] and, in fact, 'may exist only in the collective imagination of Barthes's readers'.[25] Indeed, the very drive to locate this image, proving or disproving its existence is of Indexical nature: a quest dictated by Indexical fever. But realising that the most famous book on photography *could* have been written around an invented image makes one truly aware of how little the factual existence of that photographic image – *of any photographic image* – actually counts for when discussing, referring to or even remembering it. It makes one aware of how little the (non-)existence of the photographic image affects or reflects that of the photographed as a photographed, casting into question the very necessity of a concept like Indexicality in understanding the relations between the photographic image and the world. The reason behind these notions goes much further than Indexicality or the index itself. Indexicality was adopted into photographic studies to facilitate

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[23] Kathrin Yacavone, *Benjamin, Barthes, and the Singularity of Photography* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 164–66.
[24] Margaret Olin, 'Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's "Mistaken" Identification,' *Representations* 80 (2002): 112.
[25] James Elkins, *What Photography Is* (London: Routledge, 2011), 91.

philosophical work concerned with the relation between the photographic image and the photographed: work that resulted from a particular problem that formed the field. The reason behind this compulsive appeal to and of Indexicality as an axiomatic paradigm – the reason for its fever – I would like to suggest, is that photographic philosophical theory has been asking the wrong question all along.

THREE

THE QUESTION REGARDING PHOTOGRAPHY

The single most futile question in the photographic discourse is 'what is a photograph?'. More than simply inutile, this ostensibly key ontological inquiry is misleading, for the question around what is a photograph, together with any attempt to define the photographic image is a road that although taken by many, leads to nowhere. Continuing to ask what is a photograph, when it is apparent that no intrinsic definition drawing on universal qualities is attainable, is an empty claim to ontology, an attempt to draw lines around that which morphs and transmutes. The photographic image reforms and remodels as photographic technology changes with and over time; it is a manifold being: multiple, varied, pliable, and adaptable.[1] Not only is the silver-plated copper sheet of Louis Daguerre inherently different to a digital file generated by the Dycam Model 1, but it is also essentially unlike its contemporary silver iodide coated paper and the negative-to-positive print of Henry Fox Talbot.[2] Photographic image are taken in analogue and digital, in positive and negative, without a camera,[3] and even without a photographed thing. They appear on and disappear from all imaginable

[1] In the words of Richard Bolton, the constant change photography undergoes 'raises the possibility that photography has no governing characteristics at all save adaptability', and see: Richard Bolton, *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (London: MIT Press, 1989), xi. For a claim around a recent ontological change photography has undergone see: Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen, *Photography After Conceptual Art* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). On the subject of the *expected* thematic, technological and ideological adaptability of photography see: Daniel Rubinstein, 'What is 21st Century Photography?' [2015], in 'Shadow Without Object,' special issue, *Philosophy of Photography* 7:1–2 (2017): 155–60.

[2] On the general irreducibility of the different technologies and materialities of what one calls a photograph into a single coherent definition see: Kriebel, 'Theories of Photograph,' 3–5.

[3] For a history of this practice, defined by Geoffrey Batchen as 'part art, part science, and…part magic', see: Geoffrey Batchen, *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph* (London: DelMonico; New Plymouth, New Zealand: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 2016), quote on 5. For a claim that this practice amongst contemporary artists is a re-invention of photography see: Heckert Virginia, *Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015).

(and unimaginable) surfaces. The photographic image is a plurality, a history, a multitude of histories of methods, and functions, and perception.

There is no reason to reiterate the question of what is a photograph, unless the question itself is not what it appears; unless the question itself has changed: unless asking it is not re-posing it again, but posing *a different* question, expressed through the same words. Discussing 'the photograph', I do not attempt to define it through delimitation – no necessary or sufficient conditions are drawn, which is not to say that nature, scope, and meaning – a statement of which is the standard dictionary definition of 'definition' – are left unaddressed. The reason I do not discuss the intrinsic and universal qualities of the photograph taken as an object, is that, as I claim, there is no such *thing* as a photograph: there are *only* relations that form a bond between the photographed thing in the world and its photographic image. Asking what is a photograph, therefore, is asking what relations are generated by the photographic process. It is moving away from the index and Indexicality, but not leaving behind the question of the relations between the photographic image and the world, to which it is meant to provide an answer. It is arriving at an ontology of photography, but through phenomenology – through *poiesis*. *What is produced or brought into being through photography*? This is the right problem. The answer, I claim, is a thought: the photographic image forms thought.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS *POIESIS*

Putting the question of 'what is a photograph?' in terms of *what does photography bring into being*? is a *poietical* pursuit. *Poiesis*, as Agamben recalls, comes from the Ancient Greek

'*poiein* "to pro-duce" in the sense of bringing into being', and central to it is 'the experience of pro-duction into presence, the fact that something passed from nonbeing to being'.[4] In being *poietic*, this question is a pursuit after art, but by this, I do not mean a pursuit grounded in aesthetics. In fact, *poiesis* and art are only one insofar as art is conceived outside the aesthetic dimension of the work of art – an inclusion in which would imply that 'art itself has already left the sphere of pro-duction…to enter that of praxis',[5] or 'willed action'.[6] *Poiesis* is art inasmuch as art is understood as a bringing into being, outside of 'longing', 'desire', and 'volition' that may be attributed to human 'practical thought' or action.[7] *Poiesis* is art as a *pro*duction into being – a becoming.

Photography is art. By that I do not mean that some or all photographic images could, or should or ought to be considered works of art,[8] nor do I mean to contribute to the debate as to whether photography may be a legitimate or rightful participant in the aesthetic category. Rather, it is *poietic* inasmuch as it *pro*duces into being, inasmuch as the photographic image brings into presence, inasmuch as the photographic process is that of becoming. All photography is art: it is always a bringing into being, always a birth to presence, always a becoming, always *poietic*.

Photography is always *poietic*, but that is not as opposed to, or in replacement of being a *technê*: photography as *poiesis* is not a substitution of *technê*, but a restitution of its deeper sense, towards a constitution of a new understanding of photography. Jean-Luc Nancy observes that following the internal division within the order of creations indicated by

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[4] Giorgio Agamben, 'Poiesis and Praxis,' in *The Man Without Content* [1994], trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 68–69.
[5] Idem, 73.
[6] Idem, 75.
[7] Ibidem.
[8] For this debate see: Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); and, Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014).

Plato in *The Symposium*, *technê* became the name of the mode of production, separated from *poiesis*, the name of the product.[9] However, the divorce of *poiesis* from *technê* is a difficult one: while the internal division between them, 'delivered up like a raw fact of language', may be inherent to art, it is also, and at the same time, an unstable one, for the two poles tend towards unity.[10] *Poiesis* and *technê* do not negate each other, nor do they necessitate the rejection of one for the sake of the other. Split apart, they do not form a binary, or a dual system: rather, they are two limits in constant duel, nearing and faring, drawn to each other, while drawing each other apart. This is what Heidegger observes when claiming that *poiesis* is a bringing-forth,[11] and '*Technê* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*'. To be sure, for Heidegger, it is 'as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *technê* is a bringing-forth'.[12] But this is because *technê* refers not only to technology, but also – and, for Heidegger, above all – to art itself.[13] It is *technê* that allows the thing to show itself, in a bringing into being that is *poietic* becoming. And while it is unlikely that Heidegger would have agreed to include photography in this category of art,[14] it is precisely in this way that I suggest one must turn to look at it: *photography as poiesis as art as technê*. Indeed, adhering to a distinction between *poiesis* as art and *technê* as technology, would make a study of ideas without materiality, of forms without formation, and of notions separated from that which brought them about, enabling their very appearance. Speaking of *technê is* speaking of *poiesis*, and speaking of *poiesis* cannot escape coming out of *technê*.

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[9] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One? (Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds),' in *The Muses* [1994], trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 6.
[10] Idem, 6–7.
[11] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology' [1954], in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 10.
[12] Idem, 13.
[13] Idem, 34.
[14] Costello, 'Question Concerning Photography.'

Photography's *poietic pro*duction is *momentary*, understood not as lasting only an instant, but as originating from the Latin *momentum*, meaning movement, change and alteration. The moment of *pro*duction and coming into being is a radical transformation. It is a movement of disturbance, a forceful act on the photographed – a dimensional mutation that is imposed and enforced by the photographic black box. But if Flusser's black box makes an appearance, it is not as an apparatus that 'simulate thinking in the sense of a combinatory game using number-like symbols'.[15] If it returns again, then it is it is not as sameness to what it was, but as a restitution of what it never was before, and a change to what it may come to be, that is a restoration of what could have been, and a rendering of what it may still be – in short, it returns as an Agambian repetition, as that which is 'possible anew':[16] *poiesis* out of *technê*. The black box returns not as a magical trick of false appearances, but as a powerful tool of creation and revelation. It returns as a tool capable of forcing *pro*duction onto the photographed – capable of bringing-forth its becoming.

In addition to being a *poietic pro*duction, photography is also an activity. It is a thing (every)one does, if not professionally, then recreationally, if not publicly, then privately, if not often, then on special occasions. At its finest, it is a mode, one that has its own gestures: that of the jungle hunter,[17] if one were to extend a further appearance to Flusser, or that of a gun carried in the wild.[18] At the same time, it is a dance, a performance of the body on an imagined stage, a coordinated movement

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15 Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* [1983], trans. Anthony Mathews (London: Reaktion, 2000), 32.
16 Agamben, 'Difference and Repetition,' 316.
17 Flusser, *Philosophy of Photography*, 33–40.
18 In a reading alongside J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*, Rod Giblett replaces the word 'gun' with the word 'camera', demonstrating that the camera may be conceived as a form of a weapon, that is carried, aimed and shot, and see: Rod Giblett, 'The Camera,' in *Photography and Landscape*, ed. Rod Giblett and Juha Tolonen (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 43–47.

choreographed by technological change, a progression through space that has its own rhythm, and its own sequence of steps. It is a race, a pursuit delimited by time, an open rivalry with a faceless group of others, an advancement towards an ever-faring finish line, a traversing through a territory known only through one's body. But while the activity – the photographer's movement, their dance, their race, their act, the button they press, or pinhole device they build – allows for the photographic becoming, *the photographic image does not originate from the activity*: coming before it, the activity is not essential to the *pro*duction. Becoming is triggered by the activity, but remains independent from it. Photography does not follow an anthropic principle: it is a human activity, *technê* as manufacturing, but it is, at the same time, a philosophical process: *technê* as revealing, as a bringing-forth, a part of a *poietic* coming into being, that is a formation of a thought.

FORMING THOUGHT

The first answer I advance to the question of what does photography bring into being is *thought*. Photography, it has been claimed, has a philosophical dimension, a philosophical argument, even.[19] But I am trying to say more than that – I am trying to say that photography *pro*duces thought. To be sure, the roots of my answer are found in the most traditional writing on photography. It is Barthes who suggests that the photographic image is most provocative, both in the sense of being controversial and

[19] Alexander Sekatskiy, 'The Photographic Argument of Philosophy,' *Philosophy of Photography* 1:1 (2010): 81–88.

disruptive, and in the sense of provoking an affective response, when it is pensive.[20] Yet the pensive photographic image, as Jacques Rancière clarifies in his analysis of Barthes in the 2011 essay 'The Pensive Image', 'contains unthought thought' that is independent of both creator and spectator, but it is not itself *formulating* them – it does not *think*, just like, 'someone who is pensive is "full of thoughts", but this does not mean that she is thinking them'.[21] Within the trajectory of canonical photographic accounts, the photographic image is pensive, where being pensive is being in a passive state of containment. The pensive image is precisely not thinking, but the photographic image, I suggest, *does* think: it brings thought into being, it *forms thought*. The pensive photographic image of Barthes and Rancière carries thought in it: a thought that resists both the intention of the creator and the interpretation of the looker, but that is not being formulated – not being *formed* – by the photograph itself. Indeed, as *poietic pro*duction, photography is free from willed thought and action – it remains independent from the objective of the photographer, and the subjective look of the looker. But the thoughts identified by Barthes and Rancière as being present in the pensive image, I suggest, are inseparable from the photographic form they inhabit: they are not only in the photograph, they are *of* it, *through* it and *from* it – they are formed by its form.

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[20] Translating *La chambre claire* into English, Richard Howard added to Barthes's original formulation 'la Photographie est subversive…lorsqu'elle est pensive', the explication that 'Photography is subversive…when it is pensive, when it thinks'. However, for Barthes photographs were (merely?) pensive, never thinking images. See: Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma; Gallimard Seuil, 1980), 65; and Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 38. For a further exploration of the term 'pensive' in Barthes see: Naomi Schor, 'Pensive Texts and Thinking Statues: Balzac with Rodin,' *Critical Inquiry* 27:2 (2001): 239–42; For a differentiation between pensiveness and active thinking, especially in Barthes see: Hanneke Grootenboer, 'The Pensive Image: On Thought in Jan van Huysum's Still Life Paintings,' *Oxford Art Journal* 34:1 (2011): 17.

[21] Jacques Rancière, 'The Pensive Image' [2008], in *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011), 107.

Along an unnamed road, the speckles of light in the sky turn into bullet holes punctuating a dessert habitation; I stop to look. Between the corners of two habitations that must be roofed, a third site of dwelling is commanding the prospect [Figure 7]. Look closely, into the distance. There, where the cloudless sky becomes the desert rocks, a structure made of many windows stands in isolation. At first, I can barely see it, barely discern it from the dirt and gravel that make its standing place. The look of the figured shapes in perpetual neither-black-nor-white is enveloped in the dense veil of the absorbent Korean mulberry paper and the photosensitive liquid it is manually brushed with. Then, for a moment, it is all I see. The two corners appear to have been waiting for me, waiting to open before me, to open for me, forcing me to look beyond them, to look into the distance. The shadows they project crawl towards each other on an uneven ground. The sun must be right above these homes, searing the already blemished structures.

This land neighbours the mountains I trod many times. I know this region. I know about its wars. I see them in every rock. And I know about representation of conflict. It is there, in every stone. I have been taught that shadows dance under the scalding sun, I have felt their comforting sway on my skin, and I have learned to see their vibration, even when it appears to have stopped. It calls to me, piercing through me, calling me to think; but my thoughts wonder. The house on the hill already slipped into the background. The dance of shadows makes room for the white stains on the walls. It resists me, this photographic image. It escapes me. As I wrap my sight around it, it presents me with something else, something new: a new thought, its own thought. A thought that it forces my look upon. A thought that is presented to my look – that is present to my look, pulling it in and through the image. This image is full of thoughts.

They are not mine – they are given to me, formed before me, formed by the photographic form.

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To think is to form thought – that is to say, *to give place and presence to thought through form*. Forming thought – bringing-forth thought through its form, and giving form to thought – is how the pensive image *thinks*. It is how the photographic image thinks. The thought of the photographic image is brought-forth in and through the photographic form: thought is in the photographic image, because *thought forms in the photograph*, because the *photograph forms thought through its form*. Photography's thought formation is a *poietic* bringing of thought into presence. The thought of the photographic image forms through photography, it forms photographically.

The claim for the image's ability to form thought is radical only insofar as it is rooted – it has its radicles – in a long rich philosophical tradition. Already in the early modern period, art – and, namely, painting – was viewed as a mode of philosophy, on a par with the written word with regards to its generating potential. By the seventeenth century, still life painting was praised for its capacity to activate and engender philosophical thought – a position it arguably maintains to this day.[22] In the twentieth century, Marcel Proust suggested that 'museums are houses that shelter only thoughts', asserting that paintings *are* themselves thoughts, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote an essay on Cézanne, where he advances the claim that to paint *is* to think.[23] The discourse

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[22] Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-Life Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), esp. 5–8.

[23] I discuss this (mostly painterly) trajectory in further detail in Anita Paz, 'Towards Thinking in Photography,' *Philosophy of Photography* 6:1–2 (2015): 99–101. For more on thinking images see: Hanneke Grootenboer, ed., 'Thinking Pictures,' special issue, *Image & Narrative* 18 (2007), accessed 9 September, 2016, at http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/thinking_pictures.htm; and, the

reached its possible zenith with Damisch, who in his 1987 *The Origin of Perspective* suggests that paintings *think* through the formal apparatus of perspective.[24] Although he does not put it in the same terms, Damisch's painted perspective, taken as 'a model for thought',[25] is an expressive apparatus for the painting to form thought through. The thinking of painting is a forming of thought through its perspectival form.

To be sure, the Western philosophical tradition around thinking images is centred specifically around painting, but while the centrality it enjoyed in Western arts makes painting an inevitable focal point, the said tradition is by no means limited to it. Sculpture, for instance, holds its notable weight as well. Specifically, it is Rodin's *The Thinker* that is probably the statue most often associated and attributed with thought. Unlike in the case of painting, however, *The Thinker* is said to think not *through* its form, but as *a result of it*: it is not the case of forming thought, as much as it is a visualisation of thought being formed. And yet, the question around what the thinker is thinking about – that is to say, what thoughts are being formed by this statue – continues to arise. As Nancy Schor points out, the very posing of this question is inexorable, nor is the humorous tone in which it might be answered.[26] But rather than trying to guess what the thinker might be thinking about, she suggests shifting the question to whether statues can think at all. Through reference to Norbert Elias's parable of the thinking statues, in which he says that 'they have eyes and can see. Perhaps ears as well, that can hear. And they can think',[27] which is used by him to illustrate the shortcomings of the

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panel on *Thinking Images*, chaired by Hanneke Grootenboer, Anita Paz, and Lucy Whelan at the *Association of Art Historians (AAH) Annual Conference*, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA, Norwich, 10–11 April, 2015, the proceeding of which are forthcoming in a book form.

[24] Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective* [1987], trans. John Goodman (London: MIT Press, 1995), esp. 446–47; Damisch's claim is examined and unfolded in Grootenboer, *Rhetoric of Perspective*, 120–23.

[25] Damisch, *Origin of Perspective*, xiii.

[26] Schor, 'Pensive Texts,' 257–62.

[27] Norbert Elias, 'The Thinking Statues' [1940s–50s], in *The Society of Individuals*, ed. Michael Schröter, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 113, and see 91–119.

Cartesian epistemological model of isolated individual thinkers, Schor concludes that '*The Thinker* is Cartesian man, *res cogitans*'.[28] Setting itself against the Cartesian thinking statutes, however, Rodin's thinker undoes the rigid confines between interiority and exteriority, wearing its internal turmoil on its skin. The statue thinks, and in thinking it recites the Heideggerian question around what is called thinking: the thinker thinks by forming its thoughts to itself, in front of itself, for itself, blindly.[29]

While painting may form thought through its formal perspectival thinking apparatus, and sculpture may form thought through its formal presence, photography, I suggest, may form thought through the photographic form it *poietically* brings into being. But if thought forms through the photographic form, then understanding this bringing of thought into being must pass through understanding the photograph itself.

[28] Schor, 'Pensive Texts,' 258.
[29] Idem, 261–62.

FOUR

WHAT MAKES A PHOTOGRAPH

To answer the question of what in the photographic form brings thought into being, or *where* in the photographic image is thought formed, I suggest separating the image into its phenomenological parts. Still today, the most comprehensive phenomenological analysis of the image in general is Husserl's three-partition of it into image carrier, image subject, and image object.[1] And even though in his phenomenological approach, Heidegger decidedly sets himself apart from what he sees as Husserl's neo-Cartesian idealism, accusing it of regression into a 'traditional idea of philosophy',[2] Husserl's distinction may be valuable if only as a tool which marks a territory that may later be redrawn.

Used as a rough guide into the photographic image in particular, I map Husserl's three categories onto the photographic image, offering a new way to look at what is a photograph. But simply undoing the photographic image is not enough, for the photographic image, as I show, is not the photograph itself, but its iteration. Having taken the image apart, I propose a new way of bringing it back together, concluding with an examination of the photographic relations between those parts. It is the relations, I claim, that *are* the photograph.

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[1] Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory (1898–1925)*, trans. John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 17–35.
[2] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* [1979], trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 107. For a detailed comparison of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies, including an analysis of their academic rivalry see: Steven Crowell, *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

MATERIAL FORM, LOOKING FORM, FIGURED SHAPE

The first of the three Husserlian partitions is the image carrier: the material form, or the body of the image, that is its physical manifestation in the world. The image carrier is the thing itself, the object *as* object. It has a texture, a weight, a density, an opacity – material qualities that lend it to touch, making it haptic and palpable. It may be broken to fragments, torn to pieces, fractured to shards, reduced to debris, and powdered into thin dust. It can get lost, and may be placed. It *must* be placed, for – whether known or forgotten – the image carrier always has *a* place in the world. It is present in space and in time, and it is inevitably present in *one's* space and time, though not necessarily in the same aspect as it were present outside of one's space and before their time: participating in all dimensions, it is subject to change. It is not amorphous in the sense that it is without form – form is, indeed, its *only* character – but Morpheus, the creator of forms, only lends it its form momentarily. It is permutable, thoroughly changeable, and mercurial, suddenly changeable.

The image carrier is translucent. It allows light to come through it. Seen against the light, the image carrier becomes a veil, a sheet that hides and discloses at the same time. It is there and not there, at once. But this is not to say that it is transparent, or that it allows to see anything through it,[3] framing it like a window – an aperture to another place. The image carrier is all there – it is all there is, all one sees, and how one sees it. In its materiality, it is inherently and historically a piece of the signifying register of the

[3] The term 'transparency' was first used in the analytical philosophy discourse of photography in Kendall Walton, 'Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,' *Critical Inquiry* 11:2 (1984): 246–77; and subsequently reiterated and discussed on different occasions, including, most notably: Nigel Warburton, 'Seeing Through "Seeing Through Photographs",' *Ratio* 1:1 (1988): 64–74; and, Dominic McIver Lopes, 'The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency,' *Mind* 112:447 (2003): 433–48.

image;[4] a register without which the task of meaning making – of making *sense* – becomes futile.[5] It is how one feels the photographic image against their fingertips, how they become immersed in its smell, and how they hear the sounds it makes when brushed against another surface. It is the means through which the image is collected, stored, displayed, danced with, sang to, prayed for, hidden, and destroyed. It is what comes through the senses, presenting the first facet – the first *face* – of the image. As the face of the image, it is *on it* and *through it*, that the image looks out.

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In a double page spread, ten swans are looking away [Figure 8]. Another portrait with no face, but many looks. Another look that is a withdraw. Ten swans: the swan returns, again and again. Print, and then another print. (This is what photography *used to* be thought to bring into being.) Another swan; or is it the same one – the first one, coming back? It may be that there is no first one – maybe they are all seconds. And maybe it is but a single one, repeating again and again, changing hue, scale and tone. On this photographic image, the look of the swan returns. Here, it is a soft black and white side-facing portrait, sombre and solemn; there, it is a cyan monochrome, looking to the other side, shimmering under a ray of warmth; and then, it is in greyscale again, darker this time, so low on contrast, that the body of the swan just flashes briefly from the deep black that surrounds it; but then, light again, in colour, saturated, so that the satin white feathers appear to burn in golden tint against a dark purple dusk. I look at

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[4] Webb Keane, 'Signs Are Not the Grab of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things,' in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 182–205.

[5] As Elizabeth Edwards shows, photographic images are 'profoundly social objects of agency that cannot be understood outside the social conditions of the material existence of their social function – the work that they do', and see: Elizabeth Edwards, 'Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image,' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 230, accessed 9 September, 2017, at DOI: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-092611-145708.

these images of a swan, at *a* photographed swan, at a photographic image of a swan, at *this* photographic image of *this* sawn. Through my screen, the swan keeps returning, its head directed away, its nape towards me. It does not allow my look to pierce through it – the look it offers me is far too dark to penetrate. And although it never looks at me, it offers me its look. The photographic image offers me its many looks. It looks out towards me.

* * *

It is Heidegger who speaks of the photographic object as a revealing of looks. For him, the photographic image is a derivative, *ein Abbild*, a likeness that takes on the look of that which it shows.[6] The likeness is not a copy, but a 'look which was itself gathered immediately from the presencing (present) object'.[7] It is an abduction of the form of the object, reaped as a figure as the object shares its presence, giving itself away. For Heidegger, the photographic image takes on the formal appearance of its photographed, presenting it as its look. To its looker, it shows its own immediate look – that is to say, itself as *the* photographic image – but also the look of the photographed, that it gathered from it. At the same time, it gives the look of *a* photographic image – of any-photographic-image-whatever, but also the look of the photographed as a thing in general. The photographic image is a densification of looks.

As Nancy observes, Heidegger's assertion indicates that 'the primary sense of the image, the giving-itself-to-be-seen and the offering-its-look, the *Aussehen*, the looking-like-while-showing-itself of every thing understood at the same time "as if it were

[6] Heidegger, *Kant*, 65–66.
[7] Idem, 123.

looking at us"…forms the originary and proper value of the image'.[8] At the origin, or the ground of the image, Nancy claims, there is a look: a showing of itself of the image as a look, as a gaze that is directed outwards – looking out;[9] this look is 'the look of the other, that is, the look onto the other, and the other as look'.[10] The image's looking is a form of othering – itself from itself, and itself from all else: a looking like that is at once a taking of form, and an offering of its own form to another look. This look, as Nancy shows elsewhere, is a gaze of sight [*regard*] that also looks out for [*garder*][11] – a look that demands vulnerability, that comes out of fragility and mutability. Being the ground upon which the image forms, this look – and this is what I would like to add – is what the photographic image carrier makes visible: the look of the image is grounded in the image, it is *the* ground of the image, but it shows itself *on* its material surface, looking out *through* it, forming on it. Not merely a material which assumes a form as its figured look, the image carrier *is the surface upon and through which photographic thought forms.*

The second distinction Husserl makes is the image subject: it is the form, the look of which the image carrier assumes as its figure. This looking form is the object that is present through and on the carrier face – a thing that may be existent or fabulated, witnessed or imagined, believed in or questioned, remembered or repressed, desired or dreaded, embraced or renounced, required or supressed, sworn or presented as 'fiction known to be fiction'.[12] Photographed, the form may be spotted quietly from afar, observed by a passing stranger, caught as the happening is becoming an event, situated in a constructed composition, arranged to appease a certain eye, invented for aesthetic

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[8] Nancy, 'Masked Imagination' [2002], in *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 86.
[9] Idem, 87.
[10] Idem, 97.
[11] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Look of the Portrait' [2000], in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II,* ed. and trans. Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 243.
[12] Husserl, *Phantasy*, 19.

pleasure, or stolen by an uninvited intruder. It may be decisively sought after, or accidently snapped out of serendipity or confusion. And it may be altered, whether on the image carrier, or directly on its the very flesh, transforming it into something it never was, something different than itself, although from that moment on this will also be a part of itself.

The photographed is what makes the photographic image subject, it is that from which photographic becoming initiates, that which photography affects, and the form whose look it figures on the image carrier. At the same time, the photographed form may be situated in a setting, a trajectory, and a circumstance foreign to the photographic image: the photographed makes the image subject, but they are not one. The image subject is the photographed thing as it is being photographed, but while the image subject is an internal part of the photographic image, the photographed is external to it, for the two are outside of each other. It is within the limits and through the boundaries of its framed existence as an image subject that the photographed nears the photographic image: photographed, the thing gives place to an image subject, it changes to allow the formation of the image subject of a photographic image.

Both the photographed and the photographic image subject may be different to their former selves immediately following, or even during the photographic becoming in which a photographic image is *pro*duced: it is this continuous change, as I demonstrate, that characterises the photographic image. But what the photographed or the photographic image subject factually were, are, will be, might be, or can never be has no bearing on the photographic image: the photographic image – and I will state this again – is not concerned with empirically observable data. The question is not what the photographic image is of, what it shows, and whether its image subject is what it appears to be; in any case, as I demonstrate, these are not questions that *can* be

answered by photography. The question is, in showing an image subject, what does photography bring into being. What photography brings-forth is a thought: it forms a thought, bringing the unthought into presence. In this photographic becoming, the photographed form is just a source, something to drain, to be fed from, to force becoming upon, and form a thought out of.

Husserl's third component in his three-partition of the image is the image object – a figuration of the form of the image subject. The image object comes from the image subject and is found on the image carrier. Carrying the look of the image subject as a figured shape, the image object is nothing but lines and colours. It is an extension that dilates across a supporting surface, an expansion of marks and strokes, the border to which is the limit of the chosen surface. Its edges are a place of rupture, minute scars that reveal and conceal the seam between image and world. The image object is a site of vibration – it is where movement takes place and effect. On the surface of its image carrier, the image object acts as a score: contour lines and chromatic stains organise its notation, delineating a composition. The image object is an invitation to look in a composed manner.

Like the photographic image subject that comes out of the photographed form only when it is photographed, the photographic image object comes forth through photographic *pro*duction: it comes with the iteration – it comes as a figure, a visual repetition on a material support. It comes as a figuration of the look of the photographic form. Being the figured look of the image subject, the image object is what places the image subject in the world. The photographic image object comes from the image subject, outlining a composition that figures the look of the image subject, and in repeating it, forms bonds and binding relations. Out of the form of the image subject comes the figure of the image object: it is a figuration, even when it is

not of figurative nature. But while the look that the image object gives is of the photographed, the look it allows for is not onto the photographed. Although it is experienced as the representation of the image subject – a thing that stands for something else outside the limits of itself – the image object is not an aperture towards it. The image subject forms the image object, giving it its shape, but it does not reveal itself through it. Rather, the only thing the image object allows one to look at is the photographic image made out of the photographed – and that is already enough. For in it is what photography forms and brings into being: in it is a thought formation.

The Photographic Iteration

The photographic image is an object in the world, with an image carrier as its material body, an image subject that is the thing which is the subject of that object, and an image object – the visual appearance of that subject on the object, on its image carrier. To be sure, none of the three described parts of the photographic image occur separately as such. Outside the premise of the image, the material form of the image carrier is an object in the world: it is a piece of paper, a large canvas, a glass plate, a bare wall, a draped screen, or the back of someone's arm. The looking form of the image subject is just a thing in the world: an individual, a place, an object, a gesture, an occurrence, an attitude, or a flow of information. And the figured shape of the image object – perhaps the most challenging element to think of as discrete – is lines and colours, shapes and shades: a formation stripped of the relation that binds it to the photographic image. It is only together that the three form the photographic image. And yet, I claim, this union of the three is *not* the photograph: the relation that unites

the image carrier with the photographic image object and image subject stands not for the photograph itself, but for the photographic image – it stands for an *iteration*.

The iteration is a possibility, a one of many: a one of an unbounded many that may always be repeated, replicated, reprinted, and that may have numerous doubles, changing size, surface quality, and texture. It is a manifestation, a significant unification, but always as a single within a multitude – an image that is formed by the photograph, that belongs to the photograph, but that is not *it*. Photographic images are given place in the world, brought to the light of it, but may only exist in it as iterations. All photographic images are iterations of themselves. The sensitive film that comes out of the analogue camera, ready to be developed, or the computer file that comes out of the digital device, ready to be printed, are also iterations: they are iteration zero, the index case in an epidemiological expansion. Each iteration of the photographic image provides a visual repetition of it. Iterations of the same image may vary in some or all material characteristics, including size, intonation and printing technique: the iteration is distinct inasmuch as its image carrier is distinct. At the same time, each iteration looks like the photographic image, offering its look, while also looking like all other iterations, and their looks: iterations are indistinct inasmuch as they are indefinite, not set within finite limits. If photography allows for derivation, or for likeness understood in its Heideggerian sense of an immediate look that is gathered by a secondary image, then that likeness is not – as Heidegger would have wanted – between the photographed and the photographic image, but between the photograph and its iterations.

To be sure, the coming into being of certain photographic images, including the silver-plated copper of the Daguerreotype, the glass plate of the Ambrotype, or the blue paper of the Cyanotype is ostensibly confined by either the choice or the inevitability

of having a single iteration: a unification of figure and support that materialises through a positive print. And yet, as Daguerreotypes, Ambrotypes, and Cyanotypes appear in books and on screens, the spread and multiplication of these supposedly singular images is uncontrollable. A Google Image Search will yield them by the hundreds of thousands. It may be, to be sure, like in the case of Sherrie Levine's *(Untitled) After Edward Weston* series from 1981, that this repetition is the creation of a new photographic image, where the repeated photographic image is the photographed form that forms the new image, giving place to its image subject, or its looking form. But in most cases, the repetition is not means towards a new image, but a visualisation of the inherent repeatability of every photographic image. Or, at least, it is both at once, and only rarely will it be either one or the other. Either way, iterations always return, yet the photograph never makes its appearance. The photographic form is the form of the photograph as *a* photograph rather than a specific iteration of a photographic image: all photographic images are repeatable, only the photographic form is not.

The thought that is brought-forth by photography may only be encountered in the photographic iteration. The iteration is the only look the photograph has in the world, and the only look it offers to it. Yet what forms photographic thought are not the forms and figures that the photographic iteration is made of: neither the material form of the support, nor the looking form of the photographed, nor the figured shape of the composition. It is the photographic form that forms thought. The image object, while taking on the look of the photographed form, is itself only a figure. The image subject, while being a form, is not the photographic form: it forms part of the photographic image only through its photographic becoming. And the image carrier, while being the surface upon and through which photographic thought is given form, and on which the look of the formed thought is given, is not the photographic form itself. Rather,

the photographic form is between them, in the gaps and the extensions in which they stand for, move towards, and transform into each other: *the photographic form is the relations that form the photograph*. It is through photographic relations that thought is formed, that the photograph thinks.

The photograph is a formation where thought may be formed, a formation that takes form out of the photographed, and gives shape to a photographic image figuring the photographed – a formation formed of relations. The photograph itself is that set of relations that are *pro*duced into being through photography: while it appears through its image iteration, it *exists* only in its relational form. Strictly speaking, *there is no photograph*. This is why it is impossible to arrive at an object-oriented definition of the photograph, why every attempt is a necessary reduction and exclusion: the photograph is not a *thing*, it is a *set of relations*. There is no material thing that is the photograph; there is only a photograph*ic* image, with its image carrier, image subject and image object: an iteration that *belongs to* the photograph, but not *the* photograph. The photographic form is the outcome of a *poietic pro*duction that is photographic becoming – it is only ever looked at and encountered through the iterations it forms. All iterations are repeatable, only the photographic relation is not.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC FORM

The photographic form is a set of relations that come out of a *poietic pro*duction. I propose that the first form the photographic relation takes is that of *the image object for the image subject*. Carrying itself for the image subject, the image object stands *on behalf of it*, taking its place in the world, and by that, giving it place. The representation of the

image object is a bondage that offers presence to the image subject, enhancing it, and multiplying it. Being for the image subject, identifies the image subject as the *function* of the image object: the image object is for it, inasmuch as it is *in view of it* – it owes itself to it. Looked at, it may be seen as the image subject: considered in its light, and accounted for only on its account. This first photographic relation is *a semiotic relation of representation* that centres around the image subject.

While this relation is not unique to the photographic image, but is indeed shared with all other images by nature of being images, it does pose a unique problem in the case of the photographic image. Focusing on this relation, conceiving it as the main – at times even *only* – photographic relation is what enables one to think they can look *through* the photographic image, using it as a transparent aperture towards that which may not be immediately in one's presence. It is this relation of representation that allows for what Krauss calls the 'it's a so-and-so' repetitious judgment and reaction: a photographic condition, which sees one looking only for what is *it* – what is the image subject for which the photographic image object stands.[13] And it is this semiotic relation that fuels the index, and through it, the Indexical fever.

* * *

The photographic image offers many looks, even when that look is nothing but a withdrawal, a removed look that may not be seen. Sometimes you carry them in you. I look at a photographic image I took while in the desert [Figure 9]. It is in black and white. Dusky and dappled, the dirty grey shapes in front of me stand as if they were stones, as if they were rocks: the look of this place is the offering of this view. I cannot

[13] Rosalind Krauss, 'A Note on Photography and the Simulacral,' *October* 31 (1984): 56.

escape this relation: the figures on the paper, downloaded from my camera and printed out from my screen, they carry the look of the land. Figuring this place, the greys show themselves on the behalf of this mountain view: the dark rectangular shapes, punctuated with white flashes, stand for the erected structures, bruised by the conflict in which they are situated; the charcoal-like projections behind them come into sight as cool shadows setting like dust. Representing this place, the figures act as representatives, being in place of this place, taking a place in the world, and placing this place outside of *its* place. On this surface, they function for the desert that gives its look to them, given a look that is owed to it, that is looked at in view of its view.

Before that, standing on the mountain range, I look at the view between the walls of the structure. I take its photograph, and watch as it is transformed into an image subject, as it gives place to a form that becomes a figure. I see it moving into the photographic image. Nearing it, extending itself to it, it shifts into the photographic shape that is the final stage of the photographic process, what is delivered at its end. These battered lands give their form to the photographic image, they form it, shaping it, out of their own form. The photographic figured shapes are shackled to the looking forms in a bond that is essential and originary: the photographed thing becomes a looking form, and a photographic figure is allowed to shape out of it. Photography creates both: the looking form as an image subject, and the figured shape as the image object.

Atop a deserted desert hill, I shift my look from the sight on my screen to the site in which I am. Behind this photographic image – a luminous projection of shapes that come out of forms, and let themselves be looked at on my device – is a land that let itself become a form, that gave its look to figures found on a surface. There is space for both, and yet they are fighting each other, melting into each other, slipping onto

one another. I look as the seam between the world and the image smoothens out. It becomes it. The site strengthens its grip upon this image until it envelopes it, enfolding it in its arid air, and folding it to fit into its openings. The photographic image is of that view – it is a part of the view, an inseparable part that came out of it, and leads back to it, connecting back to itself. It is possessed by the view, seized by it, and held in its possession, controlled and determined by its look.

A look I will not let you see.

* * *

The bond between the image subject and the image object is also at the heart of what I propose is the second photographic relation that makes the photograph: *the image subject to the image object*. Reaching to the image object, the image subject *changes into it*, so that the image object is the ultimate stage in its process of becoming: it is the figure that comes out of its form. Giving its form to the image object, the image subject *affects it*, forming it, giving it shape. Being connected to the image object, the image subject is *existentially bound to it*, for the one cannot be without the other: linked to each other, they are determined by each other, and confined to the logic of each other. This second photographic relation is an *ontological relation of becoming*, at work between the photographic image subject and the image object. Unlike the first relation of representation, the relation of becoming is *unique* to the photographic image, and it is *intrinsic*, not only in that it is essential and existential, but also in that it is interior, mediated and moderated by the iteration: a photographic relation between two constituting parts of the photographic image.

Symmetric, integral and inseparable, the semiotic relation of representation, and the ontological relation of becoming *are* what forms the photograph. Being the form of the

photograph, they are the form through which the photograph forms thought – the form through which it thinks. These key *poietic* relations form the theoretical basis of my argument, and I return to them time and time again, gradually unfolding them through my writing of the photographic image, while, in turn, employing them to unfold the photographic image itself. The *right* question concerning photography is a question of *poiesis*. While the photographic form is formed of two relations, of representation and becoming, it does not take on the form of that which is represented by its image object – it does not take on the form of the image subject that becomes. The photograph is not an Indexical mould.

Part Two

The Mould

FIVE

PRESENTING STILLNESS

* * *

It is a look you cannot see, for it is not for you. She is searching [Figure 10]. Against a pearl white background, this veiled body is looking at a distant point, looking for what cannot be seen, for what was never there, and what must be lost to memory. The figure is there, it just stands there. Keeps on standing, and keeps on looking. She must have been standing there all this time. The infinite screen behind her is so smooth, that my eyes slip off of its serene and uneventful plane. The screen is behind her, and at the same time, it is in front of her: so bare and plain, that I begin to see it as density, as thickness that embalms her figure – a viscous substance that presents her to my look. A mould that is soft and malleable, that holds her in it, without escape. I ask myself how many years she has been looking at that same point, looking to see what never appears. How many more years must she look, before seeing. I see her now, I look at her, trying to keep my look on a blankness that rejects it, that pushes back against it. I know that you expect me to say that she is there in this mould, still, right now, unmoved. Yes, she is still – still present, and present in stillness.

* * *

A death mask is a moulding taken around the look of a subject so that the former maintains the form of the latter. As I discussed in the previous part, with Bazin, Deleuze, Sontag and Krauss, the notion of the death mask mould became an Indexical image of thought: a dogmatic philosophical reference to the photographic image. This prevailing Indexical conception of the photographic image being a death mask sees the

image as a mould that is cast around the photographed, preserving its every aspect, presenting to the looker a stilled aspect of something that existed. As I discuss in this chapter, there are two ways of understanding this similarity: as a dimensional statement around the physical deposition of the look of the photographed within the photographic image, and as a metaphoric statement around the visual deposition of an aspect of the photographed within photographic stillness. Neither of these, however, holds true for the photographic image.

A literal rejection of the potential dimensional qualities of the photographic death mask mould is easy to put forward. A mould offers a three-dimensional form, while the look that the photographic image offers is two-dimensional: the obvious argument against the death-mask condition of the photographic image is of dimensional nature. The mould is a form in and of itself – an empty vestige that assumes the face of that which inscribes itself in it, a hollow three-dimensional cast. To photograph something, on the other hand, is to capture it in space, and transform it into an image that takes place on a plane. Photography does not assume the form of the photographed, but transports it into a condition where one of the dimensions in which it used to manifest is non-existent: it disposes of its depth, and collapses the form of the photographed thing on itself. Needless to say, the resulting photographic image cannot be an imprinted mould: unlike in an imprint, the third dimension has not been copied or added to the receptive surface – with photography, this third dimension has been cancelled. To photograph a thing is to deracinate it from the world, where it can be perceived through all the sensory faculties, multiplying it into a hosting setting, where visual perception prevails. It is to displace the form from the realm of the haptic to that of the optic: from the condition of being tactile to a condition of being seen. Photographic becoming is a passage from form to figure, from object to a shape, and

from the haptic to the optic. The photographic image offers a visual aspect of the photographed, an image of it – an image it becomes into – but never its dimensional presence, never its full look.

* * *

And still; still like this stone [Figure 11]. Seamed in the middle, the look of this photographic shape has four facets directed at me. As light hits it from all directions, and shadow falls to its right and left, it presents three angular breaks to my look – three corners where planes intersect: come together, cross each other, feed into each other, continue each other. The shape is unstable, but I insist on following its edges: I move with it, chasing it, as its presence in space morphs before me. The photographed form is made of two carved bodies pieced into a shape: two monoliths made into a *Monograph*, a single unit seamed together by photography. I search for its mould, for the place it deposited its form, where it is held in stillness. I move my fingers across the photographic image, but no relief presents itself to me. The angle formed by the fitting together sticks out towards me, but it does not prick. The sharp breakage does not prod. I search to trace the contours of the object, but the photographic image offers me nothing but flatness. There is no texture to this encounter, no tactile trace of what is photographed – nothing, but a smooth unhindered glide: a slick, uniform surface which my touch cannot grasp. I move my eyes across it, across its even surface. Where there should be roundness, only flatness holds, instead of depth, only a truncated plane remains. The seam that holds the parts together left no scar. The optic of the mould deceives me, and the haptic disillusions.

* * *

The metaphoric implication of the death mask mould, on the other hand, presents a challenge. If the death mask is a rhetorical tool at the service of an analogy, then all it suggests is a parallel between the photographic image and the mould, and not their dimensional identity. In that case, the moulded death mask metaphor may be weak, but remain valid, nonetheless: built upon the similarity of taking on a face by means of physical impression, the dimensional difference is irrelevant to the insights that follow, namely the stillness of the photographic form and image, and its preservation of the aspect of a past being. Yet a metaphor *is* invalid, when the inference drawn from it is false. And this is precisely the case with the death mask mould, for *the photographic image is not still.*

But the notion of stillness in photography is not 'merely' incorrect, it is also critically harmful to photographic philosophical theory, studies, and perception, for it misguides the first, muddies the second, and interferes with the third. While photographic stillness is regarded as cliché by some, in the general imagination, it assumes a far more privileged position, that of the self-evident, or true without the requirement to be shown or proven (even if not without stirring the occasional debate): a false axiom, and one that is damaging the entire discourse. Stillness has not been reduced to a cliché repeated into being meaningless, but upheld as a self-evident truth, when, in fact, as I demonstrate, it is a falsity.

To be sure, the mould is not required in order to arrive at stillness: as a concept, stillness has its own historiographic tradition, mostly independent from that of the death mask, and I dedicate the next two chapters to exploring it, and exposing its weaknesses. But stillness *is* a necessary derivative from the mould – that is to say, if the photographic image is a mould, then it is necessarily still. Therefore, a rejection of stillness amounts to a rejection of the ontological proposition that is the Indexical

death mask. Beginning by evincing the false axiom of stillness, I close the chapter by presenting and comparing the two ways of understating photographic stillness: namely, as an arrested image of no movement through space, and as an image of rest which presents no change through time. Laying bare the differences between these two modes is the first step in exposing their fallacies, and moving towards a *poiesis*-based understanding of the photographic image.

DISTILLING THE CLICHÉ

As Deleuze points out in his discussion of the death mask in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, the stillness of the photographic image is a key implication derived from the notion of the mould.[1] Be it a stillness of movement through space, of change through time, or as a state of serenity, the inescapability of the axiomatic paradigm of Indexicality, of which the death mask mould is a central part, consolidated it as an unavoidable point of departure. A derivation of the death mask mould, stillness became a base structure so fundamental, that it may be found replicated in the foundations of almost every art-historical or philosophical study of photography, being its truly most common place. So much that one cannot help but think of stillness as the biggest and tritest overused and worn-out idea in photographic writing. Stillness is the notion that dictates the idea that the photographic image is a captured instance, static as much as it is momentary. That its time is that of persistent immobility – held, fixed, captured, and frozen. That the spatial position assumed by the captured figure is one and constant, and that in it the image is holding still. That the photographic image

[1] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 28.

stops time, and that time stops in it. That there is no change, there is no movement, and there is no evolvement across time and space. That photography affixes the visual aspects of a moment to a glossy paper or a translucent glass panel, or any other form of support. That in the photographic image, a moment is seized in arrest, put to rest, bounded immobile, and anchored without ever having its continuity. If one discusses the temporality *of* the photographic image, asking how it participates in time, there is stillness. If one explores time *in* the photographic image, searching for its internal temporal designator, *there* is also stillness. If one directs their inquiry towards spatiotemporal relations, looking at movement and change across time and space within the image, one goes back to stillness. And if one examines the spatial position assumed by or within the image, raising the question of movement and progression across space – stillness is *always* there.

It may sound like stillness became a cliché, or at least that I am referring to it as such, in a dismissive, perhaps even ridiculing manner. But I am cautious of making a misleading devaluation of the sort, and my intention cannot be further away. A cliché is an overused and banal remark that stands in the absence of thought, pointing to the inability – or, indeed, refusal – of the speaker to critically engage.[2] In Romantic aesthetics, the recurrence of the cliché was associated with an authorship anxiety, and a subsequent withdrawal from both ownership of and responsibility for the meaning of the repeated phrase or idea, while at the same time, an ability to exert cultural familiarity and a unifying pathos.[3] Clichés are stale, stereotypic standpoints worn down by endless reiteration, that stand for a stripping down of independent thought and criticality, and a self-removal from any sense of liability: they are easy to repeat, and

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[2] Hannah Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture,' *Social Research* 38:3 (1971): 417–18.
[3] Ryan J. Stark, 'Clichés and Composition Theory,' *JAC* 19:3 (1999): 453–64.

come at no price. But while they bestow an automatic sense of familiarity, thus unifying the receiver with the utterer, they do so at the price of credibility: clichés rarely need to be disproven, as no one believes them in the first place. They are meaningless gestures, whose only (arguable) power is in establishing a common ground – but this ground is of *common distancing*, as if saying 'you and I, we *both* know this is devoid of meaning'.

It is this cliché-based attitude of common distancing that most scholars and writers opposing the base statement around photographic stillness share with each other. A relatively early and distinctly meaningful moment of such distancing is Thierry de Duve's 1978 celebrated essay, 'Time Exposure and Snapshots: The Photograph as Paradox'. In de Duve's writing, the distancing strategy is achieved through the paradoxical construction of the cliché against its exception: positioned against its evidential facet that he calls 'live evidence', and in which one witnesses a 'suspension of time', the photographic image reveals its other, artificial facet of the 'deadening artefact', where time is allowed its continues flow, but only inasmuch as it is a remainder and a reminder of what is always outside the photographic image.[4] For de Duve, time stops, held still, but this co-exists with its mutually exclusive state of a continuing flow: this is his paradox of the photographic image.

A bolder form of cliché-based common distancing is seen in the 2010 edited volume *Time and Photography*. Immediately in the introduction, the editors declare that 'the reduction of photography to a slice of time has rapidly become anachronistic'.[5]

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[4] Thierry de Duve, 'Time Exposure and Snapshots: The Photograph as Paradox,' in 'Photography,' special issue, *October* 5 (1978): 113.

[5] Jan Baetens, Alexander Streitberger, and Hilde Van Gelder, introduction to *Time and Photography* (Leuven: Leuven *University* Press, 2010), vii. The concept of the slice is not tantamount to that of the still, and is discussed separately in the third part of this study, including the false interchangeability between

Anachronistic – not untrue; and, as contributions to that volume demonstrate, not entirely abandoned either. One suggestion is that photography may be viewed as both technology and medium, so that in its former function it stops time, affixing the photographed and its figure in a permanent spatial location, while in its latter it represents or renders time through a visual language.[6] Another suggestion is that while the temporality of the photographic image in and of itself *is* still, the flow of time happens between photographic images, especially in the case of photo-essays, where photography may become the vehicle of personal and urban historiography.[7] In this case, the appearance of time both amounts to changes in space, and is enabled through them. A third suggestion is that photography suspends time rather than stopping it, so that time may return again, when the 'subjective time of the viewer' encounters the 'entropic time' of the photographic image as material surface.[8] Where the first suggestion moves through polarisation, building the new within the common place (not unlike de Duve's strategy), the second introduces external relativism through which the common is expanded to meet the new, and the third presents internal relativism within which the common place is reduced to make space for the new. Albeit in different ways, all three types of argumentation rely on the cliché.

There are other suggestions still: from further contributions within the same volume, to an earlier collection by the same editors with different contributors and a similar

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the two notions. The usage of the phrase 'slice of time' in this context is precisely a demonstration of such false interchangeability.

[6] Joanna Lowry, 'Modern Time: Revisiting the Tableau,' in Baetens, Streitberger, and Van Gelder, *Time and Photography*, 47–48.

[7] Maren Polte, 'Time and Order: Self-Reflective Strategies in Photo Essays,' in Baetens, Streitberger, and Van Gelder, *Time and Photography*, 110–15.

[8] Victor Burgin, 'The Eclipse of Time,' in Baetens, Streitberger, and Van Gelder, *Time and Photography*, 131.

scope,[9] to various other separate and individual accounts. As with any form of hegemony, moments of resistance appear against the dominant stance. Many of those acknowledge the shortcomings of photographic stillness, but come without bearing theoretical alternatives. But even there where an alternative to the stillness of the photographic image *is* brought forward – like in the case of de Duve, or some of the accounts in *Time and Photography* – one does not escape stillness. Such is the case of the argument for temporal duration, presented as occurring in photographic images in which time is stopped, but that stoppage inhabits a framed longevity that evolves through space: an argument made in direct opposition to the more common condition of stillness.[10] Or the suggestion around the temporality of an event, enriching the framed and finite instantaneity of photography with a dimension of change brought about by a movement in space that is present in the photographic process – a case presented as undoing the base condition of stillness.[11] Or, to offer a final example, the advancement of the notion around multiple non-linear temporalities, particularly in strip technique photography, where movement in time and in space is registered on the level of both the photographer, and the film.[12] In this case, too, stillness is the prevailing condition in view of which the exception is advanced. Even in arguing against stillness, suggestions share one common strategy: the *supposed* cliché. Stillness is assumed as the lowest common denominator, conditioning any new discourse. Indeed, even when an attempt to disagree with it arises, it does not escape stillness, it only expands alongside it, reinforcing the basis of the claim for stillness. An alternative, *when*

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[9] Jan Baetens, Alexander Streitberger, and Hilde Van Gelder, eds., 'Time and Photography/La Photographie et le temps,' special issue, *Image & Narrative* 23 (2008), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/Timeandphotography/timeandphotography.html.
[10] Sandra Plummer, 'Photography and Duration: Time Exposure and Time-Image,' in 'Deleuze and Photography,' ed. Michael Kramp, special issue, *Rhizomes* 23 (2012), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue23/plummer/index.html.
[11] Johanna Drucker, 'Temporal Photography,' *Philosophy of Photography* 1:1 (2010): 23–29.
[12] Maarten Vanvolsem, 'Hinting at an Experience of Time in Still Photography,' *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 4:1 (2005): 49–56.

its existence – or, better yet, the *necessity* of its existence – is suggested, remains limited, bounded by the idiosyncrasies of the special case, of the exception that departs and digresses from the orderly, that is always and necessarily extra-ordinary, or outside the order of things.

Yet the rhetoric of the cliché is such, that by attempting to point to a digression out of its order of things and its common place, the repeated concept now-supposed cliché is only reinforced. In showing exceptions, one relies on the commonplace to be non-all-encompassing, but only true in *some* of the cases, demonstrating how the truthfulness of these few cases was extended onto other cases, for which the concept does not hold. What is failed – or not even attempted – is disproving the concept in all possible cases: namely, the common distancing strategy of the cliché fails to address the base cases for which the concept is still said to hold. Stillness is reinforced because it is treated as a non-arguable foundation, one that may be shown as non-all-encompassing, but that one does not even attempt to show – because it is not possible within the premise of this strategy – as simply untrue: *always* untrue. Photographic stillness is not a cliché: it is simply untrue that all hold the belief as to its being wrong. In fact, treating the concept of photographic stillness as a cliché from which to partially distance oneself, results in establishing it as an axiom for the base cases against which the distancing builds itself: stillness comes to occupy the position of a self-evident truth.

The coda to this condition is the cul-de-sac out of which photographic philosophical theory is trying to navigate its way. If a substantial amount of publications on photography from the last decade resumes and re-poses these questions around stillness, movement and the photographic image, it is precisely because of this: the weighing down of the besetting burden of the unresolved. Indeed, I depart from the same place myself; but the trajectory I propose is different.

REST AND ARREST: ON BEING STILL

There are two, not entirely separable ways in which stillness appears in the photographic discourse. In one, stillness is experience primarily as a persistence in space in an assumed position, without change; in the other, it refers to temporality, to a single moment that persist. The first, and perhaps more common way, may be defined as the case in which stillness appears as a form of *arrest*. This meaning is captured by Wisława Szymbroska in her phototextual poem 'Photograph from September 11',[13] where she writes of those who 'jumped from the burning floor', that 'The photograph halted them in life /and now keeps them /above the earth toward the earth. /Each is still complete, /with a particular face /and blood well hidden'.[14] Affixed in mid-air, the jumpers are held still in their flight, arrested by photography. The arrested is an image where movement seems to have been paused, where progression is denied, and a process that is in the midst of realising itself is held in its premature state, pre-action. Fixed in the process of its own flow, the body is frozen, locked immotile in an act that will forever remain stripped of its continuity. The arrested is that which is stopped or suspended, permanently inhabiting a passing fragment of its own movement, in an inactively passive performance of stasis.

In the photographic image, it is the appearance of the image object as unmoving, unmovable, and unchangeable that is significant, whereas the stillness of the support is not. Although the image carrier is often a still object, the stillness of the material support is not what attributes stillness to the photographic image – indeed, the support

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[13] The term 'phototextuality' operates on the seam between photography and text, and see: Ari J. Blatt, 'Phototextuality: Photography, Fiction, Criticism,' *Visual Studies* 24:2 (2009): 108–21.
[14] Wisława Szymborska, 'Photograph from September 11,' in *Monologue of a Dog*, trans. Clare Cavanagh (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005), 69.

of the cinematic image is equally mostly a still object, and yet film is attributed with movement. It is the image object that appears immotile in relation to the motility of the photographed: the photographic image object is *for* the image subject, and yet the photographed turned image subject may move and change after, and even during its photographic becoming, and the photographic image is – or, so it would appear – never changing. And since the photographic image subject is also *to* the image object, the supposed arrested stillness of the photographic image is even more apparent.

In the arrested photographic image, the arrested is the moving presented as still, in a stillness that is maintaining still, remaining still, remaining until this moment – *still, remaining still*. It is a matter of not only taking place – or, occurring – but of taking *a place*, of taking *space* – that is to say, occurring in a specific location, in a specific positing, assuming it. The stillness of arrest is spatial: occupying a set place within a space, the body assumes its position, maintaining it in a three-dimensional-turned-two-dimensional condition.

* * *

The seam that holds the parts together comes undone. And so, I see her, like in an early Cubist painting, from all directions at once, running, hanging in mid-air [Figure 12]. Her legs that walked this roof before, took firm steps on the sizzling concrete, anchoring their hills and toes into the hard surface – these legs will not walk again. They hover, suspended, extended, nearing, but unable to reach, unable to complete their descent, to meet their long shadow projected on the floor. (Is not every photographic jump a tribute to Henri Cartier-Bresson's jumping man, whose step will never touch the soaked street that holds his blurry reflection? Just like every photographic image of a falling man is Robert Capa's falling soldier, whose body will

never rest atop the grassy hilltop, and whose fresh blood will never feed the earth.) In this simultaneity – a plurality of views – time stealthily creeps, a fourth dimension infixed by the duration of moving around: it takes time to see one jump from all directions. But in this photographic image, simultaneity comes from using radio controls, and cable synchronised shutter release – it is a trick, a fix, a visual discharge of the temporal: it announces stillness. This is what you should be seeing: she is still there, in that precise location, still holding still – holding her position, holding *in* position.

On a different day, in another time, a blond woman is wearing a silver skirt suit with bright lacquer Mary Jane loafers [Figure 13]. The day seems warm. A big brown paper bag is sustained between her arms. The year is 2009, but it might as well be 1979. So little seems to have changed. Her long, extended shadow is resting on the floor, projecting up a window front that is sealed by a white screen. The announcement hanging from it suggests that it has been closed for some time. There is no one else on the street. She takes a lengthy step. Her eyes are shut. She is on her way somewhere, and every step is a calculation, every moment that passes she is further away. Is she moving at all? Her stillness is loud, it is in her and from her, and everything else is encompassed. Even the shimmer of the bright aluminium strip slushing the window seems to dwindle, fading away in the length of the day. Time and time again. Time and time still. When will it ever come to an end? There are moments that last longer than one can withstand. This is what you should be seeing: she is still there, still outside of time – timeless, endless, never present.

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The second form of photographic stillness is to do primarily with time: stillness understood as a form of *rest* – a temporal slowness that leads to a pause. It is not a

moment in space and time severed from its continuity, but a form of presence in time and space that appears to continue, and continues to appear ever and again, illimitably, interminably, in perpetuity. Although not entirely disconnected from the corporeal, this type of stillness is asomatous, without a body, related not to the arrested motion of the body, but to the general state of things – regarding, that is, not a suspended movement in space, but a suspended being in time. It is this meaning of stillness that is at the centre of Fiona Tan's 2016 photographic installation turned feature film, *Ascent*. There, a female character, narrated by Tan herself, deals with her mourning through creating a film made entirely of photographic images of Mount Fuji: it is as if by being photographed, the volcano which the deceased sought to conquer commands a presence that puts time to rest in perpetual stillness.[15] Indeed, unlike photographic arrest which is encountered in the look of the photographic image object, photographic rest is experienced on the level of the photographic relations themselves: concerning, that is, not the photographic iteration, but the photographic form.

Unlike the state of brimming tension that is the attribute of the arrested photographic image, stillness of rest is an *ataraxic* state of expanded tranquillity, associated with paused calmness, contemplative silence and serene – at time, marmoreal – repose. Where the arrested is *tensed*, the put to rest is *intense*. Being tensed, the arrested photographic image presents a spatial suspension, a firm holding – a gathering that works *inwards*. It is a closing of the form into a constant, a state of reduction that is never fully static nor properly dynamic, even though the image it presents may be seen like that of stasis. Being intense, the photograph of rest inhabits a zone of temporal suspension that holds itself over the photographed – dispersing in a gesture of opening

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[15] *Ascent*, directed by Fiona Tan, Antithesis Films and Periscoop Film, 2016, film.

outwards. The photographic form at rest is held within an expanded field, where the intense stretches out, encompassing the framed, imparting to it a sense of composure that is not about composing – that is to say, not about placing or placement, but about *being* in that place.

Stillness of arrest is visible on the level of *surface* appearance, on the exterior and as an exterior. Tensed arrest is *on* the surface, but it also *is* the surface: it is sur-face, *above* the true face of the thing, enfolding the face, carried on the face like a shell or a shield. Stillness of arrest is dressed on the photographic image like a mask that disguises the infinite and infinitely minuscule movement underneath. Stillness of rest is *below* the face, it is the supposed *flesh* of the body, to borrow from Deleuze, where the naked essence of the thing comes bare.[16] It supposedly fleshes out the photographic form, adding weight to it – a temporal weight and bearing that steals underneath its surface, emanating from within.

Historically, both types of alleged stillness have their own origin, which are the products of their particular moment(s) in time. Stillness of arrest, as the next chapter puts forward, stems from a Bergsonian and Benjaminian understanding of photography – in themselves conflicting views, distilled into a single position. Stillness of rest, on the other hand, finds a fertile terrain in the work of Barthes, and his attempt to formulate photographic temporality. None of the three, as I demonstrate, holds on to scrutiny; and none belongs to photographic bringing-forth – to *poiesis*.

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[16] For the Deleuzian concept of flesh and its relation to the body, its becoming and its zone of indiscernibility, see: Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* [1981], trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2002), 20–26, esp. 22.

SIX

ARRESTED IN STILLNESS

* * *

The strip dividing the screen is cast under deep shadow; it breaks the waters into two [Figure 14]. The shore is deserted, but boats parked in the horizon whisper that somebody is coming. Or maybe they were just here, their footprints washed back into the sea. I can see no movement, not even the shadows are dancing. Everything is stopped mid flow – not in a gust of wind, but in a gush of sea swell – floating frozen. Indeed, a frozen wave is a paradox: how can this heavy water curl and be still at the same time? If the image breaks, will it shatter like icy shards of glass, or will it splatter into droplets? The sea never ceases to swell, but not in this photographic image. I am supposed to say that in this image, the double view of the sea is arrested, without movement, held in position, allowing me to behold it. The people, they left, turned home. Others came. In this image, they are held there still. In this image, they meet on the surface.

* * *

The arrested is a form of photographic stillness in which the photographed body turned mage subject is stilled in its image, so that its stillness manifests through its endurance in space. Stillness holds bodies in the midst of being; bodies that are held in space. Jumping, they hang. Falling, they are suspended. Sitting, they remain. Looking, they continue to gaze. Each movement is locked, fastened in the embrace of the photographic image, secured from its own derivation, held still on the surface of the image carrier, deadened by in death mask mould. Stillness of arrest is usually attributed

to images of animate photographed subjects, for it is only in comparison to the expected flow of movement of the subject that it is perceived as arrested. But it is not just bodies, it is also things that can hold on to space. Things resist the erosion of the wind and the sea, cover the bruises that mark them, recovering from their abrasion, and holding on to their appearance. Like in Jeff Wall's 1993 *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, where trees are arched by the howling wind, and a static turbulence made of papers fills the air.

Although stillness is a necessity drawn out of the death mask mould that *is*, according to Bazin and many others, the photographic image, its history dates to the very beginning of photographic history, and expands through some of its most significant moments. Discussing photographic stillness as a form of spatial arrest, free of movement, I focus my analysis on its two most prominent moments, as those materialised in the writings of Bergson and Benjamin. Untangling the history of photographic stillness, I discuss Bergson's notion of the relative stillness of the photographic image, and analyse the cinematographic model in which it is proposed. It is this relative quality that provides the motivation for rejecting it as a valid model towards understanding the photographic image in and of itself. I then turn to look at the second historic branch of arrested stillness, namely that which follows the ideas set forward by Benjamin. Comparing Bergson and Benjamin, I claim that the latter's model is intrinsically photographic, and thus more appropriate to the discussion of the photographic image. It too, however, as I demonstrate, folds in on itself, when considered through recent writings on the nature of movement.

A Model for Relational Stillness

In a short, but often quoted passage from his 1907 *Creative Evolution,* Bergson approaches the question surrounding the relation between what he identifies as photographic stillness and cinematic movement: the cinematographer, he claims, takes photographic images, 'each of which represents…a fixed attitude', and 'reconstitutes [their] mobility'.[1] In this account, the photographic image is a still moment, a stilled attitude experienced as such in relation to the cinematic movement of which it may be part.

Almost 50 years later, this idea reappears in the heart of the photographic consensus. Or, so it seems. Famously, in the opening to his 1952 photographic book, *The Decisive Moment*, Cartier-Bresson claims that movement is an assembly of moments, out of which a single definitive one presents a perfect equipoise, a blissful and harmonic rapport between the different elements in motion: it is this 'decisive' moment that the photographic image holds immobile, keeping still.[2] The photographic image presents stillness, as 'inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance' – a conception of movement as a conglomerate constituted of discrete snaps of stillness, which are separable from each other and from the whole.[3]

Yet what might seem like an import of a philosophical position into the photographic discourse is, in fact, a betrayal to that very position, for Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment' differs significantly from what is put forward by Bergson, for whom the very

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[1] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [1907], trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), 331.
[2] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 10 (n. p.).
[3] Ibidem.

idea that 'movement is made of immobilities' is an 'absurd proposition'.[4] Bergson demonstrates this absurdity through a philosophical apperception: the mapping of a new set of concepts onto an existing and intimately familiar philosophical territory. His is Zeno's classical paradox of the fletcher: if one is to think of the course of its shooting arrow as constituted of moments in which it is held in space, then the arrow results still throughout its course.[5] That is to say, if at every singularised moment of its flight, the arrow may be viewed as inhabiting a single location, then the arrow never flew at all. Bergson shows that movement is not made out of small moments of stillness, but is a continuum, where each moment possesses its own energy: the impossibility of movement being formed of stillness is laid bare.

Onto this familiar territory, Bergson is mapping his own argument, to which photography is a central metaphor. The film is the shooting arrow, and photographic images are its comprising moments in time and space; film is movement, photography is stillness, and the one supposedly comprises and gives place to the other. But stillness cannot give place to movement, and so Bergson proposes a way out: a paradoxical impossibility which is resolved not by re-considering the nature of the photographic image, but by refocusing the argument to the apparatus. Cinematic movement, he claims, is not comprised of photographic immobilities, but originates from outside, from the apparatus that is the cinema projector.[6]

Despite the apparent similarities, the difference between Cartier-Bresson and Bergson is significant: indeed, my juxtaposition of Cartier-Bresson with Bergson is not on the account of Cartier-Bresson's argument standing in continuation to Bergson's. If

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[4] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 335.
[5] Idem, 335–41.
[6] Idem, 331–32.

anything, it stands in opposition to it. Looking at content, where the former allows for movement to be made of individual moments, the latter denies that very possibility. In terms of scope, where the former discusses the photographic stillness in relation to the movement of the photographed that came *before* it, the latter sees it in relation to the movement of the cinematic strip that comes *after* it. And yet to understand Cartier-Bresson, one must understand Bergson: one must understand that the root of the idea of the photographic image as a still piece of movement that has a complex relation to motion is *not photographic*.

To be sure, there have been few other early philosophical accounts that exerted such influence upon photographic theory as Bergson's passage. Nonetheless, and despite its reference to and usage of a photographic image, Bergson's discourse does not surround photography at all. In fact, his question is epistemological: what is the relation between human intellection and reality? What are the ways in which the mechanism of one's ordinary knowledge can be described? In order to answer it, he creates a model that is essentially cinematographic at its core. Photographic images remain still: identified with the film still, the photographic image is also still, but its stillness is *not explored or questioned in and of itself* – the photographic image *qua* photographic image – but in relation to the cinematic – moving, animated – flow. In being cinematographic, Bergson's model makes use of photography, employing it, exploiting it, consuming it as a negative touchstone, a comparison unit against which the cinematic is measured. It may even be claimed, that when Bergson uses the photographic image *itself* as a metaphor for perception, like in his discussion of the

translucent print that exists as matter before it gives itself to reflexion,[7] he attributes it with movement.[8]

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Meeting on the surface, two cuts are juxtaposed into a cinematic whole [Figure 15]. Two shots, one film. It shows a woman who is fleeing from the city: seated by the window, she looks at the metal train tracks as they guide her escape; the pink scarf she borrowed no longer covers her hair, but this month's magazine, resting bellow, reveals it all. Rather, it shows a man whose search for the owner of the pink scarf was futile; his glasses are placed above this cashmere vestige, as his look, blurred by tears, is directed towards the city he hoped will remedy his lost. The train keeps on moving. It moves within this photographic image – all moves within this image. All changes. There is progression through narration, but there is also progression through encounter: there is montage. This photographic image shows movement, it *creates* movement – it calls for me to look at movement, and move with it, in it, through it. It shows me a movie. It does not show me a momentary part of the photographed, a moment reaped out and used to behold – it offers me all of it, an aspect of it that is complete, like a double that takes its place in the world, making it visible.

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Bergson's relational model of photographic stillness of arrest, and Cartier-Bresson's famous albeit imprecise following of it reflect the context of the early days of

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[7] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [1896], trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 37–39.
[8] Maria Tortajada, 'Photography/Cinema: Complementary Paradigms in the Early Twentieth Century,' in *Between Still and Moving Images*, ed. Laurent Guido and Olivier Lugon (New Barnet, Herts.: John Libbey, 2012), 44–45.

photographic philosophical theory, and the long-lasting influence cinematography had on it. A period epistemologically concerned with stillness, movement and the transient, it comes as no surprise that many accounts from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth sought to consider photography within that debate. It is around that time that empirical sciences sought to devise an imaging practice that would allow one to fix the transient – for instance, the usage of sand formations to observe complex vibrations, so that 'ephemeral sounds were made to "draw their own image"'.[9] And although, to be sure, given the secluded nature of experimentation, the epistemic concerns of the scientific community may have had limited effect on the contemporary vernacular perception of photography, it would be incorrect to maintain that these instances, which are directly to do with questions of time and stillness, had no consequences in the philosophy of photography. Henry Fox-Talbot, for instance, conducted his research in Michael Faraday's laboratory, drawing on explicit knowledge appropriated from the realm of experimental physics. His declared desire was to optically affix the moving.[10] It is also around the same decades that forms of entertainment which openly attributed effects of depth and movement to a mechanic illusion were *en vogue*.[11] These perception-alternating optic devices that enjoyed popularity in the 1800s, such as the stereoscope, the mutoscope, the kinetoscope and the phenakistoscope, visually located the photographic image in opposition to the flow of movement. These were, albeit not deliberately, Bergsonian projects – demonstrating the power of the apparatus to bring animation into what is seen as still. But it was more than a scientific or a kinetic instance that shaped the prevailing contemporary collective

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[9] Chitra Ramalingam, 'Fixing Transience: Photography and Other Images of Time in 1830s London,' in Baetens, Streitberger, and Van Gelder, *Time and Photography*, 6.
[10] Chitra Ramalingam, 'Stopping Time: Henry Fox Talbot and the Origins of Freeze-Frame Photography,' *Endeavour* 32:3 (2008): 86.
[11] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in The Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990).

perception of photography as a non-animated still. Rather, it was the experience of being photographed – of *becoming* a photograph: a form of personal knowing that the photographic process *itself* has brought about. In this perception, photography and the photographic image were placed on the opposite side of the Bergsonian spectrum: concerning not the apparent animation of the still, but an apparent stilling of the animate.

THE HOLD OF ARRESTED MOVEMENT

Discussing the conduct and comportment of the first people to sit in front of the photographic camera, Benjamin mentions the necessity of the posers to 'remain still',[12] where being still is understood not simply as a paused attitude, but as an act of inhabiting stillness.[13] Stillness results an intrinsic part of the photographic image not for its relation to the moving image it may produce if put in an apparatus, but in its origination from a wittingly non-moving subject that is reproduced through it. Being photographed bounded the photographed into stillness which, in turn, bounded the photographic image into stillness.

This Benjaminian notion of stillness is perfectly disparate from Bergson's. Bergson's argument is antonymic in nature. Formulated upon a relational opposition, it is *extrinsic* – that is to say, its denotation of the photographic image as still stands only in view of the non-still flow of images to which it is compared. Benjamin's is synonymic. The

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[12] Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography' [1931], in *One-Way Street*, 245.
[13] Joanna Lowry, 'Portraits, Still Video Portraits and the Account of the Soul,' in *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*, ed. David Green and Joanna Lowry (Brighton: Photoworks, 2006), 67–68.

stillness of the photographic image is understood as an *intrinsic* quality: directly related to the stillness of its inception, the photographic image is connoted as still through an unmediated affinity. Its stillness is an absolute quality, not a feature observed in comparison.

Unlike Bergson, whose comment on photographic stillness is reaped out of an argument concerning the cinematographic model of intellection, and whose dealing with photography was limited, Benjamin's deep fascination with and repeated evocation of photography is well known.[14] In fact, as Eduardo Cadava suggests in a text that poses itself as a 'phōtagōgós'[15] – a photographic shining of light from above as a form of resistance to historical ignorance – Benjamin's entire conception of history may be re-read through the lens formed by his utilisation of photographic terms and concepts. While Cadava's meditation suggests that Benjamin's fascination with the photographic is instrumental in understanding the full breadth of his philosophical trajectory, Ernst Bloch, in comparing Benjamin's revue form of philosophical writing in 'One-way Street' to the practice of photomontage,[16] points to that this trajectory is photographic not only in content, but also in form. Benjamin's philosophical investigations do not only surround photography, and may be understood better through the concept of photography – they are also *written photographically*.

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[14] For critical engagements concerning Walter Benjamin's interest in photography see: Rolf H. Krauss, *Walter Benjamin und der neue Blick auf die Photographie* (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1998); and, Gerhard Richter, 'Going with Time: A Miniature on Time and Photography After Benjamin,' in *Inheriting Walter Benjamin* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 123–36. For an edited collection of Benjamin's writings on photography see: Walter Benjamin, *On Photography*, ed. and trans. Esther Leslie (London: Reaktion, 2015).

[15] Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xxx.

[16] Ernst Bloch, 'Revue Form in Philosophy' [1928], in *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Oxford: Polity, 1990), 335.

Nonetheless, and notwithstanding that Benjamin looks at photography directly, and Bergson arrives at it through a cinematographic comparison, it was the spirit of Bergsonian stillness that became prominent throughout the twentieth century. Perhaps it was the technological advancement that, in obviating the necessity for long paused poses, positioned the Benjaminian notion of stillness on the margins of photographic practice and, therefore, on the margins of its philosophical theory as well. Or, perhaps, it was the wide dissemination of ideas resonating with those of Bergson through the writings of Cartier-Bresson and others. Either way, it was Bergson's relational perspective rather than a Benjaminian sense of inherent stillness that results from the pause of the poser, that proved significant in modelling the photographic conception of arrest.

But the Benjaminian notion around the hold of arrested movement was not inconsequential. As Benjamin notices, with the advent of photography, it became much simpler 'to *get hold* of a picture, more particularly a piece of sculpture, not to mention architecture' [my italics].[17] Reflected in this conception that Benjamin puts forward is a quality attributed to the photographic image by many: the photographic image is a metonymy of the photographed, which allows one to *behold* the photographed through the logic of the still arrested mould and the implied contiguity between image and thing. To behold is to see, but even more so, to behold, from the Old English *bihaldan*, 'to keep hold of', is to *hold something through one's sight*. If the photographic image is an arrested mould held in stillness, then through it, one may behold the photographed: holding *it* through their own eyes, holding its very manifestation that deposited its stillness in the photographic image/mould.

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[17] Benjamin, 'Small History,' 253.

In the history of art history, this ostensive possibility of the photographic image allowed for an outburst of methodological creativity. Two famous examples for that are André Malraux and Aby Warburg. Malraux was exuberant at the prospect of photographically holding and juxtaposing more artworks and masterpieces 'than even the greatest of museums could bring together',[18] curating a museum without walls – an exhibition space that is of nowhere and of no time, and for that is of everywhere and of all times: a 'family album', which uses a strategic succession of visuals to bring together the extended family members of art itself.[19] For Warburg, photography enabled not only his very first comparative visual research of the Hopi Indians, conducted through photographic images some 27 years after these were taken by him during his Arizona honeymoon,[20] but also his *magnum opus*, the 1927 *Mnemosyne* picture atlas, made entirely of photographic images through which artworks could be beheld, and which Didi-Huberman describes as a '*visual form*' and '*epistemic* paradigm' of knowledge,[21] whose dialectical montage allows for 'knowledge through imagination',[22] having 'the capacity to bring together orders of incommensurable realities…and to rearrange the world spatially'.[23] More broadly, the belief that it is possible to behold artworks through their photographic images became such common practice, that the very rhetoric and gesturing of art history professors assumed the presence of the artworks discussed in the auditorium *in vivo*, taking the projected slide 'as the object

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[18] André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls* [1947], trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967), 12.
[19] Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Album of Images According to André Malraux' [2013], trans. Elise Woodard and Robert Harvey, *Journal of Visual Culture* 14:1 (2015): 3–20.
[20] Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* [1923] (London: Cornell University Press, 1995).
[21] Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science,' in *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2010), 14. For the *Atlas* itself see: Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* [1927] (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).
[22] Didi-Huberman, 'Atlas,' 17.
[23] Idem, 76.

itself'.[24] A mode which has its noteworthy historical precursor in the figure of Italian connoisseur Giovanni Morelli, who went so far as to attribute artworks seen and examined solely through photographic images, drawing a parallel between a connoisseur's photographic images and a mineralogist's stones.[25]

Today, it may seem obvious that the photographic image of the artwork is not the artwork itself. In fact, it is regarded by many as such a blatant truism, that a symmetrically opposed tendency has developed, that of the artwork which is impossible to photograph, and can only ever be truly seen *in vivo*. Yet, this opposing tendency is merely a difference in degree, not in kind. Indeed, both ends of this binary operate under the same flawed assumption: that the photographic image is meant to allow one to behold the photographed. But one does not look through photographic images, treating them as transparent membranes through which reality may be held: one uses photographic images to recall, to bring to mind, to envision, or get an idea. The photographic image is not a beholding apparatus offering a palpable look, but a tool of suggested perception offering an *impression*. As a notion, 'impression' is an integral part of photography form its very inception. Be it directly, like with Fox Talbot's Calotype (sometimes referred to as Talbotype), that is etymologically derived from the union of Ancient Greek καλός [*kalos*], 'beautiful', and τύπος [*tupos*], '*impression*'; or indirectly, like with the Rayogram, which according to its inventor, Man Ray, '[recalls] the event more or less clearly, like the undisturbed ashes of an object consumed by flames'.[26] Indeed, the photographic image shows 'more or less clearly': an

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[24] Robert Nelson, 'The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art "History" in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' *Critical Inquiry* 26:3 (2000): 417.
[25] Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of Their Works*, trans. Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes (London: John Murray, 1900), 1–63, and esp. 10–12.
[26] Man Ray, 'The Age of Light' [1933], in *Man Ray: Writings on Art*, ed. Jennifer Mundy (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 117.

approximation that nears the photographed, but remains remote, a vagueness that resembles but does not go beyond putting to mind – a conjecture.

Nonetheless, even though the Benjaminian discourse around holding still and beholding marked photographic scholarship in ways it continues to combat to this day, it wasn't until the early 1980s that the Benjaminian understanding of photographic stillness made its full return. Only by then – and this is still true now – the notion of photographic arrested stillness was an inherent part of the photographic debate, shaped, as it were, by a continuous and persistent Bergsonian discourse, and built entirely around the extrinsic relation to cinematographic animated motion.[27] And so, the return of the Benjaminian intrinsic sense of absolute stillness was not as a way to replace – or, at least, problematise – the Bergsonian relational conception, but as a supplement to it; or, to be precise, to an emptied form of it.

Benjamin's return along with Bergson's depletion is exemplified in Wollen's celebrated 1984 photo-cinematic essay 'Fire and Ice'. Wollen opens by resuming and reiterating the fletcher's paradox, but his conclusion is radically different to Bergson's. For Bergson, the exposition (and resolution) of Zeno's paradox was means to support the argument that movement cannot be made of stillness and, therefore, animated cinematographic movement cannot be made of photographic frame stills, but must come from the apparatus: movement *exists*, it is simply a matter of correctly observing it. For Wollen, Zeno's paradox is a potent reference, one that requires no commentary, and whose conclusion is simple: 'Photography is like a point, film like a line. Zeno's

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[27] Most recently, see for instance, Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006); Beckman and Ma, *Still Moving*; Eivind Røssaak, ed., *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011); Guido and Lugon, *Between Still and Moving*; and, Neil Campbell and Alfredo Cramerotti, *Photocinema: The Creative Edges of Photography and Film* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013).

Paradox: the illusion of movement'; movement is but a trick of the eye.[28] But Wollen does not stop at contradicting Bergson, he also adds an additional dimension of stillness to his analysis, in which the Bergsonian comparative sense of stillness loses its cinematic *comparanda*, establishing the photographic one as still *per se*. Photographic images, Wollen claims, are in stasis not in relation to the flickering fire of cinematic movement (as in Bergson), but as a result of the static position occupied in freeze by the subject (as in Benjamin). Intertwining the antonymic and synonymic arguments, Wollen shifts his analysis to the pose of the photographed. In this Benjaminian gesture, Wollen cites James Van Der Zee's 1978 *Harlem Book of the Dead* as a visual instance where three registers of stasis come to one: the no longer animated body, the stiff lifeless pose, and the ever still image.[29] Stillness, here, is an attribute of the photographic image as an intrinsic value. The photographic image is still in and of itself: it is still because what is photographed is a still body, presented in a declaratively lifeless pose, in an image that appears not to change. The photographic image is a metaphorical death mask still held in arrest, that is literally an image taken off of the face of the immobile dead.

* * *

Through montage, two domestic planes meet, creating a passage – a room through which someone moved, in flight, leaving their presence behind [Figure 16]. Like in a work by Vilhelm Hammershøi, homeliness is a state of alienation, of longing, of openings between closed walls, and light that shines through silence. Through this door, left ajar, two foreign spaces open into each other. There was movement there,

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[28] Peter Wollen, 'Fire and Ice' [1984], in *The Cinematic: Documents on Contemporary Art*, ed. David Campany (London: Whitechapel Ventures; Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2007), 108.
[29] Idem, 110–11.

now darkness hangs between them. The door appears to rest, but the presence that moves through does not still: the disruption it caused remains on the surface as tension – a tensed gathering inwards. The photographic image is not a still death mask: it does not take on the form of the photographed, but forms its own form – a form of passage, movement, and encounter. It does not allow me to behold, but holds itself open in front of me, concealing. As I look to see where it stops me from going, a fine squeak rises from it, the sound of a thirsty hinge. It rises from within. Photography is not stillness out of stillness, but *movement out of movement*. The photographic image allows for movement, because it is unable to hold things still, it is *in* movement – it calls for the movement to be seen, to come forward from the moving thing that is photographed.

* * *

But most arrested photographic images are not of the dead. They are of people, things, places, forms – of the animated, living, and moving. And stillness of the living body, as Erin Manning demonstrates, is 'always on its way to movement'.[30] Indeed, Manning's claim may be paraphrased to form a response to the Benjaminian conception of stillness as an intrinsic form arising from the sitter: photographed bodies are not simply held still – they are *holding themselves still*. In order to remain still, the body has to constantly move: a continuous correction of itself in a Sisyphean attempt to draw level with the fleeting equilibrium. Stillness is the pressure of forcing oneself to hold on. *Stillness is infinite movement*. The posers supposedly inhabiting and bestowing photographic stillness, were never still themselves: holding still, the body cannot still, and the space it inhabits varies with it. The body holding still is holding all the same,

[30] Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (London: MIT Press, 2009), 43.

holding notwithstanding, holding its spatial position despite the struggle to maintain it – it strives to hold the same. The arrested photographic image is brimming with tension: tensed bodies holding still – that is to say, still holding on to their stillness.

The very photographic relation that is meant to reinforce Benjamin's mode of arrest, results in undermining and undoing it. In accord with the photographic relation of becoming, which sees the image subject as being *to* the image object, in a process that is both changing into and being tied to, it is the apparent stillness of the body that would arrest the image object. But if bodies do not still, but *hold* still, then movement does not cease: the photographed is never still, and the resulting photographic image is equally brimming with tension, full of movement, constantly changing.

The Bergsonian relational cinematographic model of arrest is de-contextualised and depleted, and the Benjaminian model, which Wollen interlinks with it, comes undone by photographic *pro*duction itself. But in interlinking them, Wollen does more than simply uphold them. Discussing photographic arrested stillness, Wollen insists that 'the time of photographs themselves is one of stasis', and turns to relating his own conception of the stillness of the pose of Benjaminian conviction, now released of Bergsonian relativism, to Barthes's temporal concerns of the pause.[31] In that, Wollen fuses together two further notions: stillness of arrest with stillness of rest. This is not entirely unjustified. Slightly predating Wollen, Barthes's question surrounds, to use his own words, photography 'in itself' – separated, that is, from the prevalent comparative discourse that regards photography in its relation to cinema.[32] Mostly – but not entirely – disposed of the tropes of cinematic comparison, Barthes does attribute photography

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[31] Wollen, 'Fire and Ice,' 110.
[32] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 3.

a 'stasis of *arrest*',[33] an attributed stillness that resonates with the Benjaminian inherent notion of stillness rather than the Bergsonian: an antonymic stillness that is based on the attributes of the photographed in itself, rather than a synonymic stillness that is extrinsic and based upon the relations of photography to cinema. Yet this stillness, which he calls 'arrest', is essentially different to the arrested movement in space that concerns Benjamin, Bergson and Cartier-Bresson. Rather, it concerns *time*. Being created through the photographic process, the resulting image cannot break out of the hold enforced on it by this 'stasis of *arrest*' – it is a stillness it cannot escape, and a temporal stamp that is tattooed on its surface. It is a form of stillness that envelopes the photographic image, holding it back from any change that can occur across time; indeed, it is a stillness of *rest*.

[33] Idem, 91.

SEVEN

STILLED INTO REST

When, in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes speaks of photographic 'stasis of *arrest*', what he is really getting at is a stasis of what I call *rest* – a form of photographic stillness that is experienced temporally. In photographic philosophical theory, this mode of stillness came to be identified by a formula: 'that-has-been'. The photographed existed, and it existed in the past. Nearly all writings on photography after Barthes make use of this form(ula), whether assuming and displaying it in an open manner, hiding it in the foundation of the argument, or finely grinding it into powder, only to recast it into the carrying structure that holds their thinking together: there is no escaping Barthes, and this very text is no exception. However, coined by Barthes,[1] 'that-has-been' was never meant as a formula. 'That-has-been' stems out of Barthes's relation to presence at the time of writing *Camera Lucida*, which was conditioned by his necessity to overcome the death of a beloved mother: a state of grief, which called him to lock everything – especially his memory of her, materialised, as it were, in a photographic image from her childhood – in the past. So struck was he by finding his dead mother in a (whether real or imagined) photographic image of her, which goes further back than his own existence, that a photographic theory capable of explaining his sensation had to be written. The photographic image, for Barthes, had to be linked to an image subject that existed or occurred – something that had presence, and that maintains that presents as a non-present in the present. Something that maintains that presence in the thought of the looker – a *noeme*, 'what is thought of'. 'That-has-been' is not a precept that prescribes a temporal state to the photographic image, but a perceptive experience of

[1] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 77.

the looker, determined by the way one looks and what one cannot escape from seeing, what one cannot escape from thinking about, in the act of looking at the photographic image. But in transforming from a *noeme* to a formula, 'that-has-been' grew to be a trait of the photographic image itself, coming to describe an image that is forever still, unchangeable, incapable of change.

* * *

The door opens, and I enter [Figure 17]. The year is 1996 or 1997 – I am unsure. I cannot state with certainty. The shadows of change recast a visual history of indistinct instances. Set against and occurring within an envelope of constant figures, the translucent indiscernible blur in front of me denotes a temporality that goes beyond that of my human spectrum of perception. In front of me are 366 days; I cannot keep looking for that long – I have my physical restraints. And yet, here I am, with my look directly at them. Looking at them, I do not know what day it is; I do not even know what year it is. My look is directed at bound time released and reshuffled, at a collection of distinct, distinguished, distinguishable moments captured and drawn away from their homely timeliness into a displaced state of co- and inter-being. What this photographic image presents to me is a deeply uncanny experience. This relation – this tension – between the uncanny feeling, brought about by the temporal and spatial uncertainty, and the absolute certainty that ostensibly governs this image, by its very nature of its being a photographic image, draws me towards this image, and gives me no rest. 'That-has-been'.

The year is 1996 or 1997 – of this I can be certain. The day is some day between July 29th of 1996 and July 29th of 1997. Perhaps it is a warm August day. The window is open, and the simple light wood writing table is bathed in warm sunlight. The scholar

that sits aside it, secluded in his study room with his brimming bookcase, is allowed the gratification of natural light. But the window is also closed. Yes, it must be a winter day – February, perhaps. The writing table, next to which the scholar is intently at work, is now pushed closer to the big white radiator. Outside the day is dark and sombre, and the big lamp aside the desk is spilling its white florescent light onto the brittle pages of the volume at hand. *When* has this been? Is it still? Is it there right now?

* * *

Understanding 'that-has-been' passes through understanding *Camera Lucida*. Starting with a contextualised reading of the project, I demonstrate the centrality of the notions of presence and present to Barthes's photographic project (and general state of mind), arguing that it is towards this particular telos that 'that-has-been' has been coined. Analysing its temporal quality, both in terms of tense and in terms of aspect, I conclude that the form, while offering insight as a *noeme*, fails as a formula. Discussing its ironic hold on the philosophical discourse sets the transition towards discussing the possibility of temporal stillness as a mode – both in the photographic image and in general. Photographic stillness of rest, I claim, is a borrowed mode, assumed from painting.

PRESENT, PRESENCE, TENSE & SENSE

Bereaved of his mother, Henriette, in 1977, Barthes sits down to write a book centred around an unseen photographic image of her, a holy and unreachable maternal relic that acts as a spoil plundered from the grips of her tomb. Guising itself under the cloak of photography, *Camera Lucida*, published in 1980 – in truth, a treatise on absence,

memory, longing and loss[2] – immediately became the single most cited, repeated, studied, used, reused, misused and abused text on photography, setting photographic scholarship on a particular course, from which it is yet to release itself. Without being caught in the web of a detailed examination of its provocations – studies of which are as voluminous and comprehensive,[3] as they are always insufficient and incomplete[4] – I will note that the thickness of Barthes's text is often distilled into a pair of concepts, constructed as antipodal: *studium*, understood as that which one knows, recognises and infers, and *punctum*, understood as that which one can only sense – privately[5] – as a penetrating force emitted from the image, something that 'is *seen*…but not because it has been *shown*'.[6] With the inevitability of death being, per Barthes, contained in the photographic image,[7] it is in staring back at its looker, showing them through *studium*, and piercing them through *punctum*, that the photographic image concedes not only to its looker's desire of reciprocity from its Other, but also to their death drive.

The *studium* points to what the looker is ought to recognise and understand when looking at the photographic image, using information they may possess, or that was

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[2] As Graham Allen puts forward in his book on Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 'is a book directly about his mother and the impact upon him of her death', and see: Graham Allen, '*Camera Lucida:* The Impossible Text,' in *Roland Barthes* (London: Routledge, 2003), 125.

[3] Most notable publications in English include, Nancy M. Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on Photography: The Critical Tradition in Perspective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997); Jean-Michel Rabaté, ed., *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), esp. part I. 'Reflections on Photography'; Diana Knight, ed., *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes* (New York: Hall, 2000), including Hervé Guibert's review of *Camera Lucida* in *La Monde*, 'Roland Barthes and Photography: The Sincerity of the Subject' [1980], trans. Diana Knight, 115–17, and Renaud Camus's 'encounter' on Barthes and Boudinet, 'Barthes and the Discourse of Photography' [1979], trans. Richard Howard, 112–14; and Geoffrey Batchen, ed., *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida* (London: MIT Press, 2009).

[4] In the words of Elkins: 'a full answer to *Camera Lucida* cannot be an academic essay in an academic journal: two decades of scholarship have not yet produced such an answer'; his own proposition is 'to write another even stranger' book, and see: Elkins, 'Camera Dolorosa,' 26. For that 'even stranger book' see: Elkins, *What Photography Is*.

[5] As Burgin claims, 'It is the *private* nature of the experience which defines the *punctum'*, and see: Victor Burgin, 'Re-reading *Camera Lucida*' [1982], in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 78.

[6] Michael Fried, 'Barthes's *Punctum*,' *Critical Inquiry* 31:3 (2005): 546.

[7] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 15.

planted there for them, to facilitate and guide their reading of the image (and *reading* is precisely the action here – an interpretation of signs). *Punctum*, on the other hand, is a slip, an unintended, unseen, and unnoticed occurrence that belongs to the looker's subjective experience – a latency that may only erupt if encountered by an individual pair of eyes. Through the *punctum*, it is the image's emanated look that hits its looker, bruising and affecting them, as if following the logic of Lacan's *objet petit a* – the unattainable object of desire.[8] But despite being conceived in separation, *studium* and *punctum* melt into each other. As Derrida remarks, 'the rigid separation between the pair of oppositions is 'supple' – 'at once *liée,* linked, and *déliée,* unlinked…separated by an insuperable limit, the two concepts compromise with one another. They compose together, the one *with* the other'.[9] Rancière makes a similar observation, noting that often in Barthes's account what is attributed to *punctum* actually depends on knowledge, and what is called *studium* permeates the realm of affect.[10] But while, for Derrida, this remark serves as an occasion to comment on Barthes's 'never rigid' rigour, where suppleness is a virtue,[11] Rancière's position is more critical. Rancière demonstrates that the short-circuit Barthes produces between the historical past of the photographed and the photographic image as an image of death is instrumental in Barthes's reduction of the photographic image to the Latin notion of *imago* – an effigy of a deceased ancestor that maintains their presence in the present.[12]

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[8] Margaret Iversen, 'What is a Photograph?,' *Art History* 17:3 (1994): 450–63. This essay was reprinted, with the ideas in it further developed in Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).
[9] Jacques Derrida, 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes' [1981], in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 41.
[10] Rancière, 'Pensive Image,' 111.
[11] Derrida, 'Deaths of Roland Barthes,' 40.
[12] Rancière, 'Pensive Image,' 112–13.

This reduction of the photographic image to what allows for presence in the present is significant in understanding Barthes's conception of photography at the time of the death of his mother. Presence perseveres: it never ceases to come about, to return: 'Presence is what is born, and does not cease being born'.[13] However, one cannot '*present* "presence"; it is something that *happens* of its own accord'.[14] *Being* present is being in attendance – being in existence. It is not the same as having presence. To have presence one is not required to existentially be, even though referring to this presence, one might still refer to it as 'it is'. A presence may be non-present – a sensation of non-empirical order, one that is not observed (unobservable?), but is sensed, like a chilling wave that runs through the human flesh or an overcoming feeling of a spectral company. A presence can be a non-being. But being present is necessarily being. It is a form of being that takes place in the present – a being in the present time, that is to say, a being in the present *tense*: a being that *is* (or am, or are).

In his (in)distinction of the *studium/punctum* Barthes construes the photographic image, as a non-being presence: a presence that is non-present, and whose time and tense are never – *can never be* – of the present. If examined through photographic relations, for Barthes, the image object is *for* the image subject, taking its place in the world, in that it offers its past presence a place in the non-present, representing it, and acting on its behalf. And the image subject is *to* the image object, existentially bound to it, in that its non-being form nears the present through the image object it becomes, in a connection that binds them to each other, and the looker to the necessity of this bond.

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[13] Jean-Luc Nancy, introduction to *The Birth to Presence,* trans. Brian Holmes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 2.
[14] Amelia Jones, 'Temporal anxiety/"Presence" in *Absentia*: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,' in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 198.

The photographic temporality that follows, per Barthes, takes the form of 'that-has-been', signalling what he takes to be an irrefutable visualisation of a thing that *was* necessarily present, and now remains as a presence. Grief – as Fiona Tan remarks in her own photographic obsession that arises following the death of a beloved one – freezes everything, locking it in the past tense.[15] But Barthes's grief did much more than locking his life in the past tense: it locked the entire photographic discourse in the past tense. Although Barthes never intended for 'that-has-been' as anything more the *noeme* of photography, it is precisely this form that became the base form(ula) of photographic stillness of rest. A personal experience – even if the personal is plural, and shared – Barthes's *noeme* became a rule: from a phenomenological perception to an ontological state, from regarding the looker, to describing the looked-at. Indeed, Barthes's attempt to grammatically render the non-present presence of the still photographic image – a linguistic matching game that is hindered by the nonexistence of the desired form in the (French) spoken language – resulted in a consolidation of the photographic debate around temporal tense and aspect.

As Ann Banfield observes, the temporality of Barthes's photographic image is not simply of a past presence but, rather, of a now-in-the-past: a temporal register that could be equated with the novelistic *imparfait* captured by the marriage of a past tense to a present time deictic: 'the photograph's moment *was now*'.[16] A more accurate English rendering of the time of the photographic presence, she suggests, is not the past of the 'that-has-been', but the present that *is* past, a 'this-was-now-here'.[17] Yet meticulous as it is, this observation leads to a new set of problems, for even though the

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[15] Tan, *Ascent*, film.
[16] Ann Banfield, 'L'Imparfait de l'objectif: the Imperfect of the Object Glass,' in 'Unspeakable Images,' special issue, *Camera Obscura* 24:3 (1980): 75.
[17] Idem, 76.

this-was-now-here of the now-in-the-past is always exactly what it declares to be: the *past* – as in, this *was*, and *is no more* – and albeit this past is projectable towards a future perfect,[18] it also gives itself towards a this-is-now-(still)-here: a *timeless* presence in an ever-present. That-has-been folds in on itself, and results in being both all tenses and no tense at all, both of the past and timeless, both present and non-present – and all of these, at once.

* * *

It is difficult to think of the *Office of Helmut Friedel* as a now-in-the-past – something that is happening right now, in a now that has happened long before. What would then this 'now' be? Is 'now' a warm August day? Is it a snowy February night? Is it July – and if so, July of which year, 1996 or 1997? And if it is both August and February, if it is July and July again, then what is this August to this February, this July to the other July? If both August and February are now(-in-the-past), then are August and February present to each-other?

The year is 1996. It is August, and warm summer dusks are yet to be paved away by the crisp golden shed. In the office of Helmut Friedel, the casement window is open in part, allowing a cool breath of wind to pass through the study, bringing with it deep crimson hints of late evening light. The room is filled with movement. Sounds, noises, clatters of words – all find their way in, permeating the silent air of contemplation. The room participates in the world, and the world is in it: inside and outside – syncretised, synthesised, harmonised. No, the year is 1997. The glass window is sweating signs of

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[18] Thomas Elsaesser observes that the (supposed) photographic ability to hold immobile a moment of the past is often seen through the prism of its capacity to 'sustain a "future perfect"', that is to say, to happen always before a point of reference in the future, and see: Thomas Elsaesser, 'Stop/Motion,' in Røssaak, *Stillness and Motion*, 118.

life. Sliding down, the liquefied globules of warmth draw threads of visibility down the obfuscated surface: the occluded is yet again revealed. It is winter. It is dark. Outside, a cloak woven of crystalline flakes is wrapping the streets in silky white. Reflecting the metallic light shun at it through the window, it glows in many shades of gold. It is silent. A thin, crisp silence on the streets, a flushed, voluptuous silence in the room: the two remain discrete. The year is 1996 *or* 1997 – so it absolutely must be, if the temporality of the photographic image is to be considered linear. For either the pages of the book dye red, or the snow dyes gold – but not both. Not both at once. Either light is coming from within, or light is coming from without – but never one *and* the other. Either permeation or isolation – but always one *or* the other. And yet, it would be wrong to say that in the *Office of Helmut Friedel* August is no more in February. That the sun is no more when it snows. That the window in not both open and closed. For the window is *still* open when it is *already* closed. It is now, always now, in a thick overlay of nows – a pile that amasses and resists that-has-been.

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In light of the circular irresolvability of 'that-has-been' as a formula of photographic temporality, one suggestion would be to follow Wollen's move from the notion of the tense towards that of the 'aspect',[19] which he borrows from the linguist Bernard Comrie: a proposition to think of photography solely in terms of an 'internal temporal constituency'.[20] With aspect rather than tense in mind, Wollen focuses his analysis of the photographic image on the rhetoric and semantics of it, shifting the focus towards the verb-forms used in photographic captions. His claim is that journalistic

[19] Wollen, 'Fire and Ice,' 109.
[20] Aspects as 'ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation' is a definition by the linguist Jens Holt quoted by and adopted in Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 3.

photographic captions – signifying, according to him, events – are often rendered in non-progressive present, while so-called 'art photographs' – showing states – are captioned as verbless clauses or noun-phrases, and 'documentary' photographic images – which visualise processes – make use of progressive, imperfective forms.[21] Putting aside the obvious and unanswerable question around the definition of each such group – what ontological, epistemological or phenomenological differences are there between the three delineated categories?[22] Can an event not feed into a state and become a process? – as well as the problem of 'reading' an image through the literal reading of the words that someone chose to accompany it, what remains are photographic images with internal temporal constituency of a state, an event, or a process, but without any sense of participation in time. Following Wollen, photographic presence is a non-present that is devoid of *all* time: a presence that is not in the present, but also not in the past. A presence that is without being: a presence that is not being in the present tense, but that is equally not in the past, for one cannot say it is, or it was, or it will-still-always-be. It is a presence that has presence, but for which no present is its own.

David Green goes one step further: he suggests photography should openly relinquish any attempt of temporal designations altogether, leaving only a 'this'.[23] But what is left when temporality is removed from the photographic image? What is left, but an aphasic deixis, an empty (semiotic) pointer of duration, a 'this' that is not 'is', that is without being – that is to say, without existence? When taken as a formula, and applied

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[21] Wollen, 'Fire and Ice,' 109.

[22] Although using different categories that follow a different grouping, Flusser draws a compelling distinction between supposedly indicative (e.g. scientific and reportage), imperative (e.g. advertisement), and optative (mainly artistic) photographic images, that is based on the rhetoric of the information they provide, yet these categories are neither mutually-exclusive nor constant. The distinction relies (mostly) on the channel of distribution, so that the same photographic image can, and often does, accumulate different significations. See: Flusser, *Philosophy of Photography,* 53–55.

[23] David Green, 'Marking Time: Photography, Film and Temporalities of the Image,' in Green and Lowry, *Stillness and Time*, 17.

to photographic images as a rule, Barthes's 'that-has-been' is impossible; any attempt to resolve it is equally impossible. From a temporal perspective, 'that-has-been' is unresolvable: following it down the temporal path it heads, leads to the negation of time as a meaningful attribute of the photographic image.

But while 'that-has-been' fails as a formulaic rule, its value is irrefutable when taken in its original sense, as a *noeme*: a perceived experience of the looker. Yet that experience of a non-present presence is but a single instance out of a multiplicity of possible perceptions. Nancy's brief 1985 photo-essay 'George' – one of his rare few writings on photography – is a telling demonstration. Nancy opens with a paraphrase of Barthes's form: 'Photography shows [that] something…actually existed, at a particular time'.[24] George, an instance of someone that appeared, sometime, somewhere, '*drank* this glass of wine',[25] Nancy observes in front of a photographic image of an elderly man in the midst of quaffing. In front of the same image still, he informs the man: 'I see you *drink*…I see the lived, the flow of time…You, you don't see anything: you're *drinking*'.[26] On the next page, George '[*was*] *about to* light a cigarette',[27] Nancy recalls below an image of the same man with a lighter held between his fingertips. And then, 'You're *sporting* your eternal beret',[28] and 'eating, this evening – one evening, this particular evening',[29] Nancy talks to George. To be sure, text, as Barthes himself notices, is 'parasitic' of the photographic image,[30] yet Nancy's discursivity is useful precisely in being a text that is, in its very being, paratextual, or *beside* the main thing that is examined, namely, the image. In being beside it, and despite the fallacy of 'the present

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[24] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'George' [1985], in *Multiple Arts*, 131.
[25] Idem, 132. My italics.
[26] Ibidem. My italics.
[27] Idem, 133. My italics.
[28] Idem, 135. My italics.
[29] Idem, 142. My Italics.
[30] Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message' [1961], in *Image – Music – Text*, 25.

tense of reception',[31] which often fails the looker, Nancy's 'George' does not ignore the fundamentally unstill nature of photographic temporality. If it is perception one seeks – as with Barthes's *noeme* of 'that-has-been' – then the offering of the photographic image is plural: perfective and imperfective, relative future and present progressive – multiple tenses and multiple aspects interlaced with each other. If the question is how can one voice the photographic relations of representation and becoming, then the answer must be that image object is *for* the image subject, and the image subject is *to* the image object; but they are not only *for* and *to* something that has been – rather, they are *for* and *to* something that is about to be, that is, that is being, and perhaps it was not at all.

But rejecting the Barthesian *noeme* as a formula, does not amount to rejecting stillness of rest as an ontological state of the photographic form. The discursivity that springs out of the *noeme* – the sense of unbounded tenses and aspects – is a useful step in getting a sense of the multiplicity of photographic temporality, but it is not a demonstration of it, and cannot, on its own, be means towards exposing the essentially unstill nature of the photograph.

Borrowed Time

Amongst the most famous instances of photographic images attributed with stillness of rest through time there are William Eggleston's colour images of the American cultural landscape; Michael Kenna's black and white landscapes; Richard Misrach's *Desert Cantos* series of 1987; any photographic image by Luigi Ghirri; and much of Rineke Dijkstra's photographic oeuvre, and especially her 1992–94 *Beach Portraits*. Discussing Dijkstra's

[31] Mary Ann Doane, 'Real Time: Instantaneity and the Photographic Imaginary,' in Green and Lowry, *Stillness and Time*, 35.

series of full body portraits of anonymous adolescents on the beach within the framework of the pensive image, Rancière attributes Dijkstra's photographic images with what he refers to as a sense of distance and mystery, of the sort that is, according to him, custom to encounter in a portrait gallery or a museum:[32] attributing, that is, their photographic stillness of rest with a pictorial sense of presence. According to Rancière, a certain type of photographic images – indeed, that same one that is, as he claims, successfully integrated into the museum space as art – 'assumes the format of the painting and imitates its mode of presence'.[33] The photographic image he includes as part of this argument is Dijkstra's *Kolobrzeg, Poland, July 26 1992* – an image that is, to be sure, of striking and undeniable resemblance to Botticelli's iconic *Birth of Venus* (*c.* 1484–86). But the 'assumption' and 'imitation' Rancière addresses must not be confused with an iconographical relation to painting: all photographic images may 'assume' and 'imitate' painterly stillness of rest. *Kolobrzeg, Poland* does not have a pictorial presence of distance and mystery because it looks like a famous painting. Rather, it is *through* its resemblance to that famous painting that what otherwise might have been described as 'a strange sense of calm', or simply 'stillness' is bared for what it is: an appropriated – *expropriated*, even – mode.

Silence, slowness and stillness are attributes often associated with the fourteenth century fresco painting of Giotto, while serenity and suspension are often used to describe Leonardo da Vinci's renaissance work. But it is Johannes Vermeer's seventeenth century paintings that are perhaps most known for their temporal sense of serene expansion and peaceful dislocation.[34] Indeed, far from being traditional *Vanitas*

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[32] Rancière, 'Pensive Image,' 109–10.
[33] Idem, 109.
[34] A good example of that can be seen in Laurence Weschler's report on Bosnia and the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague in 1995, where he describes the repose Antonio Cassese, a jurist and

moralising moments *en vogue* at the time, Vermeer's paintings are suspended realities that open moments to slowness and pleasure.[35] Bathed in light and held within the moment, Vermeer's painted figures *inhabit* stillness. This might bring to mind the idea of inhabiting stillness from the Benjaminian conception of the inherent stillness of the pose, but despite the striking conceptual resonance, the two must not be confused. Where Benjaminian arrest was drawn upon a poser who had to spatially inhabit a locus in static stillness, Vermeer's rest comes from a figure who, in the painting, is allowed to exist in calm stillness. It is a form of stillness that bestows a temporal sense of serene expansion and peaceful dislocation on its subject, allowing it to dwell in it. Stillness of rest is a decisively painterly mode.

To be sure, Vermeer's paintings are a particularly well-known instance of this calmness, but as Louis Marin suggests, it is painting in general that exists in a still temporality of extension, where the non-passing of time leads to a contemplative mode.[36] According to Marin, in painting, time is 'deposited' – understood as both placed for safekeeping, and committed to the tomb.[37] Painting inhabits deposited time: not only Vermeer's slowed down movements in their temporal delight, but also Botticelli's Venus suspended mode of being clothed by her earthly companions. They are both forever 'in the process',[38] to repeat Marin's words, where 'in the process' is used to describe actions whose course is presented in the painting, but that have neither a before nor an

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president of the court, found in Vermeer's paintings during the trial, noticing that Vermeer's painting, '[have become for us] the very emblem of peacefulness and serenity', and see: Lawrence Weschler, 'Inventing Peace,' *The New Yorker*, 20 November, 1995, 56–64.

35 Edward Snow, 'Meaning in Vermeer,' in *A Study of Vermeer* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 145–66.

36 Louis Marin, 'Depositing Time in Painted Representation' [1990], in *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 305.

37 Idem, 285–92.

38 Idem, 291.

after, 'only this unique, decisive, mortal moment'. Indeed, another allusion to arrest comes about, this time to Cartier-Bresson, and through him, also Bergson.

But Cartier-Bresson did not invent the decisive moment, and Bergson was not the first to compare media on the basis of their mobility. Cartier-Bresson's very idea around the existence of a 'decisive moment', much like Bergson's distinction between states of immobility and movement, resonates of and carries forward the aesthetic tradition of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1766 *Laocoön*, on its 'pregnant moment', and its dichotomous separation between the single moment of visual arts, and a succession of moments that is poetry.[39] Through a process of assimilation, Lessing's stillness nears both Bergson's and Cartier-Bresson's: the single, singularised pre-climatic moment of anticipation attributed to the visual arts by Lessing is mutated, remodelled, and recast as a static instance that is the decisive one: the still photographic image.

For Marin, painting takes this 'decisive' pregnant moment with neither a past nor a future, and allows it to linger in the present, expanding the present to encompass all other presences it encounters. Marin's argument of painterly stillness regards both rest and arrest: it is *at once* a frozen being in space and a temporal opening of time, for its temporal opening is towards an openness that is the grave of the image – its final lying point – an assumption of a final position. It is, therefore, not difficult to see how this painterly stillness succeed in permeating the photographic image, which assumes it as its own. While the affinity of the painterly mode of dwelling in stillness resonates with a Benjaminian sense of spatial arrest, and its commitment to a pregnant moment with a Bergsonian, its slowing down and disconnect, especially in relation to locking the

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[39] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* [1766], trans. Edward Allen McCormick (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

'mortal', depositing it in a temporal frame which extends beyond time, brings back to Barthes, the questions of temporal rest, and the formula it assumes.

And it is this stillness of being at rest that I suggest needs to be read in Rancière's reference to certain photographic images as assuming a painterly mode of being distant and mysterious: not iconographic resemblance, but a temporality of being stilled in suspense. Stillness is a *borrowed mode*. The 'distance' of the photographic image is a distance in time – a time that is put to rest in its own opening in the ground of the image. A distance that longs for the unattainable nearness of its own conclusion, for its closure. A distance that is a designator of farness, understood not as the remote, strange or unhomely, but as a point of expanded time that is far beyond reach. The 'mystery' is a mystery of time, a time that is congealed and concealed – buried, that is, in its final place of deposition. A mystery that is impenetrable, without an ingress or an egress, sealed in the intensity of its expanded field. In being mysterious, it is difficult to identify – a fleeting *je ne sais quoi* – an unexplainable, inexplicable sensation (indeed, this too comes to it from the realm of painting): a pause. But photographic stillness of 'distance' and 'mystery' – of temporal rest and repose – is, as Rancière stresses, an imitation. It is a fake whose original betrays its counterfeit. It betrays it, because unlike with painting, the photographic image *cannot* be temporally still in suspense.

In 'Lecture', the philosophical polylogue accompanying Marie-Françoise Plissart's 1985 photo-roman, *Right of Inspection*, Derrida suggests that the photographic image is a thought which come out of a voiceless pensiveness – a thought whose only call is that of suspense.[40] As Derrida suggests, pensiveness *is*, in its very essence, a state of being in

[40] Jacques Derrida, 'Lecture,' in Marie-Françoise Plissart, *Droit de regards* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985), XXV.

suspense. This bond between pensiveness and suspense is evinced, for instance, by the idiomatic Italian phrase *stare in pensiero*, literally meaning being in thought, inhabiting it without motion, as well as by the etymological origin of French *pensée* and Italian *pensiero* – the Latin verb *pendere*, to be in suspense. And it is precisely this essential bond between pensiveness and suspense that is not only explored by many – from Barthes,[41] to Rancière,[42] to Raymond Bellour[43] – in relation to the photographic image, but that constantly brings back photography into pensiveness. Indeed, it is this conception that sustains and enlivens the conception of the photographic image as a still image full of thoughts – an image that inhabits a state of silent pensiveness, that in and through its suspense is brimming with thought. Being a borrowed mode, I suggest, stillness locks photography in a passive state of being pensive: not because being still prevents the formation of thought – painting thinks, as Damisch points out – but because photographic thinking, as I demonstrate, is a formation of thought through movement.

While stillness locks photography in pensiveness, it is 'that-has-been', taken erroneously as a formula, which locks photography in temporal stillness. Reducing the present presence of the photographic form into a state of being still at rest, 'that-has-been' solidifies photography's relation to presence and change in a timeless non-present. And it does so expansively. Indeed, so ubiquitous and well-rehearsed is this form(ula), that despite its date of formulation being posterior to some of the discussed critical engagements with the photograph (de Duve springs to mind, but also Benjamin, and even Cartier-Bresson), the chronologically preceding text cannot elude being read through the prism of the form(ula)tion that followed, without 'that-has-

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41 Roland Barthes, *S/Z* [1973], trans. Richard Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 216–17 (561).
42 Rancière, 'Pensive Image.'
43 Raymond Bellour, 'The Pensive Spectator' [1984], trans. Lynne Kirby, in *Between-the-Images* (Document: Les Presses du Réel, 2012), 86–93.

been' appearing through them. 'That-has-been' feeds back into conceptions that precede it, so that the latter can no longer be seen without the former. Indeed, this is often the case, that the past is seen through its future – that the past is *changed* by its future. In fact, it is precisely this revision of the past through its future, actuated by the Barthesian formulation that voids its own postulation: the past has never 'been', it always *is*, and always in motion. In the world, there can be no stillness through time, and the photographic image is no exception: evincing this (im)possibility is a vital first step outside the grave-like hole in which temporal stillness has deposited the philosophy of photography.

EIGHT

STILLNESS THROUGH TIME

In the photographic image of rest, stillness surrounds the general temporal attribute of the image: appearing paused and at rest, the image object does not allow for its location in a singularised moment in time, and the image subject assumes an extended sense of stillness, as if continuing and prolonging at length, timelessly. But the impossibility of the photographic image being still through time becomes apparent when the question around what it would mean for the photographic image to be timeless, is raised. There are three ways for the photographic image to be timeless: without time, outside time, and throughout time; however, none of these, as I show, is true of the photographic image. The first option of being *atemporal* would demand the image to remain immutable, while both the photographic image and the photographic form, as I demonstrate, are in constant *flux*: materially, epistemologically, and ontologically. The second option, being *extratemporal*, would locate the photographic form through time, but never *in* time – that is to say, never in the present, while photographic relations, as I show, are *always* in the present. The final option of the photograph being timeless is being *eternal*. Yet the timelessly eternal, I argue, is a constant non-present, whereas the photograph is *ever-present*. Photographic relations may be eternal, but they are not timeless, and they do not lead to a stillness of rest.

CHANGING PRESENCES

The first way of thinking about the relation of the timeless photographic image to the passage of time is through the notion of *atemporality*. The atemporal exists without time,

that is to say, it exists at no time, or does not exist at any *specific* time. It is never in the present, nor is it of the past, or of a coming future. Unaffected by the movement of time, it exists without being, because it may not be described as 'is': it is a presence with no present. Equally, it has not been, nor will be, it does not follow a before or an after, does not occur on a day or an hour, does not take place in an era or an epoch or an age. The atemporal exists as a negation. It is *a*-temporal: on the opposite of being temporal, from the Latin *temporalis* – 'of a time', but at the same time, on the opposite of being earthly or terrestrial, from the French *temporel* – 'that which concern material things'. The atemporal is non-worldly, not of *this* world and its time. It is timeless in its truest sense: lacking in time, devoid of time, free from time. The atemporal does not move, progress, change or even happen; it is never created, it merely exists.

Taken as atemporal, photographic timelessness manifests on both the register of the photographic image, and on that of the photographic form. On the level of the image, it is experienced as a suspension that the image presents, and does not cease to make visible. The atemporal photographic image does not change: its atemporality is of material nature. On the level of the form, it is experienced as a suspended state of being, which holds photographic relations, so that these never change. On this register, atemporality is a question of epistemology and phenomeno-ontology.

The photographic image is not an *a priori* entity. Whether manufactured or mass-produced, it is an image with a genesis: a temporal stamp of creation and coming into being. As an object, the photographic image follows the mechanical logic of its iteration: it is *technê* as manufacturing – taken, developed, printed, made. At the same time, photography is also *technê* as a bringing-forth – a philosophical revealing that belongs to *poietic pro*duction. The photographic image follows the logic of its becoming, its coming into being, and in that, its bringing into being: the photographic formation

of a thought. Relations form, photographs form, and photographic instances – iterations – are precisely that: instances, occurrences in time.

While the atemporal is immutable, the photographic image is constantly in flux. Over time, photographic images fade. The silver print is gradually eaten away, until nothing remains but a soft fog mantling the surface. The scarred chromatic coat bleeds yellowed colours – a wound created in time. Tears and ruptures, blunted corners, marks of attachments, folds that turn into broken veins, subtle imprints of paper, casual imperfections – causalities. And cuts. And shutters. Like when the fragile glass of the Ambrotype cracks and disperses into shards, its varnish futile in its fight against abrasion. Or when the Ferrotype buckles and deforms under the strains of time, and fractal trees spread across the corroded iron, as its protective varnish blisters and flakes. Barthes was aware of this material deterioration of the photographic image,[44] and many have written about its significance.[45]

This material mutability is the first of the possible objections to the atemporality of the photographic image. Of the three levels of change the photographic form and image undergo, the material is the most immediately apparent, but perhaps the least important: the change is of the iteration, not of the photograph itself – not of the *relations*. Although the photographic image thinks through its form, it is a form whose materiality is a mere means of materialisation, whereas it is the relations between the image subject and the image object that form the photograph.

A change on the register of the relations is observable, however, on the second level of photographic mutability. It is what Jonathan Friday hints towards, when noticing that

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[44] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 67.
[45] See especially: Elisabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).

'what the [photographic image] is a picture *of* changes over time'.[46] This second type of change is of *epistemological* nature: what the photographic image shows – what one *sees* in the photographic image and what one may *know* from looking at the photographic image – is mutable: a change that occurs precisely over time. Indeed, as Cadava claims, photography is so unstable, mobile and pan-contextual, that its 'signature characteristic is perhaps its capacity to take on different forms, relentlessly and restlessly, to migrate, to travel, to move, often away from itself'.[47] Military intelligence photographic images that, in gathering visual information and performing surveillance, served for the forceful occupation of territories, may be reappropriated as means of empowering the oppressed narrative of the occupied: an image whose showing was used to hegemonise becomes an evidence of the history of that very hegemonisation.[48] Personal, intimate and domestic imagery taken privately and shown to a few, may be the subject of a sociological claim about societal structures and the function of modern kinship: an image that used to show a family dinner, now shows a constructed state of society.[49] A found, foreign, 'exotic', or strange photographic image may be the subject of an outsider narrative, an 'it's-a-so-and-so', to repeat again the words of Krauss, a form of one-minute story-telling entertainment that French television broadcasted in the 1980s: an image of something-whatever becomes an image of whatever one sees in it.[50] A curated assemblage of discrete images with little in common, may be topologically

[46] Jonathan Friday, 'Stillness Becoming: Reflections on Bazin, Barthes, and Photographic Stillness,' in Green and Lowry, *Stillness and Time*, 49.
[47] Eduardo Cadava, 'The Itinerant Languages of Photography,' in *The Itinerant Languages of Photography*, ed. Eduardo Cadava and Gabriela Nouzeilles (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum; London: Yale University Press, 2013), 24.
[48] Rona Sella, 'Rethinking National Archives in Colonial Countries and Zones of Conflict,' in *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, ed. Anthony Downey (London: IB Tauris, 2015), 79–91.
[49] Most famously see: Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* [1965], trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity, 1990). For a close reading of the many ways in which family photos change what they are of, see: Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991); and, Marianne Hirsch, ed., *The Familial Gaze* (London: Dartmouth College Press, 1999).
[50] Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography and the Simulacral,' 56.

grouped together through the appearance of an otherwise insignificant detail – a teddy bear, perhaps, like in the case of Ydessa Hendeles, where images of schoolchildren and sailors, groups of athletes and army sweethearts, sunny vacations and family dinners dissolve around the appearance of a small stuffed animal, as the *punctum* of the unexpected bear becomes the *studium* of the explicit theme.[51] Or, perhaps, another curated assemblage, such as Linda Fregni Nadler's *The Hidden Mother* (2006–13), a collection of Victorian photographic images, which forces into visibility that which was never meant to be seen – the mother, holding her infant, covered by a cloak, concealed from sight: the photographic image is precisely *not of her*, but through it and in it she is revealed, visibility regained – a presence that is again present. Specific instances could go on and on.

Unlike the material change, that remains on the surface level of the photographic iteration, the epistemological change the photographic image undergoes over time affects the ontological relation of photographic becoming, which sees the image subject as being *to* the image object. With time, the photographic image subject changes: it is no longer what it used to be as it was being photographed, no more what it was at the time of the photographic first bringing into being. It is different to itself, and this difference affects the image object into which it becomes, giving it shape, and to which it is existentially bound.

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The room unfolds, as the barred window opens to its suburb, and the dusty road rests on mahogany wood [Figure 18]. Embedded in each other, their form is united into

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[51] For a thought-provoking capture of Hendeles's project see: *Ydessa, the Bears and etc.,* directed by Agnes Varda, Ciné Tamaris, 2004, documentary film essay.

one. The street is not through the window, it is not behind it, and the floor is not underneath. The image object was a layered structure, but the photographic image is one, a thing-bloc, a unity. And it changes in time. Now it is a collage, a photomontage, an assembly of unrelated instances whose combination is greater than the sum of its parts: through its dialectical mode, it brings together that which cannot otherwise be seen. Now it is a poetic composition, with a style of expression and an appeal to the emotive through its imagery: it is an aesthetic choice, a move to make one feel through form, colour and structure. Now it is a political statement, a critical observation with a theoretical proposition: in its juxtaposition, its works is to make visible, inform, empower and elicit resistance. Now it is a sociological document, an attestation of a state, a tool of visualisation and for examination: in being data, it makes a part of a visual argument, a thesis measured by impact. Now it is an anthropological artefact, a visual form that calls for cultural interpretation: it is by an Other, a subject that may be looked at through the visual culture it produces. Now it is an archival unit, a historical record deposited for continuity, a participant in a system of control: it may be forgotten, found, rescued, appropriated, repurposed. Now it is evidence. Now it is fiction. Now it is truth. Now it is falsified. Now it is demagogic. Now it is oversimplified. Now it is inaccurate. Now it is misrepresentative. Now it is a personal view.

The photographic image has a presence: it has a different presence in each present. And the thought it forms through its form varies with it – it multiplies.

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The third objection to the photographic image being atemporal, and consequentially immutable, is of *phenomeno-ontological* nature. Not only does the appearance of the

photographic image change over time, and the thing the photographic image is of or about is subject to change, but the thing the photographic image *is* is profoundly and fundamentally changeable – a change that is observable through the perception of that image. The essence of the still photographic image – what the still photographic image of rest *is* – is an image in which temporal change is at rest. This observation may appear as a tautology, but despite its self-reinforcing logic, the statement is not true. The still photographic image of rest is not an image in which temporal change is at rest, but an image in which temporal change is at rest *at this instance*. To be sure, whatever material change the image carrier undergoes, the photographic image object itself remains largely immutable, continuing to follow the same contours, albeit shifting hue, and suffering from possible raptures, tears and cracks. But looking the same is not the same as *being* the same.

One cannot bathe in the same river twice, Heraclitus's famous adage suggests: all changes all the time – the river is never the same river again, and the individual is never the same individual again. All changes over time: both the river and the individual; both the photographic image and the individual. One does not look at the same photographic image twice. Only in the case of the photographic image, the change undergone by it is owing to the change undergone by the individual – not as an individual, but as a part of a social collective. The photographic image changes because taste, culture, and even history, all change – it changes because the individual changes. Because what the individual sees when *they* look at it, changes.

The still photographic image of rest is an image in which temporal change is at rest *at this instance*, but that is not to say that this silent contemplative stillness was in or of the image all along. Given the relatively recent acceptance of photography into the realm of art's affect and affection, it is difficult to identify an instance where such change is

registered by the history of art and ideas. But there are stunning demonstrations of this change in painting, including the case of Vermeer's – in many ways, photographic[52] – work. When Proust's Bergotte spends the final moments of his life with the world's most famous '*petit pan de mur jaune*', it was neither a silent contemplation, nor an opening in time, but a little patch of yellow wall, precious like a Chinese work of art that he sees when looking at Vermeer's *View of Delft* (1660–61). It was the yellow, golden light on its range of radiant and transparent sensibilities that drew to Proust to Vermeer's work.[53] Light was not only what Proust saw in Vermeer, but probably what most people in the first quarter of the twentieth century saw as well. This is how *The Smiling Girl* and *The Lace Maker*, both painted by Han van Meegeren around 1925, succeeded in convincing Andrew W. Mellon, who purchased them in the second half of the 1920s, of being authentic Vermeers: through their soft golden light. Unable to produce a Vermeer – which is rather different to reproducing a Vermeer – van Meegeren attempted to reproduce the set of qualities he believed to be essential for a painting to be a Vermeer. Such is the true value of artistic counterfeit: it reveals how its contemporaries *perceive* the group of originals it is presented as a part of, and what qualities are conceived as essential to them. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for Vermeer that quality was light. But looking at the van Meegerens today, it may be unclear how could these have fooled anyone, when they look nothing like a Vermeer. If, for a period of time, these two paintings *were* a Vermeer, but no longer are, it is because Vermeer *was light*, whereas today he *is stillness*. What the image *is* is an outcome of *when* it is being looked at.

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52 Philip Steadman, *Vermeer's Camera: Uncovering the Truth Behind the Masterpieces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
53 Germaine Brée, 'Proust's Combray Church: Illiers or Vermeer?,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112:1 (1968): 5–7.

The still photographic image of rest is not an image in which temporal change is at rest, but an image in which temporal change *appears to the individual* to be at rest *at this instance*: when one looks at it, one *sees* an image of rest – when one looks at it, it *is* an image of rest. This phenomeno-ontological change the photographic image undergoes over time occurs specifically in the photographic semiotic relation of representation, which sees the image object as being *for* the image subject. A change to what the photographic image *is* is a change on the level of how the image object stands on behalf of the image subject: to how it takes its place in the world, and how it offers it place, to the bondage between them, and the function of one in the light of the other.

Coming to Presence

That from a material, epistemological and phenomeno-ontological perspective, the photographic image is not atemporal is not yet to say that the photograph is not timeless, for photographic timeless stillness can also be *extratemporal*. The extratemporal is that which is located beyond the verges of the flow of what is called time. Unlike the atemporal, it allows for mutation, duration, and temporal subordinating conjunctions: there may be a before and an after, a since and an until, a beginning and an end. With the extratemporal, there may be difference over time, for it is time itself that is of a different – external – order. The extratemporal is *extra*-temporal: outside of time, in addition to time – a second logic of order, progression and continuance, that moves in a non-parallel course to time, expanding into multiple directions, following a discrete, yet not distinct, velocity. Never constant, but always in relation to time itself, it is a logic of acceleration and deceleration that opens itself to intervals that swell and retrieve: stillness as an expanding suspension. Side by side, the temporal and

extratemporal near and separate, the latter curving into the former, but the two never falling together: remaining asymptotic, they never touch.

Addressing time and temporality, Claude Lévi-Strauss observes that so-called 'cold' primitive societies follow a mythical order of time and history, a model which he defines as a 'form without content', in which there exists 'a before and an after, but their sole significance lies in reflecting each other'.[54] This mythical history, according to him, follows a 'timeless model'[55] – a timelessness that is an extratemporality. Societies that locate themselves *outside* of history are timeless in the sense of being outside time: extra-temporal. Lévi-Strauss describes this mode as 'both disjoint from and conjoint with the present'.[56] Disjoint, in that its occurrence is profoundly distinct from that of the present, to which it is an irreconcilable Other – a temporal chasm that cannot be rectified. Conjoint, in that its occurrence outside time returns to the present as its immediate past.

In photography, the claim for extratemporality manifests on the register of the photographic form – in the photographic relations. The claim of photographic extratemporality is that from the moment it is brought into being, the photographic form is outside time: not of that moment, nor in that moment, but in some-moment, on a different order. If it is extratemporal, then the photographic form forms in a different logic of time; in a diachronic movement, it nears time and draws back away – projecting into time, but never being in time, never synchronic. It is only the photographic image that is here, present in the present. This is because, in order for the photograph to be stilled into the timeless rest of extratemporality, it must never be

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[54] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* [1962], trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 235.
[55] Idem, 236.
[56] Ibidem.

present in time. In that, it is timeless, but not without time: it returns, reappearing, as a recurrence from another time. The extratemporal returns to time to give place to an image, which holds the extratemporal relation as its past. It returns as an image of itself, a photographic iteration. It may encounter time through its iteration, projecting itself into the present as a form of past, but it itself must remain outside: the relations that form the photograph are out of time, it is only ever the photographic iteration that is present. The image object is *for* the image subject, multiplying it and owing itself to it, not in the present, but as a presence. The image subject is *to* the image object, forming it and linking to it, not at this very moment that is now, but at another moment that returns as a memory. The extratemporal meets time as an estimation, as a transference, as an extension, as a presentation on its surface, as an image that becomes material, as a projection. The extratemporal may appear in the present, but it as an occurrence from the outside, as a recurrence, a projection from a different time order. Growing and expanding, the extratemporal opens and intensifies *through* time without ever being *in* time, that is to say, without its presence ever reaching the present.

* * *

As layers come undone, the image multiplies [Figure 19].

First, I look at each photographic iteration separately. Stooping to the floor, I look at a framed bubble gum candy pink mesh silkscreen leaning against the gallery wall – a negative image of the hands of the artist. It represents: it stands for those hands, offering their presence to me, in the present. Offering their presence to all the looks that hit its surface, sharing its presence across multiple presents. Rising up, I look at the dark grey ink print excoriating a white wall, a monochromatic articulation of a human form that comes through between the shadows. I know that what I am expected to see

is a systemic structure of communication, a performed language that turns to a provocation to enunciate, to speak – a reflection on the production of meaning. What I see is the photographic form, continuing to form in front of me: I see the hands becoming image, redrawing their own image, reaching through the wall, through the surface, through a silk screen. A multiplication that pulls the photographic image into the present.

I stop, and look at the photographic image in front of me: an image of two images installed for my look. It is not transparent, I cannot behold them through it. It forms between my finger: it represents and becomes, it places in the world, and links itself to it. Its photographic form is now, and it is multiple.

* * *

But the photographic form, within its temporally multiple existence, is present in the present, while remaining present in the past, and maintaining present in the future. Photographic relations exist not only in a timeless before that may always be immediately preceding, but also during, while, at once: not as a past, but as a present presence, a presence that *is*. Not only does the photographic image move through time, but the photograph itself moves through time, and in its movement, it inhabits time, keeping its presence in the presents through which it passes: photographic relations are at once diachronic and synchronic, at once through and in time. The photographic image inhabits multiple points in time, assuming and consuming them, without release. The photograph does not simply appear in the present in the form of an iteration, it is *in* and *of* the present, of *multiple, changing presents*. The photographic form is *ever present*. Rather than the image object being *for* the image subject as a presence, it is *for* it as an offering of presence in the present, as an enhancement that brings to the present – to

all presents. Rather than the image subject being *to* the image object in a linkage that repeats as a memory, it is *to* it in way of continuous formation, a figuration that re-confines one to the other, redrawing the confines of each other. The photographic form is not extratemporal: it is not timeless and never present, but *ever present*. In that it may be designated as eternal, but it is not, as I show, eternal in a timeless sense.

MOVING THROUGH PRESENTS

As a third mode of timelessness, eternity is incessant, without cease, without stop, without break, and without conclusion, a constant – but one that may be subject to change. Unlike its divine omnitemporal counterpart, a form of timeless being that does not belong to a single point in time, but exists at *all* temporal points, being temporally present at all presents *at once*, the eternal inhabits time by way of *accumulation*. An all-inclusive simultaneity of which all parts are permanent, being at once is a stable mode of concurrence. Being by mode of accumulation, on the other hand, is a perpetuation through increase, an ever-growing augmentation. Within that, the photographic form – the register of photography which this third mode of timelessness concerns – is always more than it used to be.

If it is timelessly eternal, then the photograph travels through time, and allows, in turn, for time travel to take place through it. So much, that cinema – a medium that *is* movement, especially, as the Bergsonian model holds, when compared to photography, that is stillness – *required* photography, taken as timelessly eternal, to portray one of its most iconic time travels. Indeed, it is *through* photographic images, distinctly marked as still, that Chris Marker's 1962 short film, *La Jetée*, allows its protagonist to move

through time. On the fiftieth day of his journey to the past, the nameless man, who witnesses his own death on the observation deck, meets the nameless woman, who he is tracking through time, at a natural history museum.[57] As they dwell amongst the taxidermied beasts, the English voice-over speaks of 'ageless animals' – '*bêtes éternelles*' to use Marker's own words from the French screenplay: *eternal* animals. The 1992 English book version *La jetée: ciné-roman* reads 'timeless animals'.[58] Within the logic of the film, the musealised animals are eternal in its timeless and ageless sense not because of the chemical process forced on them for their material preservation, but because they were photographed, because they exist as photographic images. Their timelessness, their proposed eternity, and particularly, the voicing of their timelessness within the film's narrative, takes place on two registers of meaning. On the one hand, as creatures, they are timeless in that they continue to exist apparently without cease: lifeless and deathless at once, they are ageless for they belong to no age in particular, but to all ages that were and that are to come. On the other, in a self-reflexive mode, the film comments on its own chronic logic: time travel is made possible through the transformation of moments into still, timeless photographic images, a taking of form that occurs in the mind of its hero. In being timeless and eternal, the still photographic image allows him to enter it, refilling it with his own timely presence. If the photographic form is timelessly eternal, then the image object being *for* the image subject is a being on behalf of it that allows, through its still surrogate, to reach back to it. The image subject being *to* the image object, in that case, is a connection that remains at the end of a transformation, and may lead back to the form out of which came the figure.

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[57] *La Jetée*, directed by Chris Marker, Argos Films, 1962, film.
[58] Chris Marker, *La jetée: Ciné-roman* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), n. p.

Coming from the Latin *aevum*, age, the eternal is etymologically derived from the Ancient Greek *aion*, a temporal concept whose meaning it partially preserves. Chronos and Aiôn, as Deleuze suggests in his account of the Stoic theory of time, are the two modes through which the Stoics read the duality of time. While Chronos is the time that is 'composed only of interlocking presents', Aiôn is the time that is 'constantly decomposed into elongated pasts and futures'.[59] Despite reciprocally excluding each other, both are equally necessary readings of time, that do not force one another out of time, but reveal its complexity. In fact, Chronos 'depends on the matter which limits and fills it out', whereas Aiôn is 'an empty form of time'.[60] Relating Aiôn and Chronos to photography, Yve Lomax suggests that the immeasurable time which opens in the still photographic image is that of Aiôn, understood as an interval, or a meanwhile.[61] It is a form of non-present that is at once its own past and future: a timelessly eternal extension.

To be sure, this logic of linking and delinking, particularly in relation to a point of present, has obvious parallels with Lévi-Strauss's account of 'primitive' temporalities, especially between the notion of Aiôn as an 'empty form of time' and Lévi-Strauss's mythical and extratemporal model of a 'form without content'. Yet despite these surface similarities, the differences between the two models are pronounced. Lévi-Strauss's model is a twofold view that exists in parallel and meets, through projection, in the present. Deleuze's understanding of the Stoic model presents two contradictory readings of time, which cannot coexist, but cannot be separated, either. Although it does not allow for a present, Aiôn is not a form of extratemporality: it is a mode of

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[59] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* [1969], trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Athlone, 1990), 62.
[60] Ibidem.
[61] Yve Lomax, 'Thinking Stillness,' in Green and Lowry, *Stillness and Time*, 59.

eternal expansion. In being an empty form and a straight continuous line, Aiôn is the time of the event-effect: fleeing in both directions past and future, it effectuates a simultaneous advance and retreat, a pulsation along time, both about to happen and having just happened, for the pure event is 'never an actuality'.[62] The event never has its presence in the present. Aiôn without Chronos, the eternal without time, or the timelessly eternal is never now.

* * *

The image continues to multiply – it is becoming change itself [Figures 20–22]. Against an evening sky of lilac, lavender and mauve, the haze of a warm sundown bedims an equestrian bronze cast that is facing the horizon. Soon he will be swallowed in the belly of the clouds. For now, he is still here, still moving. As the horizon stains in cerulean, cobalt and azurite, early twilight begins to fall on the rider. The clouds swell, and the milky veil becomes a speckled sheet of grey and ivory whites. I can see him clearer now, but he is further away. Time passes. Gradually, teal shifts into golden sand and the scorching flare of day swallows the horseman. The sky is clear, and the sun persists on the body of the rider, burning right through it. It is blinding, but I continue to look as he fades away into a white glow. He will continue to ride forever.

As the photographic image burns out and away, its surface goes through deterioration, dematerialisation, de-territorialisation. As it loses grounds, it can no longer be the ground of the image – it can no longer offer its look. The iteration disappears, and with it the figuration that was on it. Forms and shapes bleach into a uniform projection of light. But the photographic form is still there. Its relations do not cease. It cannot

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[62] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 63.

return, for it never went away. It *is*. As the rider against the sky becomes an image of itself, it assumes a form, forms a thought, and this photographic form is eternal, extending before and after, ever present, with presents that overwrite each other. Yes. it *is* eternal, but it is never timeless, never without time – instead, it moves through time, changes in time, and is affected by time.

* * *

The timeless eternal is a mode without presence: it may be present in all presents, *but it is never present in the present*. Like any presence it perseveres, but like any non-present it never *is*. The temporal designation of the timeless eternal is a constant non-present. The photograph, on the other hand, is *ever-present*. It is, it *always* is: as a presence in the present, as a being in the present, as something that *is* in all presents it passes. The image object is *for* the image subject: it does not just represent it, it *is* for it, it exists in view of it, in a function of it that is always now. The image subject is *to* the image object: it reaches towards it, changes into it, in a perpetual becoming, so that the one never is without the other. Presents change, and the photographic form changes with them, always present. Indeed, the photograph *is* eternal, but not in that it is timeless: the photographic form is *timeful*. Photographic time does not still, or put to rest – it moves without cease. Through its form, the timeful photographic form is incessantly present in an ever-present.

The reason there is no timeless model that can account for the photograph, is that the entire temporal system in which timeless stillness operates cannot account for photography. Photographic timeless stillness of rest demands a linear model of 'standard' time, where time is a unidimensional axis along which progression occurs: within it, what one refers to as 'past' is located before what one would call 'the

present', and their succession is a chronologic unfolding of history. Stillness demands and may only exists in direct opposition to a linear model because, much like progression that might require a pause to activate it,[63] and bring it into contemplation[64] – indeed, to make it remarkable – stillness, too, is noticed and is attributed with interest – it is remarkable – only when measured and signalled against a progression. In relation to this unilateral line of movement, the arrested photographic image is imagined as a particular and constant point located directly on it, signalising an instant of immutability where progression is denied. The still photographic image of rest, on the other hand, may be imagined in one of three ways: atemporal – an isolated pause that may not be located; extratemporal – a bilateral wave graph progressing in parallel, nearing and moving further away without ever reaching the linear axis; and, timelessly eternal – a wave graph encompassing the axis like a reel, with lines of flight pushing in both directions at once, without ever being 'now'. But upon scrutiny, each of these models of stillness – indeed, the entire discourse around photographic stillness – collapses. The photographic form does not deny progression, and its mutability is constant; the supposed pause *can* be located; the wave graph does reach the main axis, touching it, converging with it; and 'now' is all the photograph ever has to offer. There is no stillness without linearity, and there can be no stillness in linearity: this is the paradox of photographic stillness.

And yet, photographic stillness exists in photographic philosophical theory as a self-evident truth. The explanation is simple. It is clear that something about the photograph and the photographic image calls for such an immediate response: something happens within photographic temporality, and that something is interpreted,

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[63] Raymond Bellour, 'The Film Stilled' [1987], trans. Alison Rowe and Elisabeth Lyon, in *Between-the-Images*, 138–39.
[64] Bellour, 'Pensive Spectator,' 89.

perceived, *sensed* as stillness. But in order to understand it, photographic temporality itself must first be made clear. Linearity is unable to contain the photographic form, but without stillness, it can be put aside, so that a different temporal model may be brought forward.

NINE

TIME PRESENT

When Antonio Paraggi, whose tale of succumbing to photography is told by Italo Calvino's 1955 'The Adventure of a Photographer', began taking photographs, he was unsure whether his resistance 'to live the present as a future memory, as the Sunday photographers did', had not led him to 'trying to photograph memories…to give a body to recollection, to substitute it for the present before his very eyes'.[1] Paraggi's perplexity evinces the two temporal modes photography assumes within linearity: the present held still for the future in which it will becomes that-has-been, and the past returning into the present as a void presence. But the photograph, I would like to suggest, demands *its own* temporal mode – one that does not enlist for or obey by linearity.

Parting with the horizontality of linearity as an unavoidable requisite brings the question of an alternative model for photographic temporality to the centre. It posits a question of presence, presents and movement as those are performed by the photographic form and registered in and on the photographic image. Put simply, it raises the question of the way in which time is present in the photographic form. It is a question of what is the time in which the image object is *for* the image subject: in which present does representation take place, and when does the sign accumulate the meanings of the presented. It is a question of what is the time in which the image subject is *to* the image object: where can the outset and outcome of the process of

[1] Italo Calvino, 'The Adventure of a Photographer' [1955], in *Difficult Loves*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1985), 229.

becoming image be locate temporally, in which presents is the image object affected by the image subject, and what is the temporal link between the two.

Starting with a multi-disciplinary presentation of stratigraphy, I claim that the photographic form exists in a stratigraphic temporality, which allows is to maintain presence in multiple presents at once. Through the accumulation of these multiple strata-presents, and the internal movement that is engendered between them, I claim, photographic form generates encounters, which, in turn, allow for photographic thinking to come about. This very movement, or passing of presents is, however, and at the same time, the reason for the self-evident state of photographic timeless stillness.

PLURAL PRESENTS

What the photographic form and image present is an ever-present. Presents follows presents. *A* present follows *a* present. The photograph *accumulates* presents, and that accumulation is not horizontal, but vertical: an amassment rather than a succession. Presents *on top of* presents. The photograph changes presents, and changes within them. Multiple presents, and multiple looks. An alternative temporal model for the unstill photograph, I propose, must allow for this accumulation and multiplicities: it must part with linearity in favour of *stratigraphy*.

In geology, stratigraphy refers to the analysis of sedimentary and layered rock formations. Borrowed by and embedded within the archaeological discipline, stratigraphy became a reconstructive study of a relative chronology, grounded in the dismantling and unravelling of soil deposits into superimposed strata that exists in a set of inter-dependent relations. Each layer is a present: a contemporaneity, a unit that may

be considered as such. In their plurality, the stratigraphic presents exist in a spatial relation to each other: below and above may correspond to a temporal differentiation. However, the strata exist only as relative layers: *the stratigraphic unit in and of itself possesses no absolute temporality*. The presence of a thing in a certain stratum has no *necessary* consequences for neither the thing nor the stratum.[2] Things are constantly used and reused. A stratum may indicate the present time of the making or erecting of a thing, but it will not always show its activity, or the many posterior presents it was and continues to be a part of (like in the case of a foundation column, for instance). Similarly, from a thing's eventual deposition in a stratum of a present that it came to occupy – when that is different from the present in which it came to be as a thing – one may infer only that at a certain instance this presence entered that present, and not the precise temporal designation of either (like in the case of a roman capital reused 1000 years later, or a pot propelled deeper into the ground by the current of a flood).

Accumulating on top of and aside each other, the strata form not as a layer-cake of uniform strips (as some art historians would have wanted it),[3] but as a complex formation with layers of uneven breadth, width, and shape, that often possess no clear boundaries, and follow no clear division. The stratum is not a smooth hermetic entity. It is not so much a plateau, as much as a topographically malleable formation. Formed of ridges and furrows, the slips and slopes allow for penetration and infiltration, and eventually, for contamination. For Deleuze and Guattari strata 'consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance

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[2] For a comprehensive account of the consequences of stratigraphy on the theory and practice of archaeology see: Gavin Lucas, *The Archaeology of Time* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. 32–60.
[3] Robert Bork, 'Pros and Cons of Stratigraphic Models in Art History,' *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 40 (2001): 177–87, esp. 177–82.

and redundancy'.[4] The stratum is not static or stable or constant: it shifts, shifting the presence, or multiple presences, in its present. A site of and for change and encounter, it gives form to what is held within in, forming its being as a single unit.

* * *

The colour of the sky keeps changing, until I stop recognising it as sky altogether [Figure 23]. Not only the hue, but also the shape of this photographic image is out of the ordinary. Indeed, it is precisely not out of *an* ordinary: not an ordinary camera, but a hand-made box camera; not an ordinary method of registration, but a method that registers directly onto the photosensitive paper, an oversized one as well; not an ordinary exposure, but one that is achieved through burns, gaps, and light games otherwise reserved to the darkroom; not an ordinary method of developing, but one that calls for the process to deposit itself on the image, leaving streaks, drips, smudges and uneven saturation. But maybe this image is not ordinary, because *there is no order in photography*. There is no ordinary or orderly, there are only ones-of-a-kind, the very designation of which becomes superfluous – an excess that remains of photography's need to distinguish itself.

All photographs are ones of their kind. Each photographic form is difference in itself. It is a difference that keeps setting itself apart, that keeps differing itself from its former self. As such, it must exist in a temporal system that would allow its photographic relations to materialise within their differentiation. A system that allows for change, but also for encounter, for the photographic image is always different, but its differences come about through movement, through a change that is a collision.

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[4] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 40.

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I propose that, in the case of photography, the notion of stratigraphy calls not for a geological method that sees the photographic image as a sedimentary site, which conserves a congealed image of the past as a plurality of presents, nor for an archaeological method that treats the image as a site of research through which the past may be retrieved, excavated and exposed, layer after layer. The photographic image is not in and of itself a stratigraphic image – it is an image whose form exists in a temporality stratified system, where time is a unit or a bloc, in which a latter present superimposes the former, and the plural planes coexist in a mode of *simultaneity*. In stratified temporality, a past present may be underneath a present one, but it is not before it, it is still there, still present. Stratigraphic temporality is a transhistorical model – one that considers time in a spatialised manner, rejecting horizontality in favour of verticality: an above and below that collapse onto and into each other. It calls for plurality – a plurality of layers, surfaces, and strata.

Each temporal stratum is a present, and holds within itself different presences. Like its archaeological counterpart, the temporal stratum is a porous entity, not a hermetic one: it allows for temporal shifts and the movement of presents. Through an opening, a past presence rises into the present present. Through a crack, a present presence slips and settles into a past one. Slowly, each stratum becomes perforated, punctuated by other presences. Contaminating each other, each present is infiltrated and filled with presences from other presents. The multiple strata – or, multiple presents – are present to each other: they *maintain a present presence in each other's present present*. They keep present, so that the past present cannot but be changed by the present one, and the present present cannot escape the presences that the past one leaves within it.

For the photographic form, existing in a stratified temporality means that the image object *for* the image subject, and the image subject *to* the image object are relations that are constantly present. To the questions around the present in which the representation of being *for* takes place – when does the image object carry itself for the image subject, and when does it function on its behalf – my proposed answer is that the sign accumulates the meanings of the presented in each present it passes through. Representation takes place not in a single present, but between and within multiple presents, with meanings being deposited one on top of the other. To the questions around the present in which becoming *to* occurs – when does the image subject give shape to the image object, bounding itself to it – my proposed answer is that the temporal link between the two is incessantly present. Becoming does not cease, its outcome is ever-present, and its outset is not in the past: the image object continues being affected by the image subject, and the reverse is equally true.

Accumulating one onto the other, the strata-presents of the photographic form amass through passing presents. Through the passing of presents, the photographic strata-presents *become a mass* – a weighing structure, so that each layer casts its weight to the one and many below it. Weighing [*pesée*] and thinking [*pensée*], as Nancy points out, share an etymological kinship, so that thinking '*is* an actual weighing; it is the very weighing of the world'.[5] With this reference, however, I am not attempting to suggest that photographic strata-presents think themselves: the strata-presents weigh not each other, but *on* each other. What I am proposing is that through their weighing on each

[5] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Weight of a Thought' [1991], in *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul and Gregory Recco (New Jersey: Humanities, 1997), 76.

other, the strata-presents *present a space for thought to take place and form*. As Deleuze and Guattari note, stratigraphy is the temporal system of philosophy.[6]

The strata-presents present a thinking space for the photographic form by means of encounter. Encounters, as Deleuze argues, are what generates thinking: a forceful clash that allows for the unthought to come into thinking.[7] It may be an encounter between thinkers, concepts, views, images, or relations. In the case of photography, it is an encounter between different presences and relations. For the photographic form, each stratum-present of its existence holds inside it a photographic image – an iteration that is a materialisation of its concomitant photographic form, of the relation that form it at that present. The iteration's image carrier, its image object, and its image subject are all presences within that present – all presences defined by a set of relations that are the photographic form. For each photograph – each set of relations – each stratum-present holds an iteration, so that each iteration is a potential difference – not in the sense of it being a variation, but in the sense of it being an idiosyncrasy, a *complete otherness*.

Iterations may look alike, but – as always with photography – looking the same is not the same as *being* the same. The photographic form, as I have suggested, changes constantly, including phenomeno-ontological changes to its very being, to what it *is*. This incessant change, I now add, occurs as part of the accumulation of new strata-presents. It is through the infiltration of presences that different temporal presents come to contain them – to be contaminated with them: that the different temporal presents remain present to each other. Presence, as Nancy continues, is 'the act

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[6] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [1991], trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlison (London: Verso, 2013), 58–59.
[7] This is one of Deleuze's main arguments to which he returns numerous times throughout his writing, and see especially: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 183–84.

through which the thing is brought-forth: *prae-est*'.[8] Through their movement, photographic presences maintain presence, and the photograph brings-forth an encounter: it forms a thought.

What the image object is *for* the image subject, and what the image subject is *to* the image object is registered on the photographic image: it is the form that forms its thought. These relations, as I have claimed, change across time – they change as presents change. As they change, new relations are registered on the photographic image: the image changes, its form changes, its thought changes. But the separation between these differences is neither stable nor durable. Iterations open up to each other, infiltrating each other, permeating each other with foreign presences: encounters across time. As internal temporal constituencies generate themselves anew, aspects rearrange – they *dis*arrange, dislocate, and intermix. The photographic image is not static, devoid or out of time, but a thing through which and in which presences pass, infiltrating others presents, so that each presence remains present. The flux is incessant, but the tense remains one: *a present*. One that is plural – always a present, always multiple presents. The photograph presents to its looker time as packed multiplicity.

* * *

Reflected off of a mirror, the vision that returns its look cuts across its plane of sight, creating difference through light movement [Figure 24]. The double sky is bright blue; the wall should be white, but it is cast in shadow, so that each of its mirror reflections returns a different look. Reflections collide: a mirror image in a mirror image in a

[8] Nancy, 'Technique of the Present,' 191.

mirror image. It is not a matter of exponentially receding to infinity, but of change observed through broken planes: of openings that allow for infiltration. Through reflection, the image calls for reflection – a consideration of its internal system of reflection, that is to say, of weighing, pressing and forming thought.

The figured shapes on the photographic surface place the represented thing in the world – they are for it, giving it presence, in all presents through which the image moves. The thing for which they look out changes into them, becomes from form to figure, creating a temporal link that pulls each of them into the present. Each of these relations determines the photographic form and image at any given point in time. But they also co-exist. Accumulating on top of each other, their weight gives way to containment by contamination – it creates a way for weighing and reflecting.

The figured mirror on the wall is for the mirror it represents, it is for it now, always now, through multiple presents. The mirror on the wall becomes its own figure, it continues to link itself to its figure in the present, in every present, in all presents. The photograph *is*.

* * *

PASSING PRESENTS

The photographic form exists in an unstill stratigraphic temporality, where a plurality of presents coexist in superimposition. And this is on the very opposite of the now-in-the-past which Barthes's *noeme* leans towards. Derived from the Barthesian 'that-has-been' *noeme*-turned-form(ula), the now-in-the-past is a form of past presence that spills

into the present, whilst maintaining its pastness, its being an anteriority, a before that returns. But with the shift from linearity to stratigraphy, photographic temporality may shift from an affirmation of the past, to the negation of that affirmation, which is in itself a *re-affirmation of the past as a present*. Rather than a now-in-the-past, or a now-past, I propose that the photographed plurality of presents is a *non-past*, so that the negation of the past, expressed in the addition of 'non', is a negation of the past *as a past thing*, or a thing that has passed. It relocates the past into the dimension of things that maintain present – a temporality that is not of 'was', but of 'is': a mode of being still without being immobile. While the now-past is a timeless return through stillness, the non-past is a *persistence*: a simultaneity that is still, but only in that it persists up to the present time. To borrow from Deleuze, the past 'no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it *is*'.[9]

What I propose is this: superimposed on each other, the plurality of photographic present non-pasts gives place to a temporality of being, whose mark is the plural 'is' – a present tense being. It 'is' because the present tense, as Sylviane Agacinski argues, 'does not indicate an instant but…a now that lasts'.[10] The 'is' of a present past is a mode and tense of persistence: it is not a now-in-the-past, but a now-still-in-the-non-past, in a present that is 'made up of a certain "surface" or layer or, rather, a superimposition of *layers of time* of different widths'.[11] For the photographic form, past presents maintain present underneath and within the present one, and together, these temporal strata coexist in the present present, giving it form. However, the coexistence of the strata-presents follows a plural 'is', and not an 'are': the photographic strata-presents do not

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[9] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 107.
[10] Sylviane Agacinski, *Time Passing: Modernity and Nostalgia*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 54.
[11] Ibidem.

unite into a single plurality – a group – but maintain their multiplicity of individual plural presents. The stratum-present bellow follows the singular present of 'be', and the stratum-present above is a singular present as well – superimposed, they maintain their individuality: it 'is' and it 'is', signs of a being that is present.

There are two distinctions to be made here. First, that the stratigraphic temporality of photography should not to be confused with the Platonic tradition according to which 'being itself can never *pass*', for it is not ephemeral, but eternal;[12] a tradition which modernity has broken with, starting with Freud: the eternal does not pass, but it does not arrive either – it is an impossibility with regards to being in the world.[13] There is no timeless eternal and there is no stillness: the photographic present does not pass not because it is timelessly eternal, but because the temporally multiple structure of which it is part, restrains it from passing. Through infiltration and contamination, the past present is inseparable from the present present, inextricable from it – from the Latin *in + ex + tricae,* on the opposite of being out of the perplexity of its state – in the sense that it cannot be pulled out of the entangled state in which the two strata coexist.

And second, that the stratigraphic temporality of photography must not be confused with the fleeting concept of the Benjaminian dialectical image. Shining through the fragmented ruins of the *Arcades Project*, the dialectical image is one that brings the before in the now, forming a constellation of lights that may be encountered through language.[14] Elsewhere in the *Project*, Benjamin cites a brief paragraph from André Monglond's *La préromantisme français*, in which the French literary critic photographically ties the past and future through the logic of image development, and

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[12] Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 13.
[13] Idem, 12–13.
[14] Benjamin, 'Awakening,' in *Arcades Project*, 462 [N2a, 3].

the idea of being 'imprinted by light'.[15] The second part of the same quotation then appears in another posthumously published fragmented annotation, 'The Dialectical Image', where Benjamin uses it as a point from which to set out into a discussion on the conception of history, and historical time.[16]

To be sure, the dialectical image might share an essential trait with the photograph – coming through light, it is an image in which the past-present may have a presence in the present-present. But the temporality of the dialectical image is not so much stratigraphic, as much as it is more strictly archaeologic: excavated from beneath the ruins of time. Better yet, the temporality of the dialectical image may be described with the term *archeochronic*, for it is not *lógos* or a proof of something presented as true that it gives place to, but a chronic compulsion towards a buried and imagined chronology. Where the passing presents of the stratigraphic photograph exist as an accumulated multiplicity of an ever-present 'is', and the past is a non-past stratum of present, maintaining its presence within it, Benjamin's dialectical image sees the what-has-been that suddenly emerges re-invented by the now, and the now as a site (and sight) of re-envisaging the what-has-been as it never was before. Archaeochronics sees the past as a unit of return, a thing that comes back or re-appears, and in its reappearance, it may be re-read, for it is in language that the dialectical image is encountered. In that, it is closer to the Barthesian return of the now-past than it is to the stratigraphic persistence of the non-past: a persistence that is extra-discursive.

Photographic temporality is an incessant accumulation of strata-presents, and its 'is' is a form of temporal expansion, where each past present *is*, that is to say, where a past

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[15] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 482 [N15a, 1].
[16] Walter Benjamin, 'The Dialectical Image' [1940], in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writing*, vol. 4, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 405.

present *is* (a part of) the present. Unlike in Benjamin's dialectics of seeing, where 'for a part of the past to be touched by the present instant, there must be no continuity between them',[17] the photographic past present and the present present weigh on each other, interweaving. For its looker, it is not a matter of a dialectic relation of 'what-has-been to the now',[18] nor is it a matter of experiencing 'not only a present but also a past',[19] but that of experiencing a non-past, something that is not past, in the sense that *it has not passed – it is*.

* * *

Set against a built wall, the radiant strips appear, at first, like luminous mirrors embellishing its façade [Figure 25]. In New York, at the MoMA Victor Hasselblad Photography Study Center, I realise they are window reflections. This image is older than most of what I have been looking at, so far. It is from a different time, a past that escapes me, and that I refuse to try and catch. But its form is also now: like all photographs, it *is*. It forms before me.

It *is*, but not inasmuch as it is a Platonic non-passing being, which is timelessly eternal and can never pass. The look of this building wall on its asymmetrical windows, and repetitive pattern panelling passes, its photographic form is determined by its continuous passing, a passing of, into, and out of presents. Not something that does not cease because it never really started, but a placing in the world, a becoming that keeps taking place. Neither would I say it *is* because it is a dialectic archeochronic return of the past. Looking at this photographic image, I do not see the past

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[17] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 470 [N7, 7]. For more on Benjamin and the dialectic image see: Susan Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (London: MIT Press, 1989).
[18] Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 462 [N2a, 3].
[19] With these words Agacinski describes Benjamin's experience in Paris, and especially as this comes through in his unfinished *Arcade Project*, and see: Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 52.

reappearing to reclaim its form in a present that can no longer hold it as something that has passed. Instead, I see an amassed multiplicity of photographic presences, and a non-past that keeps reforming. A *poietic* bringing into being. I see a figured wall whose being is a continuous replacing of its form in the world, and a wall that continues to become across presents. In a stratigraphic passing of presents, the past present and the present present cannot be separated, they coexist, entwined within each other, dependant on each other.

* * *

While the photograph and the dialectical image are not one and the same, the two do intersect: through an opening that lets light in and thought through, the photographic image may be experienced as dialectical. 'The past', writes Benjamin, 'can be seized only as an image which flashes up [*aufblitzt*] at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again'.[20] The past *flashes up*. In a movement that is all light, the past is set in motion: projecting upwards, not forwards. Emerging from its place as past, it erupts, carried by the flash of light. The flashing up of the past is its fleshing out. It is the reveal of the past for what it is: a non-past. In this light movement, it ceases being past, and never seen again. When it is seen again, it is not as past that is it seen: *through the light of its flashing, the past is registered as a stratum-present, a layer that persists*.

The experience of looking at a photographic image is one of seeing time amassed – that is to say, time as a mass, a weighing structure, a unit made of singles, whose form is indefinite and undefinable: a multiplicity packed into – but not bounded within – a single iteration, which contains all its previous ones, all its contemporary ones, and all

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[20] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' [1940], in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 255, V.

its future ones. In this mass, strata-presents are on top of strata-presents; they are all present. But there are times when the looker can and does not longer see it: the present passed, and all that is left to see is a past. Indeed, there exist photographic images, in which certain presences are sensed as past. Where despite being present, the relations in these images appear – they are *perceived* – as having passed, as a form of the past. It is not a minor discrepancy: the conflict between the present presence of each stratum and its (possible) perception as something passed and past is directly related to the proliferation of the self-evident state of stillness. When something is sensed as passed, but appears in the present, it calls for an association with a lack of movement, a lack of progress, and a lack of change. For photography, this is inevitable.

The sense of present *can* pass from the photographic image, because stratigraphic multiple temporality is unbounded. Its presents are limitless (but that is not to say illimitable) and unrestricted: nothing puling each stratum down, or closing it in place but, at the same time, nothing offering it stability, or keeping it in safe. While the temporally multiple structure, in which the photograph exists, restrains strata presents from passing, it cannot keep them present for the looker: while each temporal stratum *is*, in the perception of the looker they may come to be sensed as unbounded tenses and aspects. Nancy's *George* is one of many demonstrations of this multiplicity of perception, and Barthes's *noeme* is one of its possible codifications.

Stratigraphic temporality does not allow for stillness, it does not still, it does not stop – it endures. Like entropy, its presence cannot decrease or disappear without affecting a change in their environment: it cannot be reduced to a single past without collapsing the integrity of its system, without passing itself outwards – or, better yet, *backwards*. This phenomenon of strata-presents losing their presence and becoming passed – becoming *sensed* as past – is due to the sense of present passing from the photograph,

risking that *all* its strata presents, including the present present, become sensed as a passed past. The reason certain photographic presents pass out of presence is to do with the very thing photography is: a *pro*duction into being, a *poietic* becoming. *Poiesis*, as Nancy puts it, is 'the productive technique of presence'.[21] And the entire 'essence' of that *pro*duction, as Agamben observes, 'is to bring something into presence'.[22] As *poiesis*, the essence of photography is the bringing of presences into present presence: *what the photograph brings into presence is the passed as a present*. But present presence is friable, easily pulverised into flecks of non-present past. Photographic strata-presents accumulate through passing presents, where the passage takes place within an in-betweeness, signalling a differentiation, but one that cannot be without transmittance: it is a matter of friction and fraction – a process of attrition and dissention, of detachment and breaking away. Being friable, from the Latin *fricare*, 'to rub away', the presence of the past as a present is abrade from the photographic image, enabling its passing away. And although, to quote Nancy again, presence 'is the very thing that would seem to shelter the thing from any such passing',[23] such shelter, as the photograph makes visible, is temporary – a temporally conditioned state. The image object is *for* the image subject between and within multiple presents, but this accumulation of meaning and amassment of place in the world can slip into the past, disappearing in it, losing its present presence, passing from it. The image subject is *to* the image object in a temporal link that is incessantly present, but while the outcome of this becoming does not cease to be present, its perception may be lost to the past. Being sheltered from passing depends not on the number, width or weight of the strata, nor is it conditioned by the amount of time passed since its becoming a photograph. The passing of

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[21] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Technique of the Present: On On Kawara' [1997], in *Multiple Arts*, 191.
[22] Agamben, 'Poiesis and Praxis,' 73.
[23] Nancy, 'Technique of the Present,' 191.

presence is unexpected and unpredictable: this is the shock of the perceived as still – its status of being remarkable. While the passing presents of the stratigraphic model are a proposition against the stillness of the death mask mould, they are also, and at once, an explanation of it: a lead back to it that is a reminder that while stillness does not exist, its perception is inescapable.

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The little bricks form a pattern: a visual timeline of fifty-six years of armed conflicts [Figure 26]. Each year of war is a single tile of smoke; while a rare peaceful year is marked with golden blanks piercing through it. Produced by culling archive images of smoking bombsites into a digital negative framing the smoke alone, the positives are then solarised using the light of a flame, so that fire is the genesis of the photographic image both figuratively and materially. Fire dances before the negatives, bringing light through them. The smoke thins as it rises through the image, through the ages, through to me. I know the photograph is present, but I cannot see it. All I see is the past. The war is still here, it never went away, it is here still, and I see it still – I see the smoke stilled in this image. While there is no stillness in photography, the perception of it is inescapable. Not a figure that is placing it in front of me, but a misplacement that I must resist – this is out of time. Not a form that keeps becoming, that keeps linking itself to the present, but a past form of being, whose link I must break with my look. The photograph brings into presence the passed as a present: its presence rubs away, passes out, breaks through its links, and all that remains for me to see it the past.

Only traces of it remain.

* * *

PART THREE

THE TRACE

TEN

THE TRACE & THE SPLINTER

In the previous part, I argued that photography stands in complete opposition to the still death mask mould, as the dimensional condition of the photographic image is flatness, whereas the temporal state of the photographic form is unstill. But Indexicality is a whole compound of misconceptions that are intertwined with each other, reinforce each other, and depend on one another. Indeed, the death mask is but one of the ontological misconceptions that are entangled within the conceptual field of Indexicality; the other one is the trace. There exist three main conceptualisations of the photographic trace: the Bazinian, which sees it as a mark; the Derridean, which visualises it as a simulation; and the Kraussian, which has it as a slice.[1] As I demonstrate, it is the slice that is distinctly the most consequential of the three. Starting by unfolding the photographic trace as a threefold concept, I move towards the notion of the slice which it folds within it, looking at the different ways in which the idea of the photographic slice has been conceived. Pointing to the three discourses around the photographic slice, namely those that identify the photographic image as a slice of time, those that view it as a slice of life, and those that insist it is a slice of the real, I show that while these are conceived in parallel, the distinctions intersect, and are even used interchangeably. As I argue, the conflation of the already complex concept of the slice in photographic philosophical theory – if photographic images are said to be thin slices, in relation to what is that measured? If they are slices, what is their whole, and

[1] By Bazinian, Derridean and Kraussian, I do not intend to suggest that these notions of the photographic trace were necessarily ideated by the respective figures, only that it was in their respective writings that these concepts received a theoretical frame, which both allows and calls for this eponymous classification.

how did they come about? – with the idea of stillness, turned the slice into a multileveled and oxymoronic hybrid, a Gordian knot of aspects and attributes. Analysing these distinctions through the photographic form, and demonstrating how they collapse into each other, allows me to call attention to the inherent flaws of the notion of the slice, and to its underlining problem: the photographic image cannot be a slice, for if one conceives of its form as something that was cut off and taken out of a whole, one is forced to admit that it will never fit back in. I conclude by rejecting the notion of the slice as a valid photographic concept, and move towards an alternative proposition: the photographic form, I demonstrate, is what comes out of a splitting through the photographed, not its remaining splinter.

TRACING THE IMAGE

Although Bazin's principal stance on photography equates it with a death mask imprint, his discussion of this still mould allows for its mark to be a two- rather than a three-dimensional trace.[2] Discussing the photographic image, Bazin suggests that rather than being an image of something or someone, it is their 'tracing', for it 'proceeds by means of the lens to the taking of a veritable luminous impression in light – to a mould'.[3] For Bazin, (analogue) photography is conditioned by that very tracing, which moulds the light sensitive surface to assume the traces of the photographed. The

[2] There is nothing surprising about this conceptual conflation. As William B. MacGregor demonstrates, the conflation between the trace and the imprint, be it as a metaphor or a practice is the historic condition of the notions, since at least the seventeenth century, and see: William B. MacGregor, 'The Authority of Prints: An Early Modern Perspective,' *Art History* 22:3 (1999): 389–420.
[3] André Bazin, 'Theater and Cinema: Part Two' [1951], in *What Is Cinema? Volume* 1, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 96.

photographic image results as a traced flat mark left by the presence of the photographed thing.

This formulation is reminiscent of the earliest accounts on the photographic image, throughout which a stubborn excess persists as a leitmotif. In an often quoted speech to the French Chamber of Deputies in 1839, François Arago urges the residing men to see that photographic images are 'drawn by nature's most subtle pencil'.[4] Henry Fox Talbot asks the beholder of his 1844 photographic portfolio, *The Pencil of Nature*, to notice that photographic images are 'the sun-pictures themselves'.[5] In a poem by Pope Leo XIII, referred to by James Joyce in his 1905 short story *Grace*, the photographic image is '*Expressa solis spiculo*' – 'Drawn by the sun's bright pencil'.[6] In more recent accounts, this observed connection between photographic image and world is dubbed as 'capturing reality' or 'reproducing reality', other times it appears as 'showing the real', 'carrying the real', or 'marked by the real'. Most often it emerges in the face of Indexicality.

To be sure, light can mark the photographic image carrier, but that is precisely the weakness of this claim. For if the photographic trace is to be read through this Bazinian conception of it, as a light delineated mark that remains as an indication, then the trace is not of or from the photographed, but a result of the photonic activity of analogue photography; then the trace is not on or of the photograph itself, but a mark left on the material of its iteration zero; then all claim to Indexicality is lost. The trace is

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[4] Dominique François Arago, 'Report to the Commission of the Chamber of Deputies' [July 3, 1839], in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 18.
[5] William Henry Fox Talbot, 'Notice to the Reader,' in *The Pencil of Nature* [1844] (London: KWS Publishers, 2011), xxxi.
[6] Pope Leo XIII, *Ars Photographica* [1867], cited in Robert M. Adams, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's Ulysses*, trans. Robert M. Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 179.

not a streak shaped by the photographic body, but an assortment of lines that a chemical reaction left as a residue, and whose claim to the world is faint.

Derrida's conception of the photographic trace makes its relation to Indexicality yet more vague. Describing the shackled prisoners in Plato's cave, who stare at the projected shadows oblivious to the things themselves, Derrida mentions that in being motionless, 'they do not venture out with outstretched hands in the direction of this *skia-* or *photo*-graphy, their sights set on this shadow- or light-writing'.[7] For Derrida, skiagraphy, or shadow writing, and photography, or light writing, are integral notions – a relation, that in a dialogue on photography he ascribed to the light and shadow writing's common sense of the trace and the traced, where the very movement of the trace, he suggests, is 'a priori photographic'.[8] This is what Fox Talbot was getting at, when, in his very first writing on the subject of photography, he describes his latest endeavour as 'the art of fixing a shadow'.[9] The photographic trace is signalled as a projection of the photographed that is fixed to remain after it, a flat figuration sketched and held on a surface, a residue that is robbed of the depth of that which gave it shape, a vestige inasmuch as it is a mere hint, but one that persists, disconnected from its origin.

This Derridean trace-like conception of the photographic image being a flat projection shaped by light is an apparently appealing description of photography. But the Derridean notion of the trace conceals within it a temporal condition, for the trace,

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[7] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* [1990], trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15.
[8] Derrida, *Copy, Archive, Signature*, 17, and see also 15–17.
[9] William Henry Fox Talbot, 'Some Accounts of the Art of Photogenic Drawing' [1839], in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 41. For an analysis of Talbot's usage of the term shadow, and its relation to him naming his invention a 'photogenic drawing' see: Geoffrey Batchen, 'The Naming of Photography,' *History of Photography* 17:1 (1993): 25–27.

according to Derrida, 'is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself'.[10] Conceived as a trace, the photographic form is a spectral non-presence, in the spirit of the still mould. Moreover, whereas the shadow projection, in transforming forms into figures, nullifies the mere idea of depth, the photographic *pro*duction does not cancel the third dimension: as I have claimed elsewhere, it flattens it in the other two, and folds it through the other two.[11] It is not a question of removal and lack, but of movement and embedding. While the death mask appropriates the volumetric qualities of the photographed, and the projected trace expropriates them, depriving the thing of its depth – the photographic image *transpropriates* them, moving depth in and through itself, beyond its former self. The photographic image object being *for* the image subject, carrying itself for it, is not in view of it in that it takes its view, as with the death mask, nor is it in that it takes away its view, as in the trace: rather, it is in view of it, in that it shapes its view, in a change that is continuously reshaping itself. The photographic image subject being *to* the image object, changing into it, gives it shape neither in that it is the whole which the image object replicates, as with the death mask, nor in that it is the whole of which it is part, as in the trace, but in that it confines the image object to its logic while, in turn, being determined by its transformation into it.

It is possible that the profusion of the view around the photographic image as a projected trace is teleologically determined by the philosophical necessity to defend its distinctness, in light of the qualities photography is presumed to share with other media. Already in the early days of photography, photographic images were famously

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[10] Jacques Derrida*, Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* [1967], trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 156.
[11] Anita Paz, 'The Location of Thought,' paper presented at the *Thinking Images* panel, at the 2015 *Association of Art Historians (AAH) Annual Conference*, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA, Norwich (10–11 April, 2015).

equated to a 'mirror with a memory'.[12] But even more recently, the suggestion that the photographic image is akin to an image reflected off a mirror,[13] especially in terms of their dimensional transformation,[14] is not uncommon. The notion of the trace, therefore, could serve to differentiate the photographic image not only from 'non-realistic representations' like painting, but also from what might be viewed as 'realistic non-representations' like mirror reflections. But if the purpose of the projected trace is differential, then the notion of the trace is entirely superfluous, for the mirror and the photographic image are already essentially distinct. As Jean-François Chevrier points out, 'the mirror is in constant oscillation between reproduction of exterior appearances and introspection'.[15] Within the mirror image, reflection manifests itself in its fullest ambiguity. At once there exist a reflection of the exteriority of the self, and a revealing of the reflection of the interiority of the self. The former is the throw back of a light wave from the specular surface; the latter, an auto-contemplation or, to use a Derridean term, an 'auto-affection', one that is impure inasmuch as it passes through a space outside the 'sphere of "ownness"' – that is, through the mirror.[16] For this reason, the mirror reflection can only take place *in praesentia*, where the presence is not only of the reflected or reflecting thing, but also of a looking eye. The photographic form, on the other hand, brings into being *in absentia*: it brings into being out of the

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[12] Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,' *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1859, accessed 9 September, 2017, at https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1859/06/the-stereoscope-and-the-stereograph/303361/.

[13] For a critical analysis of this 'analogical definition of the photograph as a mirror image' see: Craig Owens, 'Photography "en abyme",' in 'Photography,' special issue, *October* 5 (1978): 73–88, quote on 73. For a selection of instances, spanning from journalistic photography to psychoanalytic theory assuming this similarity, see: Stephen Mayes, *This Critical Mirror: 40 Years of World Press Photo* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Nan Goldin, David Armstrong, and Hans Werner Holzwarth, ed., *Nan Goldin: I'll Be Your Mirror* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; Zurich: Scalo, 1996); and, Mary Bergstein, *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[14] Jonathan Miller, 'The Camera as Mirror,' in *On Reflection* (London: National Gallery, 1998), 183–85.

[15] Originally: 'Le miroir oscille en permanence entre reproduction des apparences extérieures et introspection', and see: Jean-François Chevrier in conversation with Claude Pétry, 'Le miroir, object de spéculation,' in *À travers le miroir: De Bonnard à Buren*, ed. François Nourissier (Paris: Èditions de la Rèunion des musèes nationaux; Rouen: Musée des beaux arts, 2000), 28. My own translation.

[16] Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 78–79.

photographed, not as a remainder of it, but as something that stands for it in the world. While the mirror image is one of simultaneous presence, photography brings into presence the past as a present: the excess of the photographic image in relation to the mirror is temporal. Moreover, it is the mirror that holds traces in it, not the photographic image: photographic images neither present, nor have a memory – it is mirrors that carry memories in them. To quote from Christopher Reid's non-translation of the fictive East Bloc poet, Katerina Brac, 'But wait: can mirrors /be said to have memories? /Yes, there is always behind the surface /an inordinate heaviness'.[17] The mirror surface hides behind it all the past traces of its reflections, materialised as smears of tarnish, dotting the reflected presence. All the mirror ever presents is an image of the past lost to a look in the present: it remembers because unlike the photographic image, it may be truly and directly marked by the look it reflects.

Bazin's trace is a chemical reaction, and Derrida's trace is a simulacral projection: both used to uphold Indexicality, while, in effect, undermining that very concept. But it is the Kraussian conception of the photographic trace that brings about the most lasting effect on photographic philosophical theory, affecting the entire discourse. As I argued in the first part, in her account of photographic Indexicality, Krauss thickens the notion of the death mask impress, with an additional layer of signification, evincing the remnant-like aspect of the photographic trace. The trace is a leftover, a secondary appearance that survives the removal of the whole, of which it is fragmented. Within the logic of the trace, the photographic image is a relic or a residue, like a fragment that remains after photographic becoming, or a splinter broken off of the whole: the Kraussian photographic trace is a slice taken from the photographed.

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[17] Christopher Reid, 'Like a Mirror,' in *Katerina Brac* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 38.

In 1966, the director of Photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), John Szarkowski, curated *The Photographer's Eye*, in the catalogue of which he famously wrote that photographic images are 'thin slices of time', the immobilisation of which 'has been a source of continuous fascination for the photographer'.[18] The question guiding his interest in photography, as Douglas Crimp points out, is neither political, nor social, nor cultural; rather, for the arguably first time in Western museology, it is purely aesthetic:[19] an essential question that looks to discover the essence of the photographic image. The photographic image, according to Szarkowski is a slice: a fragment of something bigger, a piece of something else, other than itself. Indeed, for Szarkowski, the photographic image is a slice that is not only separated from its whole, but that maintains a unique relation to that whole, one that defines not only its ontological fragmentary condition, but also its teleological state – the aim it assumes in the eye of the photographer. Following Szarkowski's influential text, the notion of the photographic image as a slice became a recurring theme in the photographic discourse, expanding it from the analogue image to which he was referring, to include the digital as well. However, unlike the concept of the still that supposedly became branded with cliché – while, in fact, as I have claimed, occupying the erroneous position of being self-evident – that of the slice successfully managed to escape such theoretical tarnish while, at the same time (and perhaps because of that), eluding a comprehensive examination.

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[18] Szarkowski, *Photographer's Eye*, 10.

[19] As Crimp demonstrates, it was Szarkowski who transformed photography from an information category to an aesthetic/formal one, and see: Douglas Crimp, 'The Museum's Old, the Library's New Subject,' *Parachute* 22 (1981): 32–37.

According to a standard and widely accepted definition, a slice is a segment that is smaller than the whole it used to be a part of. Somewhat tautological – as Euclidean geometry points out the intuitively evident truth that all wholes are always greater than their parts, and thus all parts are always smaller than their constitutive wholes – this standard understanding of the slice is true by necessity, which makes it also insufficiently open – an insufficiency that is to be read in its twofold meaning: at once too extensive and too exclusive, too general and not comprehensive enough. Etymologically, the slice is derived from the Old French *escliz*, a splinter – a worthless fragment broken off of something else. A fragment that is almost a by-product, an unintended result, an act of chance,[20] an accident, something unthought. Primarily a spatial concept, the notion of the slice assumes the existence of a whole of which it is a portion, and in relation to which it is of smaller measures. A slice is a segment of a whole that may vary in scope: it may be extended or reduced, encompassing or limited, complete or partial, though it is always a part *of* something else. It may vary in breadth, coming in all forms of thinness and thickness, both in absolute terms (being thin or thick in and of themselves, compared with other slices), and in relation to its whole (being a thin or a thick part of the thing of which it is a slice). And it may vary in size, from micro to macro, and measured using all possible scales, as long as its size remains smaller than its whole (although is some cases, like that of the liver, a slice can regenerate to its full size). There are many ways in which the slice may become a splinter: it may be cut off, it may fall off, it may break off, and it may get eaten away, by a hungry child, market fluctuations, forces of nature, or time itself. When the slice is segmented from the whole – becoming a slice – the whole changes with it. Looking at

[20] It is no coincidence that the notion of photography *as* an art of chance gained critical acclaim in recent years, and see: Diarmuid Costello, Margaret Iversen, and Joel Snyder, eds., 'Agency and Automatism: Photography as Art Since the Sixties,' special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 38:4 (2012); and, Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

it from the perspective of relationism, the whole becomes a second slice, a completing one, so that that both cuts are now two slices that used to form a whole. Looking at it from the perspective of absolutism, the slice becomes a segmented unit, while the whole is reduced, formed anew, smaller than itself. Either way, both units maintain a relation: that of lack.

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The agape mouths in these photographic images of Giotto's fresco wall painting in the Upper Basilica of St Francesco d'Assisi in Italy appear as I turn the page [Figure 28]. I try to think of them as slices, splinters, fragments – as the thin slices of time Szarkowski would have them. *Are* they 'thin'? Compared to their painting whole, they may appear fat, rotund, exposing the richness of their texture, of their painterly strokes, but certainly they are thinner than other 'slices' I've seen cut of this masterpiece before: slender, lean and meatless – they are truly nothing but skin and bones (and yet it is a fine cut, nonetheless). I am not sure they are 'of time', either. The mouth on the left appears to me to be singing; the one on the right is releasing a scream. If a slice they are, then the slice is a note whose whole is a score; it is a gesture whose whole is a sound. It is reversible and replayable. It is a vibration, a reverberation. It is movement. If slices of time they are, then time is movement: the painted whole may be already still, but the photographic image that comes out of it generates sound, immobilises it back into sound.

* * *

Although the slice is a fundamentally spatial concept, and albeit there are different ways in which the photographic image may be considered a slice, under the influence of Szarkowski, it is the notion of the slice *of time* that became the decidedly prevalent

one. While Szarkowski never offers a theoretical exposition of the slice, it is famously Sontag, who, in her 1973 essay, 'In Plato's Cave', remarks that the photographic image presents a frozen moment, which differs from the moving image by being 'a neat slice of time'.[21] For Sontag, being a slice of time is understood as being a still piece cut off of a movement, sliced away from a progression, or a continuum: indeed, a Cartier-Bressonian view,[22] where, re-assembled, a plurality of slices has the potential to re-form the whole they were once part of – a return to movement and to the flow of linear time. The photographic image is a slice of time in that it presents the viewer with the experience of non-movement. Time, for Sontag, is movement. Different from the influential Kantian model where time is a pure, empty and *a priori* form – a non-empirical intuition that is immediate and independent,[23] the relation between time and movement that Sontag seems to propagate is of an Aristotelian derivative:[24] a conception that 'inscribes the possibility of time within *the experience of movement*'.[25]

When conceived as a motionless slice of time, the photographic form should reflect the splinter's relation to its whole. Each photographic image would, then, be a slice of time inasmuch as it is timeless, held in a spatial position, and its whole is a movement that happens in time. The image object, being *for* the image subject, would give it a place in the world, in that it allows it to hold to a placement that is sliced off of the

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[21] Sontag, 'Plato's Cave,' 15–17, quote on 17.
[22] Sontag was certainly familiar with Cartier-Bresson's work, and even mentions in passing his book, *The Decisive Moment*, and see: Susan Sontag, 'Photographic Evangels' [1977], in *On Photography*, 128.
[23] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [second edition, 1787], trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 178–84.
[24] For Aristotle's writing on time see: Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV, 217b27–223b (chapters 10–14). As Agacinski suggests in her examination and comparison of the Kantian and the Aristotelian models – the two main Western philosophical models of time – although the Aristotelian claim of time and movement being inseparable dates much further back than Kant's pure intuition, it is the Aristotelian view (which, I will add, Sontag seems to share) that is the decisively more modern conception. For an in-depth discussion of the question surrounding the relation between movement and time see: Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 33–47.
[25] Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 35.

whole of its movement. The image subject, being *to* the image object, would have it as the ultimate stage in its process of becoming, fixing it as a static part of a whole that keeps changing.

* * *

Immobility return: atop an all-encompassing extension of greyed concrete, two legs in a suit are hanging in mid-air [Figure 28]. The faded plastic bag they hold, scorched by the sun, tattered by its multiple reuses, will never be liberated from the grasp of the palm that holds it tight to the body. When the google car that took this street view passed by the jumping legs, they were in mid-air. Then, when that image was stitched into the panoramic view of the Google Street View feature on Google Maps, the jumping suit was holding still. Later, when the photographer captured it from the Google Street View with his camera positioned in from of the screen, the jumping legs were still holding. They are jumping, running, sweat dripping down the suit, their feet – they must reach the ground, they must reach their destination. There is no stillness for them. They are not about to stop.

Looking at this jumping suit in mid-air, I understand how you could see it as still: a stillness of no movement and arrest. A stillness that separates a moment of its progression – a still that is a slice of time. I can see how the still and slice collide, merging into a single concept. Then, stillness begins to expand beyond arrest: the photographic image is still, because it is paused in time – a fragmented splinter of time, a singularity taken out of a progression. Now, I can see it as an image of rest: the pause and pose, united through the slice. And I can see how that slice of movement that is a slice of time becomes, before my eyes, a slice in general: a slice of life that was captured, a slice of the real that occurred. A conceptual hybrid is forming before me.

* * *

Surrounding movement, the notion of the photographic slice of time corresponds both conceptually and rhetorically to what I have named photographic arrest, a space-oriented conception of the photographic image as still: a correspondence that can, and often does, lead to a complete identity between the concepts of the slice and the still. Sontag is a particularly meaningful instance in this assimilation, for her reference to the photographic image as a slice of time that is a piece of stillness blurs the lines between the two concepts, making them interchangeable, while hers being one of the most quoted texts on photography, solidifies the slice and the still into a single understanding by means of repetition. This is possible because the partial collision of the still as arrest with the slice of time gives place to a chain of assimilations. The first is by means of analogy. The concept of the slice is primarily a spatial one, related to size, shape and form. Following the movement-based affinity between the slice of time and the stillness of arrest, the former comes to refer to that which appears to be denied progression in space, and the latter comes to refer to that which is cut away from a flow of movement: the photographic slice of time and the still image of arrest become one. A second assimilation by means of metonymy follows. Having been assimilated to the still photographic image of spatial arrest, which presents a suspended being in space, the concept of the photographic slice of time becomes akin to stillness *in general*, and in that also to the second notion of stillness, that of temporal rest, which presents a suspended being in time. As a result, the photographic slice can be said to capture a particular moment in time, holding it in still rest. This process is symmetrical: the concept of a photographic slice of time becomes interchangeable with that of the still photograph, and the still photographic image became a slice of time. This is how, in photographic philosophical theory, the notion of the still photograph came to mean a

being that takes place outside of time, that does not participate in time, which quickly turned into an idea of a thing that is held still in a particular point that falls outside of time, and of being firm in a particular placement, devoid of time – a void that is refilled with space. *The no-time of the still became the space of the slice.*

Commenting on Fox Talbot's earliest text, Batchen notices that, for Fox Talbot, the photographic image occupies "'a space of a single minute", in which space *becomes* time, and time space'.[26] Indeed, the fusion between time and space has been a common practice in photographic philosophical theory from its very start. As to the fusion between *non*-time and space – or the idea of looking at something as devoid of time and hence belonging to space – this, too, has a strong theoretical tradition behind it. French structuralist thinkers, with their lauded 'spatial turn', constructed a system that suggests that where there is no time, there will be space. As Foucault declares, the methodology of the structuralist analysis is to work against the predominance of temporal investigation around the before and the after, and emphasising, instead, the practise 'of juxtaposition…of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed'.[27] This methodological revolution, however, originates from a skewed proposition in favour of spatial considerations, guided by the incorrect construal of space as the 'the absolute negation of time',[28] achieved through synchronic analysis, which regards no-time at all,[29] and *therefore* – as Doreen Massey emphasises – in the structuralist system, it *is* space.[30] But, while the structuralist conflation of non-time with space is met with growing criticism, the bleed between the notions of the space of the slice and the non-time of the still proves more durable. In challenging the structuralist

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[26] Geoffrey Batchen, 'Ectoplasm,' 13.
[27] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' [1967], trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16:1 (1986): 22.
[28] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 37, and see 36–40.
[29] Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 27–28.
[30] Massey, *For Space*, 38.

equation of space with non-time – that is to say, the negation of the temporality of space and the dimensionality of time – Massey herself speaks of holding something still and offering a slice of time as interchangeable concepts, mutually identified as renderings of the instantaneous.[31] Yet the still and the slice are not both 'moments' in the same way: the first is to do with the negation of time, the second with the affirmation of space. Allowing for the conflation of the still and the slice, Massey's critique reproduces the structuralist fallacy on a smaller scale. Space is not what remains after time, and the slice and the arrested still are not one.

SLICED FROM LIFE

* * *

Dancing body parts slice through the camera look [Figure 29]. Emerging from obscurity, their movement draws light. The room is dark, and the flash of the camera does little to shed light beyond the raised arms that are blocking the view of the camera eye. The sharp elbows stick out like splinters lodged into the fabric of their darkened environment, a foreign body injected in a foreign body. The music in the background fades out. They remain. They are there. I am offered a slice of their dance – not only movement, but being: the photographic image offers itself to me as a slice of life. Cut directly from the fabric of life, it calls for me to look at it as truthful, unmediated, transparent, and immediate. This happened, it makes me see: this flesh was revealed in a flash. The camera reaped the thing, the sight, the happening; it gathered it into an image, removing it from the world. It remains an image not as a memory, but as

[31] Ibidem.

memorabilia – a memento sliced out, and taken away. This happened *this* way: this flesh was severed by a flash.

* * *

Other than the influential Szarkowskian slice of time, there are two more ways one encounters the notion of the photographic image as a splinter: one is as a slice of life, the other a slice of the real. Where the notion of the slice of time reflects the distinct conception of the photographic image as a part of a moving whole, that of the slice of life mirrors the conception of the photographic image as being taken out of a constituting whole of existence in the world. The logic of the slice of life sees the image object *for* the image subject, inasmuch as it takes its place in the world by taking it out of the world, replacing it with an image. The image subject, in turn, is *to* the image object, in that it is existentially bound to it, being cut and separated from the world – the image object robs the image subject of its existence.

The notion of the slice of life inhabits a complex locus that is a twofold space of ambivalence – that is to say, of two opposing valences, and difference within itself. Broadly applied in connection and relation to what may be encountered as 'truthful' imagery, and 'natural', 'real-life' photographic images, the conception of a slice of life may be used as both a commendation of supposed authenticity, and a condemnation of overt simplicity. In this way, a photojournalistic feature photographic image 'records the commonplace, the everyday, the slice of life',[32] and a fine art photographic image (in this case, by Philip-Lorca diCorcia) is claimed to be 'not a captured slice of life, but

[32] Kenneth Kobré, *Photojournalism: The Professional's Approach* (Oxford: Focal, 2004), 87.

a well-thought-through scenario'.[33] (And this is not to suggest that journalistic and fine art photography are distinct categories, but only that this differentiation appears in the relevant contexts.) Moreover, for certain photographers – including Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Larry Sultan, Tina Barney, Martin Parr, and Nan Goldin to name a well-known few[34] – both the favourable and unfavourable acceptations repeat and occur side-by-side. At times, their images are praised as attentive and incisive observations, acute snippets of life itself; other times, their photographic images are far more than *just* a slice of life – not a splinter, or an accidental view, but a studied, intentional, and mediated composition.

All of this, however, when doubts surrounding the ability of the photographic image to be an unmanipulated cut from life proliferate. It is possible that 'life is all that photography has', as Guy Davenport suggest in his 1976 short story 'The Invention of Photography in Toledo', but ascribing reality back to the images, as he recounts, is both futile and senseless.[35] As it has been demonstrated again and again, photographic images are not transparent, and the photographer is never simply there, evincing truths. By that, I do not mean to suggest the realisation of the risks voiced in Allan Sekula's warning that 'The old myth that photographs tell the truth has been replaced by the new myth that they lie'.[36] What I mean is that it is clear that while photographic images do not always lie, they are often deliberate constructs. Journalistic photographic

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33 Thomas Cyril, 'Philip-Lorca diCorcia,' in *Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*, ed. Lynne Warren (London: Routledge, 2006), 389.
34 A number of these were included in the Art Institute of Chicago 2006 exhibition, *So the Story Goes*, the premise to which revolved around this duality of the orchestrated and the raw, and see: Katherine A. Bussard, *So the Story Goes* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; London: Yale University Press, 2006).
35 Guy Davenport, 'The Invention of Photography in Toledo' [1976], in *Da Vinci's Bicycle: Ten Stories* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 121–130, quote on 123.
36 Debra Risberg, 'Imaginary Economies: An Interview with Allan Sekula,' in *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996. Allan Sekula*, ed. Debra Risberg (Norman, IL: University Galleries, Illinois State University 1999), 239.

images, for instance, are both symbolic and iconological, adhering to and, in turn, promulgating visual conventions that are rife with what Barthes coined as 'connoted messages' – visual constructions that call for specific sociocultural associations.[37] Documentary images, such as the ones found in *National Geographic*, and often explicitly presented as a 'truthful slice of life from another country', have equally been shown to make use of what John Tagg calls a 'documentary rhetoric', including a manipulative usage of frontal portraits, to fake intimacy and construct socio-cultural values.[38] Even scientific images have 'their own aesthetic histories', that include the usage of false colouring for the purpose of arriving at a result that is considered (by the photographer and researcher) 'beautiful'.[39]

Nonetheless, the desire to believe that being in the world is subjectable to objective recording brings to the endurance of the slice of life as a photographic notion. Nourishing and fostering the discourse around photographic alleged transparency and the possibility of immediacy, the persistence of the slice of life reinforces the Indexical claim around the photographic image's status as a potential document. This, in turn, allows for an image-based analysis, where one's perception of the photographed may be presented as unmediated, and the photographic image vested with a truth claim. While several artists and writers, including Sophie Calle and W. G. Sebald, have challenged the idea that photography must or even *can* be true, the slice of life persists in historical and philosophical accounts of both photography and specific

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[37] Andrew Mendelson, 'Slice-of-Life Moments as Visual "Truth": Norman Rockwell, Feature Photography and American Values in Pictorial Journalism,' *Journalism History* 29:4 (2004): 166–78, esp. 168–69.

[38] Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, 'The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of *National Geographic*,' *Visual Anthropology Review* 7:1 (1991): 140. For more on Tagg's notion of documentary rhetoric and its relation to the perception of photography see: Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*.

[39] James Elkins, introduction to *Visual Practices*, v.

photographic images, as well as in other disciplines. It persists by means of repetition, like when Pascal Bonitzer's 1978 quote around the photographic image being 'a slice of life caught hot or cold in a snapshot or a composition' reappears in the 2000 introduction to *Cahiers du Cinema* fourth compilation volume.[40] It persists by means of expansion: for instance, as a visual research approach in photo elicitation interviews (PEI) taken as a part of qualitative analytical research in the social sciences, where a certain type of photographic image is taken to visualise and display snippets of someone's current and actual life – a photographic approach that is labelled as 'a slice of life'.[41] And it perseveres – indeed, maintaining a very (*per-*) strict (*severus*) appearance, desperately holding on to its slipping state of being true (*verus*) – in photographers' own written expositions, press releases, and gallery texts and panels. The slice of life remains.

SPLITTING FROM THE REAL

* * *

The sharp elbows gather together into an embrace, a holding of the self in the sight of a lustrous reflection [Figure 30]. Pieced together, these sliced bodies move in a single direction – inwards. The twist of the body is a calling forward to come one with this lust, to be absorbed in the self. A repetition in reverse that is an alluring return of and to itself – an invitation to fall in on itself which will inevitably result in its transfixing

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[40] Berenice Reynaud, 'Introduction: *Cahiers du Cinema* 1973–1978,' in *Cahiers du Cinema Volume Four: 1973–1978: History, Ideology, Cultural Struggle*, ed. David Wilson (London: Routledge, 2000), 29.
[41] Deborah K. Padgett et al., 'A Picture Is Worth…? Photo Elicitation Interviewing with Formerly Homeless Adults,' *Qualitative Health Research* 23:11 (2013): 1440.

upon its own image. A collapse of the self into the self: a shimmering reflection that is a bringing-forth into demise – an invitation to be absorbed in itself. A reflection reflected six time, side by side, in a circle, an endless orb of stares and desires, each leading to the next – an inescapability.

The marble boys from George Minne's 1898 *Narcissus Fountain* (*Fountain with Kneeling Youths*), can be looked at in the Museum Folkwang, in Essen. But this photographic image wants me to believe that I am holding their look in my hand. Transfixed in their own sight, they became a photographic image. Its edges are torn. It is a fragment, a slice of what it used to be. But if this image is a slice of anything, then it must be a slice of the real. An actuality took place in the world – sliced, a piece of it remains, materialised in the form of a photographic image. It is a slice of what was, and now remains: Narcissus arrives not as a bearer of his own testimony, but as proof – an undeniability.

* * *

When looked at as a slice of the real, the stakes regarding the photographic image shift from authenticity and staging to actuality and the virtual. The question is not whether the image is transparent, but whether the thing whose look it offers me is existent. Not whether there is an aesthetic, a composition, or a process of selection, but whether there is *anything at all*. The slice of the real demands the image object *for* the image subject to be a representation of the world, making it visible, functioning in view of what gives itself to be proven. It demands that the image subject *to* the image object is a taking of shape that can serve as proof of what is there, a link that is not only a confinement of the one to the other, but also a confinement of both to the world.

Less occurring than its 'time' and 'life' counterparts, the appearance of the photographic image as a slice of the real assumes a particular mode of universal 'knowledge', a *doxa* to which the writer or thinker may appeal. In the case of Jay Prosser, author of the 2005 *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss*, a book that examines the photographic image as a real-isation of loss, or a bringing of loss into the real, the notion of the photographic image as a splinter of the real is used as a conception to avail oneself of. Borrowing from Lacan's notion of the Real, Prosser's analysis focuses on Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. While others have already suggested that Barthes's photographic *punctum* may invoke or even *be* the Lacanian Real,[42] Prosser goes a step further in equating the Real with the notion of loss, suggesting that Photography, 'capitalised and iconised', possesses the Real: it possesses that which has been lost to language.[43] Prosser himself declares that his initial interest in photography was fuelled by it being the 'visual most often thought of as a slice of the real'.[44] An interest, therefore, that oscillates between the reality of the real and impossibility of the Real – a movement that is guided by photographic real-isation. Leaving aside his complex usage of the Lacanian Real, I will point that within his conceptual oscillation, Prosser's justification of his own association of the photographic image with the slice of the real is that it is something common – an immediate form of universally shared knowledge.

Somewhat different is the case of David Campany, where the notion of the photographic slice of the real is used as a basis from which to expand. In a short essay

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[42] Several writers suggest this, including the most recent and exhaustive analysis in Jennifer Friedlander, *Feminine Look: Sexuation, Spectatorship, Subversion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), esp. 11–16.

[43] Jay Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 29.

[44] Jay Prosser, biographical page on the University of Leeds website, accessed 9 September 2017, at http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/profile/20030/439/jay_prosser.

written to accompany a catalogue of images from the Tosca Photography Fund Collection, Campany sets out to compare mirror images that have their origin in a mirror reflection or reversal (though Campany does not provide examples, these images include Jeff Wall's 1979 *Picture for Women*; a plurality of images from Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* – including #2, #14, #56 and #81; and many well-known photographers' self-portraits like the 1928 image of Florence Henri, the 1950 image of Eve Arnold, the 1988 image of Nan Goldin, and the 2014 Ai Weiwei selfie, *Illumination*), and flipped photographic images, whose image is inverted, thus producing an uncanny effect (Campany's example here is a shop window image by Alvarez Bravo; other well-known instance are Abelardo Morell's *Camera Obscura* series, ongoing from 1991; and many of Lee Friedlander's street views from the 1960s and 1970s). While Campany identifies mirror images with a form of narcissism – an attribution related to the status of the mirror in Christian mythology and morality – flipped photographic images are attributed with a position in which the photographer 'becomes a maker who doesn't over-identify with the photo as a slice of the real, but sees in the image new and latent possibilities'.[45] Neither criticising nor endorsing this view of the slice, Campany simply takes the slice of the real as a granted and existing conception of photography, using it as a touchstone to build against, or a cornerstone to build upon and from. Its status is that of the prevalent assumption, the typical and familiar that may sometimes be challenged.

But the full extension of this popular belief is perhaps best demonstrated through a quote ascribed to American critic and historian of photography, A. D. Coleman. 'We've spent now about 150 years', he supposedly says, 'trying to convince ourselves

[45] David Campany, 'The "Sinister" Photograph: Manuel Alvarez Bravo's *Parábola óptica*, 1931,' in *Photography Discussed: Images from the Tosca Photography Fund Collection*, ed. Mehmet Delman and Zelda Cheatle (Oxted: Hurtwood, 2010), 27.

that photographs are reliable evidence, some unimpeachable slice of the real world. That was a myth from the very beginning'. Encountering this quote on numerous occasions, I became curious as to its context, but found no concrete bibliographical reference to point to its origin. Originating, in all likelihood, from intellectually reckless quote-mongering (as is quite common online), its genuineness is probably to be rejected – doubted at the very least. But the truth is that it does not matter. The point is this: the quote, attributing the view of the photographic image as a slice of the real to a commonly shared and until recently undisputed view, is out there, repeated again and again, and it is *credible*. To its reader, the idea that Western society has been teaching itself that photographic images are slices of the real sounds familiar and correct – it is experienced as common knowledge, even when there is nothing supporting it. This is what makes a *doxa*.

In his 2010 essay, 'Live View', Pavel Büchler offers an exploration of photography in which he states that a photographic image 'is not, then, a slice of the real'.[46] Büchler's rhetoric is telling: it is with this '*then*', an apparently insignificant adverb, but one whose sole function in this sentence is to close the discussion around this conception, that he addresses the notion of the photographic image being a splinter of the real. Inserting it into his argumentation, Büchler is positioning himself against a commonly held opinion, though he is doing so not so much for the philosophical shortcoming of the notion of the slice, which he does not show, or even appear to be interested in, as much as for his own preference for techno-scientific theoretical concepts that he borrows from Flusser. Büchler's motivation is clear: in arguing for the photographic image being a potential observation rather than a recorded actuality, Büchler shifts the

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[46] Pavel Büchler, 'Live View,' *Philosophy of Photography* 1:1 (2010): 15.

attention to what he calls 'the "critical" moment of exposure', and its temporal incongruity with the reality that the photographer intends to capture.[47] The slice of the real is set aside. What remains unclear, however, is what comes after the slice.

[47] Idem, 16.

ELEVEN

BREAKING THE SPLINTER

Part one of Henri van Lier's 1983 *Philosophy of Photography* closes with the statement that 'all photographs are *fragments of reality taken through the frame of the real*'.[1] There is something, perhaps, surprising about this. Having argued, in the beginning of that very part, against the association of the photographic with the (Peircean) index,[2] van Lier turns to affirm another form of Indexicality: that of the trace, the fragment that remains, splintered off of its whole. This points to two things. Firstly, it shows – if it still requires showing – that it is not only the conceptual field of Indexicality that is a textured mess, but also the Indexical paradigm. And secondly, and more concretely, that even without the index, and without the stillness of the mould, Indexicality survives in the form of the trace that is the fragmented splinter: the slice.

There are three modes the photographic splinter assumes: a slice of time, a slice of life, and a slice of the real. While all three are, more or less, common encounters in writings on photography, none, as I demonstrate, should have a natural place there – none belongs there. Of the three, it is the slice of time – as Szarkowski has it – that is the most common formulation. Accordingly, rejections directed at it – albeit they are not many – do exist. Of these, I refer to two arguments against the slice of time that are particularly meaningful. The first, by Damian Sutton is a challenge directed at Sontag's conception of movement and its relation to time; the second, from Ulrich Baer, works against the very notion of Indexicality, and the slice's claim to truth through the trace.

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[1] Henri van Lier, *Philosophy of Photography* [1983], trans. Aarnoud Rommens (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 51.
[2] Idem, 17–20.

But while both objections are strong cases within the theoretical frame they operate, it is the frame itself that fails to contain the photograph for what it is: the right framework, I claim, is one that centres the analysis around the photographic *form*, not the photographic image – the right framework is *poiesis*. As I show, if the photograph emanates from a *poietic* bringing-forth, then it cannot be a slice of anything, because *poiesis* resists splintering and fragmentation.

Being a slice of something is being a part of that something – a part that is divided from what was previously the whole. A slice is necessarily separate – no longer conceived as inseparable – from that something, even if spatially it may reside in direct proximity to it. The slice may double the shape of the whole, repeating it on a smaller scale – a segment of a film strip, for instance – or it may take a form whose contour draws out a cavity in the whole – a segment of an orange, for instance. Of the two possible formalistic relations of the slice to the whole, it is the latter one, of the segment, that best describes the supposed slice of time: a photograph that is a piece of enveloped time, removed from the general sequence of time as it is experienced through movement and progression. Similarly, a slice of life is imagined to be a segment extracted from the fabric of life. The form of the slice of the real, on the other hand, appears to double that of the whole, replicating it on a reduced register. This formal state that the slice necessitates is at the basis of its rejection. As I show, the photographic form is not a slice of time or of life, for in its *poietic* becoming, the photograph does not fit back into the hole it opened in its claimed whole. Neither is it a slice of the real, for the *pro*duction of the photographic form does not repeat reality.

BREAKING WITH THE SLICE

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Two agape mouths with thin red lips and sharp white teeth are photographed side by side [Figure 27]. If time is movement and progression – as Aristotle would have wanted it – then they may be slices of time, cut away from a movement that is without continuation, severed into stillness and silence. Then, they are mute, aphasic, a 'this' that is not 'is', that is without being and existence – a sign that is pointing at something without voicing, without sound. But time is more than just movement and progression in space: it is also duration, understood as change, as the experience of difference as it unfolds. And change – pure duration – cannot be escaped from. From the silenced mouths a slow sound is released, bursting out. The photographic image becomes audible. It is a hymn, and a scream, and a prayer. Increasingly, it intensifies, taking over the page, fills its space until I can no longer unhear it. Sound may belong to movement, but duration – an internal experience of being within change – must not belong to silence: the photographic image is not instantaneous – it is not a moment, but an accumulation, it is change itself.

* * *

The first argument I would mention against the slice of time is the more recent of the two. In his 2009 *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image in Time*, Sutton offers a criticism of the notion of the photographic image as a slice of time from a perspective that frames itself within Deleuzian philosophy, attempting to marry it with the philosophy of photography. Within this framework, 'the opening and closing of the

shutter marks out a slice of time to capture it',[3] and yet, while the photographic image 'might immediately offer itself as a slice of time…it actually demonstrates an aspect of duration that is independent of chronology'.[4] But in order to fully comprehend the weight of this instance, a short detour around the ways Deleuzian philosophy is applied to photography is necessary.

Deleuze famously wrote about cinema and painting, but openly ignored photography. Perhaps he considered the photographic image a cliché, a 'figuration of what modern man sees', as opposed to what an *individual* might see – a thing that the painter has 'to break with',[5] or perhaps he found the photographic form's presupposed stillness – what he calls its 'state of equilibrium at a certain instant'[6] – to be antithetical to his conception of a 'time-image', a direct image of time.[7] Whatever the reason might be, Deleuze's determined avoidance of photography does not – and, indeed, perhaps should not – hinder the quest for a Deleuzian aesthetics of photography. However, it seems that most artists, art historians, philosophers, and others interested in this topic, are more concerned with the application and the applicability of Deleuze's philosophical writing to photography, than with understanding photography through the lens of Deleuzian philosophy.

The introduction to *Rhizomes* 2012 special issue on *Deleuze and Photography*, for instance, suggests that 'To function as Deleuzian art, photography…must unabashedly recognize, accept, and incorporate the "already there" to explore new images and random sensations that could displace the normalizing operations of the regurgitated

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[3] Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image in Time* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 59.
[4] Idem, 145.
[5] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 11.
[6] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 28.
[7] Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory*, 45–46.

cliché'.[8] In other words, arriving at a Deleuzian aesthetics of photography is a matter of looking at the photographic form and image through a Deleuzian perspective, and with a Deleuzian ideology, rather than looking at Deleuze's writings (or lack thereof) on the subject of photography. Contributions to this issue include an invitation to consider Lomography photography through the lens of the diagram – a concept Deleuze develops when discussing the art-philosophy of the painter Francis Bacon – resulting with the elevation of the popular colourful photographic style to a form of philosophy-art like the one Deleuze attributes to Bacon;[9] a proposal to employ the notion of any-space-whatsoever – a term taken from Deleuze's cinematic philosophy and referring to a singular space that lost its homogeneity and became unstable – as a conceptual tool for extending Deleuzian thought into photography, specifically that of industrial landscapes;[10] and an appropriation of the Deleuzian concept of the fold, originating from his studies of Foucault and Leibniz, and carrying a range of meanings that are to do with doubling and the relations between interiority and exteriority, specifically vis-à-vis subjectivity, as a tool to examine photographic space and time, namely in images of urban sprawl.[11]

A second, more focused approach to a Deleuzian philosophy of photography can be found in *Minor Photography: Connecting Deleuze and Guattari to Photography Theory*, an edited volume from the same year. Where the essays in *Rhizomes* encompass various

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[8] Michael Kramp, 'Unburdening Life, or the Deleuzian Potential of Photography,' in 'Deleuze and Photography,' ed. Michael Kramp, special issue, *Rhizomes* 23 (2012), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue23/kramp/index.html.

[9] Alexander Monea, 'Lomo-Fi (v.): To Expose the Haecceities that Pose for Your Lomography Camera,' in 'Deleuze and Photography,' ed. Michael Kramp, special issue, *Rhizomes* 23 (2012), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue23/monea/index.html#_edn1.

[10] Todd Jerome Satter, 'Tearing Real Images from Clichés Through Edward Burtynsky's Manufactured Landscapes,' in 'Deleuze and Photography,' ed. Michael Kramp, special issue, *Rhizomes* 23 (2012), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue23/satter/index.html.

[11] Zoe Hatziyannaki, 'Photographing Folds,' in 'Deleuze and Photography,' ed. Michael Kramp, special issue, *Rhizomes* 23 (2012), accessed 9 September, 2017, at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue23/hatziyannaki/index.html.

applications of multiple theories to different aspects of photography and the photograph, those in *Minor Photography* pivot around the application of a single theory to iterations of the photographic image, focusing specifically on a question of representation. Highlighting a larger (Deleuzian) question around variation and multiplicity, the starting point this collection of essays assumes is the application of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature to photography, so that minor photography is 'photography that experiments with the medium, bringing it towards its borders, and along the way deterritorialising the dominant codes of representation by operating directly in society, instead of merely representing it'.[12] Instances to this conceptualisation include photographic images that present political implications and anticipate the future becoming of communities, like those of Miroslav Tichý;[13] photographic works that occupy a 'parasitic' place of in-between art-historic 'masters', like those of the Marcel Mariën;[14] and photographic 'schools' or groups whose work minorised the prevalent and pervasive regime of art photography in the 1960s and 1970s, namely the Belgian Conceptual artists, a group that included Jacques Lizène and Philippe van Snick.[15]

Sutton's attempt, chronologically predating both the *Rhizomes* special issue and the edited volume on minor photography, is different still, for his Deleuzian conceptualisation of photography operates through the application of a single theory to the *idea* of the photographic image: not a specific photographic image, genre or

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[12] Mieke Bleyen, ed., *Minor Photography: Connecting Deleuze and Guattari to Photography Theory* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), xi.
[13] Gilles Rouffineau, 'Tichý as a Maverick: Singular Figure of a Minor Photography?,' in Bleyen, *Minor Photography*, 17–38.
[14] Mieke Bleyen, 'Always in the Middle: The Photographic Work of Marcel Mariên. A Minor Approach,' in Bleyen, *Minor Photography*, 39–62.
[15] Liesbeth Decan, 'Conceptual Art and Surrealism: An Exceptional, Belgian Liaison,' in Bleyen, *Minor Photography*, 145–62.

aesthetic, but to the notion of the photographic image as such. Sutton's rejection of the slice of time is equally to do with the *idea* of photography, and its relation to time. In his attempt to impose a Deleuzian theory onto the idea of photography, Sutton's objections to the notion of the slice of time are cognate to the movement-based rendition of it by its proponents. According to him, while the act of taking a photographic image delimits a captured slice of time, the photographic image itself is not a slice of time, because it is independent of chronology, which for him means independent of the organisation of temporal experience into a homogeneous progression that is based on movement within space.[16] In this objection, the photographic image is not a slice of time, because time does not equal movement.

For both Sontag and Sutton, the notion of the slice of time is to do with the relation between time and movement, but where, for her, this relation results in affirming the photographic image as a slice of time, for him, this results in rejecting it. For Sontag, time and movement are inseparable notions, and the photographic image is a slice of time in that it presents stillness, a severed splinter of movement: a cut created by the camera. For Sutton, through chronology, movement constitutes only one part of time, and the photographic image is not a slice or a splinter of time precisely because it is independent from movement: the nature of time in the photographic image, he claims, is that of duration. Although he does not put it is these terms, rendering his argument in terms of the photographic relations that constitute the photographic form, would see the image object being *for* the image subject as a temporal enhancement of the image subject into a prolonged duration, and the image subject being *to* the image

[16] Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory*, 37.

object as a reaching of the image subject outside chronology, and towards an image object that is determined by its own logic, and not by a progression-based organisation.

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Two sounding mouths are still there, as I turn the page [Figure 27]. If time is a history, a narrative of happenings that pursue one another, a chronic progression that takes the form of a chronicle, an all-encompassing and deterministic structure of a consecutive story, and a process that keeps unfolding, then the photographic image may be a slice of that time. These mouths are pieces of walls, pieces of paintings, pieces of the clergy, pieces of a papal quest for political dominance – pieces of Western culture, politics, and the struggle between them. But if time may be made of fleeting instances, occurrences that pulverise and disappear, particulars that are just particles, bursts of isolated, unstable events, then the photographic image is no longer a slice of anything – it is an event in itself. The mouths appear. The sound is here and gone. The photographic image is not a testimony, but a proposition, a one of many.

* * *

The second main argument against the slice of time is taken from Baer's study of photography and trauma, which begins by criticising the notion of the slice of time as a commonly shared illusion.[17] According to Baer, this illusion of the slice is to do with a second misconception regarding the truth value of photography: conceiving the photographic image as a slice of time is attributing accuracy and truth to it, inasmuch as it is a singular instance, which is seen as a segment that refers to its whole – time itself – and, hence, also history. For Baer, the notion of the photographic image as a

[17] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (London: MIT Press, 2002), 2–3.

slice of time is to suggest that the photographic form is a piece splintered from history, and this can only exist, he claims, in a conception of history as a narrative, or a structural unfolding of processes that takes the form of *longue durée*. Positioning himself against this conception, Baer's argument is in favour of an event based theorisation – not only of the photographic image, but also of time itself. The photographic image is not a slice of time, because it is often located outside of, in opposition to, and as a challenge to the historic whole which it would have been splintered from – because in its being, it subverts and undoes the very idea of a process, evincing the immediate, episodic, and situated nature of being in the world. The images accompanying and illustrating his argument include contemporary photographic images from the Sobibór concentration camp, and original colour footage from Ghetto Łódź.

For Sutton, photography does not give place to a slice of time, because time is more than movement: it is also duration. For Baer, photography does not give place to a slice of time, because time is not historic unfolding: it is an outburst of events. Sutton's argument is constructed in opposition to the notion of stillness, whereas Baer's moves against the broader conceptual field of Indexicality, and the necessitation of existence that is derived from it. Developing Boer's argument through photographic relations would suggest that the image object, being *for* the image subject, is not a bondage that reflects a continuous state, but one that occurs as an appearance, an experience, or a happening; and that the image subject, in being *to* the image object, does not give it its form as part of a durational unfolding, but in a connection, which is itself an event.

But while both objections are compelling within their own theoretical frame of reference, it is the frame itself that proves incompatible with the photographic form. Sutton's objection to the slice of time, while moving against one aspect of stillness, does so within the general premise of linearity whereas, in order to resist stillness,

photography demands a temporal system that is stratified. Baer, on the other hand, dismisses the slice on the grounds of its impossibility to indicate a true occurrence, since that occurrence cannot be anchored in a historic process whereas, in order to resist the truth status bestowed upon the image, photography demands an alternative to Indexicality. In fact, photography cannot be that indicator because what it shows, what it makes known, and what it *is* changes with passing presents, indicating – if anything – a certain truth about the looker rather than about the looked at. The photograph is not a slice of time, not because it is embedded with duration, or because it embodies an event, but because it emanates from a *poietic* bringing-forth. The image object *for* the image subject represents it and offers it presence, *multiplying* it, not taking away from it, or reducing it. The image subject *to* the image object shapes it by bringing it out of its form by means of becoming, not of coming away.

* * *

I return to the dancers, to their dance, a one of many [Figure 29]. The movement continues through the shapes, it continues to form, to take place. But if this photographic image is a slice of their life, then death is what remains for them – what remains *of* them. Bringing its look forward, photography takes it out: a slice that is a slaughter. It opens a hole in the whole whose look it offers. A hole through which it is drained, through which it empties, and dies out. But, at the same time, it is a hole into which the photographic slice cannot be returned, into which it no longer fits. Pressed back, it becomes a double splinter: a fragment sliced out of a whole, which then penetrates the whole, bruising it anew – a reminder that it was never a part of it to begin with. The photographic image was never a slice of its life.

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For the slice of time, it is one of its earliest formulations – namely, Sontag's – that evinces the whole of which it is splintered, allowing the notion to be challenged. Similarly, for the slice of life, it is re-reading Bonitzer's quote around the photographic image being 'a slice of life caught hot or cold in a snapshot or a composition' in the context of its utterer reveals the hole it forms in life: a removed slice of life is a small death. The photographic slice of life and photography's relation to death are two integral and integrated parts of the same conception. Even though more recently, the discourse around photography and death shifted to the question of the figuration of death,[18] the preoccupation of photography with death is a particularly well-rehearsed one, dating as far back as photography itself.[19] Referring to Balzac, Nadar mentions his belief that 'every time someone had his photograph taken, one of the spectral layers was removed from the body and transferred to the photograph. Repeated exposures entailed the unavoidable loss of subsequent ghostly layers, that is, the very essence of life'.[20] Nadar himself probably shared this belief around photography taking a slice of one's life, leading to a subsequent death, or at least referred to it as plausible.[21] Much later, Barthes is well-known to claim that photography 'produces Death while trying to preserve life',[22] Sontag is often quoted saying that 'to photograph someone is a subliminal murder',[23] Bazin's 'Ontology of the Photographic Image' is famously punctuated with death, namely a death mask, which he likens to photography itself,[24] and Batchen goes as far as relating this death discourse to the alleged temporal stillness

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[18] Most notably in Audrey Linkman, *Photography and Death* (London: Reaktion, 2011).
[19] A critical recapitulation of it can be found in Mulvey, *Death 24x*, 57–66. For a comparative study of the ways in which photography is linked to death in (mostly Western) literature see: Joanna Madloch, 'Remarks on the Literary Portrait of the Photographer and Death,' *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 18:3 (2016): 372–94.
[20] Felix Nadar, 'My Life as a Photographer,' trans. Thomas Repensek, in 'Photography,' special issue, *October* 5 (1978): 9.
[21] Rosalind Krauss, 'Tracing Nadar,' in 'Photography,' special issue, *October* 5 (1978): 34.
[22] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92.
[23] Sontag, 'Plato's Cave,' 15.
[24] Bazin, 'Ontology,' esp. 7, second footnote (marked by a dagger).

– indeed, the temporal rest – of the photographic image.[25] The claim around the particular relation between photography and death is further scrutinised by Christian Metz, who points to the multiple similarities between the two, including that both are, according to him, 'an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world'.[26] Specifically, Metz affirms, following Dubois, 'Photography is a cut inside the referent, it cuts off a piece of it, a fragment, a part object'.[27] In this morbid discourse, the photographic image is a fragment of the photographed, a splintered slice of its life, a small death.

But for a photographic image to be a slice of life, it must be severed from the living body of the photographed, causing the sundered organ to wither and die. Indeed, it is only a slice of *life*, if it takes away a part of the body's livelihood, of its vitality. It is not a surgical cut, but a carve-up: a ruthless butchery that results in demise. If the photographic image were a slice of life, the photographic form would be that small death, which destroys in its very preservation. It would be ante-mortem and post-mortem; it would be death itself. Formally, this would mean that the form of the photographic slice of life is not a reduced-size double of its whole, but a hole made in it. A hole into which the slice no longer fits – into which it cannot be returned. This would make the photographic slice of life a matter of the past, for without a body, the organ decays, it goes into atrophic degeneration and degradation, into dissolution and decomposition. And yet, the photographic form is none of these things: it perseveres, continuing to generate, to be regenerated in a string of passing presents, continuing to re-compose itself. The photographic image in one in which time is constantly present, that is to say, constantly *of* the present, where strata-presents are aggregated and

[25] Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
[26] Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish,' *October* 34 (1985): 84.
[27] Ibidem.

accumulated into a multiplicity of present 'is' – weighing on each other, presenting a space for thought to take place. The photograph is not death, and the photographic image cannot be a slice of life. The image object *for* the image subject is on behalf of it not in that it halves it, but in that it is its other half in the world: not fatally reducing it, but enhancing it. The image subject *to* the image object is existentially bound to it not in that its existence is taken away by it, but in that it is determined by the vital link that transpires from its becoming it.

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The life of Narcissus was not lost to photography, for the reality in which it occurs cannot be reduced to a slice: the absorption needs no proof [Figure 30]. It cannot be evidenced. For if it is taken out of its embrace, if it is sliced out and used as demonstration, as a replacement for a testimony, and a visualisation of that which the eye should not see, then everything is lost to proof – it is lost to sight. Words become empty shells, voices mute, and witnessing accounts demand more than swearing that 'I have seen this'. If the real can be sliced, and the photographic image its slice, then the world is nothing but that which comes through its light. Then the unprovable, the unbearable, the impossible, and the invented become one: falling outside of the visible, no fragment of them may be given to sight. Then all fiction is lie, and philosophy is reduced to nothing but a thought experiment, a form of empirical research that breaks with the sensed, allowing only for the observable. Then photography is news, and science, and raw data, but it is not *poiesis* – for it does not bring into being, but simply reflect that which is.

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While the notion around the slice of time generates a discourse around stillness, duration and history, and that of the slice of life leads to a discourse around death, the slice of the real brings the discussion directly towards the notion of evidence. A slice of the real is a multi-dimensional separation, a removal from the flesh of the thing's existence. It is a cut of reality, a chunk of realness, a piece that was ripped apart – removed and no longer inseparable. As such, it must, it *cannot but*, bring back to the real, back to the world. The photographic image object *for* the image subject must confirm its place in the world, must evidence its look. The photographic image subject *to* the image object must, in its logic of linking and becoming, leave something of itself that will then be used, if necessary, to bring back to itself, as evidence.

Although they may never use this term, this is the assumption out of which the inventors of forensic photography were operating, when suggesting that the photographic image is an indisputable document.[28] But as a recent exhibition held jointly between the Photographer's Gallery in London and the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam evinces: 'the image is always *in itself* an enigma'.[29] Moving through eleven case studies, ranging from photographic images used to confront the Nazis in the Nuremberg trial, to aerial photography of bombing sites, it becomes clear that the need to evidence is a burden dressed upon the photographic image by its beholder rather than an inherent quality of the photographic form. Indeed, the mere act of looking at photographic images as evidence requires not so much decoding, as much as *interpreting* – forming opinions – and the *belief* in the correctness of said

[28] Luce Lebart, 'Rodolphe A. Reiss. Traces, Marks, Prints: Revealing Details Invisible to the Naked Eye,' in *Images of Conviction: The Construction of Visual Evidence*, ed. Diane Dufour (Paris: LE BAL – Éditions Xavier Barral, 2015), 39.
[29] Diane Dufour, introduction to *Images of Conviction*, 5.

opinions is an act of theological compliance.[30] Photographic images are, and always were, part doubt, part certainty, and these parts are equal in size, and in constant combat.

To be sure, doubt, uncertainty and questioning are all *experiences* that belong to the looker, not a property of the photographic image.[31] Nonetheless, this overlapping of certitude with fantasy, of evidence with invention, and of the believed with the doubted has been the condition of the photographic image from its very first day: be it due to the image's 'fragility, enfeeblement or obscurity', its 'often invisible artifice', or the 'plurality of [its] meanings', the photographic image cannot escape the doubts that enshroud it.[32] Photographic images cannot bear the load of being used as means to prove – to swear – that something was looked at, giving its look.

A drawing, on the other hand, can be means to swear that one has seen. In fact – and this is what Michael Taussig gets at – it is *only* a drawing, a creation that is at once 'a depicting, a hauling, an unraveling [sic], and being impelled toward something or somebody',[33] which can fulfil the necessity of swearing, which may be means of verification of the self, for the self. In fact, the photographic slice of the real cannot attest to the imaginary, the hallucinated, the dreamt, the ungraspable, the unbearable. It cannot, because doing so would make the image itself unbearable. In terms of its form, the slice of the real – unlike the slice of time or of that of life – doubles that of its whole, replicating it on a smaller register. If the photographic image were a slice of the

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[30] Jane Blocker, 'Introduction: Imagery Specialists,' in *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xiii–xxiii.
[31] On this see: Douglas R. Nickel, 'Three or Four Kinds of Indeterminacy in the Photograph,' in *Photography and Doubt*, ed. Sabine T. Kriebel and Andrés Mario Zervigó (London: Routledge, 2016), 10–25.
[32] Sabine T. Kriebel and Andrés Mario Zervigó, introduction to *Photography and Doubt*, 1–9, quotes on 5, 6, and 7, respectively.
[33] Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), xii.

real, then its form would be a synecdoche of the photographed – a part that is sufficient to stand for the whole, a *pars pro toto*, a totalitarian 'act of force' as Barthes defines this rhetorical tool.[34] This doubling of the real would have made the photographic slice intolerable – in fact, impossible – in that its very being would be a betrayal to that which one can endure. Indeed, that real, of which the photographic image is considered a slice or a splinter, and for which it supposedly stands, may be the ungraspable hell of Auschwitz,[35] a real that not only requires no fragmentary proof, but that also rejects the very notion of being provable (and in that, also disprovable).[36] The photographic image object being *for* the image subject, owes itself to it not inasmuch as it is forced to correspond to it, attesting to it, but inasmuch as it functions for it, contesting its place in the world. The image subject being *to* the image object, is confined to it, not because it is forced into it, but because it has no force without it. The photographic image is not a slice of the real, because there is no real photography is capable of representing or coming out of: the questioning of whether a certain thing is real or faked, existing or invented, happened or imagined, true or fable, cannot be answered by photography, for certain things evade such classification – they evade the very notion that a classification could ever be possible.

WHAT REMAINS OF THE SLICE

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[34] Roland Barthes, 'Brecht and Discourse: A Contribution to the Study of Discursivity' [1975], in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 218.
[35] George Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* [2003], trans. Shane B. Lillis (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), esp. 79–81.
[36] Jacques Rancière, 'The Intolerable Image,' in *Emancipated Spectator*, 89–90. See also: Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, 'Incongruous Images: "Before, During, and After" the Holocaust,' in 'Photography and Historical Interpretation,' special issue, *History and Theory* 48:4 (2009): 9–25.

I look back at Dean's sounding mouths. These photographic images cannot be slices. They are not slices of time, of temporality, for they are not a tempo, a pace that is non-present, that is not of the present. They do not offer me a piece – a decisive moment – of a movement: it is movement itself that they have in them. I hear them now; I hear their vocal layering of presents. They are not slices of life, either: not slices of livelihood, vital organs of sound, articulators – articulating, enunciating death. For the music carries on, not decomposing, but re-composing itself, forming new compositions. Nor are they slices of the real. They are not a synecdoche of the singing brothers from the papal basilica, evidence of their song, a replacement to the testimony these lips articulate in voice.

Photography is *poiesis*. Affecting the mouths, the sounds, the brothers, and their song, photography cuts through them but not from them, it forms something new: a thought.

* * *

Besides *being* a slice of time, of life or of the real, the photographic image can also be described as capturing and presenting a splintered slice. But this is a vocabularic similarity to the photographic concepts of the slice rather than a different case of it. That photography captures a – in most cases, rectangle-shaped – slice is uncontested: something is, and that present existence is given shape in the image. This is not peculiar to photography. Like all other images, the photographic image has an image-subject which is taken to be existent or unreal, doubted or wished for, and so on.[37] The idea that the photographic image presents a certain slice, a fragmented segment, an

[37] Husserl, *Phantasy*, 19.

incompletion, is similarly uncontested: the photographic form puts forward a photographic image, and that image – like all other images – is partial. But it is not, as I have argued in the previous parts, indexical or still, and it is not, as I attempted to show here, a slice of the photographed. But there is, to be sure, a latent possibility waiting to be erupt in the slice, and simply reducing the concept of the slice to the inconsequential notion of partiality, is relinquishing the deep and subtle relation the slice may have to photography. My suggestion is this: rather than the photographic image being a slice *of* something, or a splinter, photography may be a slice *through* something – a splitting at the serve of *poiesis*.

TWELVE

SPLITTING THROUGH

In a poster accompanying his 2013 installation at the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam, *The Sound of Silence*, Alfredo Jaar attests that 'You do not take a photograph. You make it'. While these words, famously attributed to Ansel Adams, are usually taken to refer to the photographer's willed construction of a photographic composition, they hold, in fact, another, more *poietic* meaning: a photograph is something that is made – it is *pro*duced. Belonging to *technê*, photographing is a revealing or a bringing-forth. Photographing is the making of something new: a bringing into being. And this making, I claim, is not by means of taking a slice away, but of placing something in the world. However, while the photographic image is not a splintered slice, parting with these notions must not mean parting with the thinking and the conceptualisation that emerges around it: it must not mean parting with notions of reduction.

Commonly, the notion of reduction denotes a bringing back to a lesser or a previous state, and a scaling down in amount, degree, or size. In the photographic context of the slice, this sense manifests itself as a bringing back to the past, accompanied by a scaling down of the photograph's participation in the temporal order, that is to say a slice of time; a bringing back from the dead, accompanied by a scaling down of the photograph's sense of vitality, that is to say a slice of life; or a bringing back to the photographed, accompanied by a literal scaling down of the world, that is to say a slice of the real. In the previous chapter, I have shown that the photographic image is not a slice: not of time, not of life, and not of the real, and that photography is not reductive in this sense. However, as I show, what happens through photographic *pro*duction *is* a reduction, albeit the very understanding of reduction is radically altered. Maintaining

reduction as a photographic concept, I suggest a revaluation of its performativity: from a lessening of the world to an expansion in the world. This reconceptualisation will see photographic reduction turned into photographic *re*duction: an augmentation through slicing and splitting, which brings about a return, or a re-placement of the photographed thing in the world. My proposition is that taking a photograph is slicing through the photographed, creating a split within it, not as an act of attrition or removal, but as accession and enhancement.

Needless to say, parting with the slice and rethinking reduction is not an epistemological goal in and of itself – it is merely means towards understanding photography as and through *poiesis*, asking both what and how it brings into being. Reduction is means towards reproduction: two notions that are not only historically, but also conceptually inseparable. As Siegfried Kracauer demonstrates, John Ruskin's views, according to which photography is 'as if a magician had reduced the reality to be carried away into an enchanted land',[1] and Hippolyte Taine's claim that 'I want to reproduce the objects as they are, or as they would be even if I did not exist',[2] are not only contemporaneous to each other and to the invention of photography, but are also *interdependent*.[3] Similarly, I suggest, the notion of photographic *re*duction is inseparable from that of re*pro*duction – a replacement to reproduction – which the second part of this chapter surrounds. Discussing the notion of re*pro*duction in relation to the split caused by the slicing through of photography, I show that photographic *poietic pro*duction is a re*pro*duction – a bringing forward that is a bringing into being of something new.

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[1] John Ruskin, 'VII. Macugnaga,' in *Praeterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*, Volume II [1845] (London: George Allen, 1907), 206.
[2] Quoted in Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography,' in *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 5.
[3] Idem, 4–12.

*RE*DUCTION

Photography is not reductive in that it makes its photographed thing simpler. Even without the slice, the sense of photographic reduction as a diminishment or a lessening is highly problematic. Indeed, the very idea of the existence of a 'less complicated' state of the photographed in the world, and the desire to expose and encounter it is implicated in essentialism. Accepting it is giving credence to the belief that a certain essence of the photographed could be made simpler or more easily apparent if captured in the form of a photographic image, shedding away the visual disturbances of non-mediated perception, clearing the field of sight to expose the thing for itself: as if without movement or time or space the thing *itself* could be seen. It is this belief that fuelled and enabled Victorian practices of surveying,[4] including the colonialist and ideological taxonomic classifications of men into visual types – a practice that not so much caught a certain essence, otherwise lost in the complexity of the thing, as much as fabricated false simplicities, which could then be used towards the exercise of control.[5]

Photographic reduction is not an act of descriptive or interpretative simplification. In fact, rather than making its photographed more straightforward and transparent, easily and readily lending itself to an other, photography often veils it in equivocality – posing uncertainty about its very nature; ambiguity – opening it to multiple interpretations and meanings; and ambivalence – leaving it to oscillate between contradictory valences, inhabiting both values at the same time. Photography makes things more complex: it is

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[4] For more on nineteenth century photographical surveys see: Alan Thomas, *The Expanding Eye: Photography and the Nineteenth-Century Mind* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

[5] A similar claim is argued for in James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion, 1997), eps. 214. See also: Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, ed., *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angele: Getty Research Institute, 2013).

a *poietic* process of coming into being, and within that of complication. One prominent instance of such augmentation of meanings is Heidegger's already mentioned handling of the photographic image as a densification of looks – what he calls 'images in the broader sense'[6] – offering its own look as the photographic image, the look of a photographic image in general, the look of the specific photographed thing, and the look of that thing in general. But there are many others.

* * *

Formed by photography, St. Paul's cathedral in London appears before me dozens of times [Figure 31]. Postcard on top of postcard, photographic image on photographic image, juxtaposed and superimposed in a palimpsest of architectonic form, the layers dilapidate the Palladian site, pulverising its columns and spires into a haze of hinted sights. There are no identical two, although all come out of a single place. Photographed, St. Paul's cathedral is re-placed in the world*, placed anew*, *in a form it may never have had before*. It multiplies, in a spin that is without control. The views are gathered and piled, and a new photograph takes form.

Unlike in an architectural capriccio drawn by Piranesi – a dark and imaginary view that traps the look in a rapid passage between buildings and ruins – the look of St. Paul's does not come out of a fantasy. Nor is it simply a matter of excess, like in one of Leonardo da Vinci's *Pentimenti* – a superimposition that is a multiple tracing at the risk of total erasure, an exploration of what could have been and still may be alongside that which is already there – for the multiplicity of St. Paul's is not the outcome of a repetition to replace a trace, but of a replacement that is a placing back, a putting back

[6] Heidegger, *Kant*, 66.

into a place it never was before. Photographed, the structure is sliced, it is split, and a photograph comes out of it – a photograph re-duces it out into the world, re-placing it in the world. The patterned vista forms a thought.

* * *

Although it comes out of a process of reduction, the photographic form is not a reduced outcome, and its iteration – the photographic image – is not a reduced image: it is *a returned image on and through the carrier of which a look is looking out*. Continuing from where Heidegger left of, I suggest that photography is a reductive process in that *it allows for the coming forward of the look of the thing*, the coming forward of the face of the thing, a resurfacing, a process of bringing back: a *re*duction. Etymologically, reduction, from the Latin *reducere*, composed of a prefix of return and repetition (*re-*) and an action of pulling and directing (*ducere*), is an act of leading back, guiding back or bringing back, and more figuratively, a restoration, replacement or turning around. Photography is reductive in the sense of bringing back, where bringing back is understood not as a leading backwards to a lesser state, but as an act of restoration, of replacement, a re-placing, or placing anew of the photographed in the world: *bringing back as a poietic process of coming into being in the world.*

Photographed, the thing multiplies: a process that once initiated, curtailing it may prove beyond the bounds of possibility. What was one is now many, iteration follows iteration: on glossy print and computer screens, on newsprint paper and cardboard postcards, extended on a billboard and condensed to a slide, projected, scanned, repeated, and repeated. *Photographic reduction is an expansion*. The image object being *for* the image subject takes its place in the world by placing it in it, by allowing the image subject to come forward in the world, to return to it, and resurface in it, enhancing and

multiplying its presence, through expansion. The image subject being *to* the image object changes into it, so that its becoming is a coming forward of its look, a coming into being that is a placing of itself in the world, determined by the multiplication offered to it by the image object.

My claim is that photography allows for a bringing back of the look of the thing, and its re-placement in the world. To be sure, my terminology may be reminiscent of traditional photographic philosophical theory, like the poetic rendering Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortés-Rocca offer the photographic image, for instance. But the differences between their usage and my own are significant. For Cadava and Cortés-Rocca, the photographic image is a cut, a mark that is left on the world by the look of the camera (or any other sighted eye): photography is a cutting away into the fabric of the world, and the photographic image a wound that is Indexical, bearing the haptic marks of the life it bleeds out of the photographed.[7] The cut, for them, is an act of reduction: reduction from the body, reduction to an image. My proposal, on the other hand, is this: taking a photograph is *slicing through* the photographed, creating a cut through it. The photographic image is not the cut, but is what comes *out of* the cut through the photographed: it is the re-placement of the photographed in the world, a *re*duction that comes out of slicing.

Performed directly on the photographed, slicing is a cutting into the form, creating a laceration in the subject, so that to allow a movement from the inside out (and the other way around). Photographic slicing causes a splitting from within the photographed, bringing about its *re*duction and re-placement. In *re*ducing the whole, it does not give place to slices – splinters separated from the photographed – but affects

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[7] Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortés-Rocca, 'Notes on Love and Photography,' *October* 116 (2006): 20.

the whole, so that it may undergo change. Photographic slicing is a splitting that is a re-joining: a *splicing*, to use a Lacanian term, an entwining performed on the edges of the photographed thing, allowing for it to continue, melting into its image. In that, slicing as a form of *re*duction or a re-placement, is a laceration that opens the way for expansion. The image object *for* the image subject is in view of it, because it comes out from it – it owes itself to it in that it is owned by it, it is its own. The image subject *to* the image object gives it shape in that it brings its shape from beyond its form – it *trans*forms into it.

* * *

From within the pattern, between the brittle pages of a book whose fore-edge is tinted scarlet red, a zebra is staring out [Figure 32]. Photographed, the book allows itself to be seen: it fans out, spreading its sheets, opening a momentous view, a peek into its belly, and the beast that stands within, safeguarded by a chain-link fence, double safeguarded by the turning of the page. The bars that hold it multiply. They divide its score on an invisible stave, neatly separated sections that set the printed characters apart from the figured animal. Between them there is silence. The turning of a page is always an act of a silencing. It is an erasure of the text, and in that, a crippling of the context.

In this visual composition, each turning of the page is a break marked on it: it is a break with it. The book ceases to speak – it becomes a photographic image of itself; it becomes a musical notation of itself: an annotation of characters and figures, shadows and light, a juxtaposition that demands new meanings – a new thought. As the photograph is brought-forth, the book is re-placed in the world, taking a new place, one it never had before, but now has, through its image, in its image. Photography brings change upon it, because it leaves an incision on it: an aperture through which

*re*duction can take place, a laceration that allows for duplication and transformation. Photographed, the book is sliced and split: it is marked by the photographic blade that slices through it.

* * *

Although the notion of the apparatus is an outdated model that produces 'analogue' misconceptions which resonate into 'digital' photographic theory, there is one observation that remains true: photography is armed with a blade that is activated at the time of photographing. Photography is a sharp occurrence. The photographic blade is sharp in that its point is whetted, capable of piercing through the epidermis of the photographed, capable of affecting and incising, of moving from the outside in. It is sharp in that its movement is sudden and marked, a slicing that is abrupt: whether it is expected or occurs by surprise, photography is always an abruption, an action that is immediate as much as it is violent. And it is sharp in that it is acute, an intensity brought about upon the photographed, a severe and sudden change. Yet, at the same time, the blade of photography is also blunt, for it is not immediately – or even necessarily – sensed by the photographed, for one is often photographed without knowing or consent, while only sometimes being able to sense that such slicing and *re*duction is taking place. Indeed, the blade of photography is sharp *and* blunt, and it is both at once. It is sharp from the point of view of inducing reproduction, but it is blunt from that of sensing that induction: examined from outside the photographed, it is sharp, examined from inside, it is blunt.

Photography acts on the thing – it slices through the thing, doing something *to* it, but it does not take anything away *from* it: not diminishing it, and not cutting a splinter off of it. Each slicing the photographed undergoes is a single and decisive swing of the axe.

The slicing occurs *through* the photographed, moving from its outer side inwards, so as to mark an opening in it: making a way inwards, the slicing creates a way outwards – a path towards the re-placement of the thing in the world. Photographic slicing creates an ingress that is also an egress. It does not injure the photographed, reducing it, but *re*duces and re-places it in the world, brings it back into the world. The photographed is too pliable and resilient to be injured by photography, which is weak nonetheless, but it is, at the same time, too amenable and susceptible to escape its affect altogether. The slicing through of photography is both sharp and blunt, and it is both at once.

The slicing of photography is an action performed on the photographed form, whose outcome is the photographic form. Neither the photograph itself, nor the photographic image are a slice or a piece of the photographed whole, nor are they a cut performed in or on it: the photograph is what comes out of the photographed following the slicing of photography. Photography is not a lessening, a removal or a death; it is a *pro*ductive slicing. Through photographic slicing, a split occurs: a split activated by a slicing through – an act of photography on the photographed. A split that is a cut, a marking of the real, a marking in the world. The photographic form comes out of the splitting of the photographed and its reproduction.

RE*PRO*DUCTION

Commonly used in photographic philosophical theory in relation to the canonical Benjaminian meditation around replication, aura and dissemination,[8] the notion of

[8] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' [1936], in *Illuminations*, 217–51. Benjamin's claims in this influential text were analysed by a considerable number of scholars,

reproduction opens debates that surround the political potential intrinsic to the technological distribution of mass culture,[9] and the techniques and technologies pertaining to the production of art,[10] and leads, eventually, to the disruption of the very modernist orders of the political and the aesthetic.[11] But this is not the meaning around which I wish to centre this argument: rather, in discussing photographic reproduction, I would like to focus on reproduction in its *biological* sense – a procreation that is a bringing into being. Photography, I suggest, *brings about a reproductive process on the photographed thing*: This begins with a slicing through – a laceration that is non-diminutive, non-subtractive. A slicing that does not remove anything from the photographed form, but that allows for its multiplication: an augmentation and reduplication of the photographed. The cut of photography is not a taking away, but an opening up: a splitting through that gives place to an expansion, a form of *re*duction that is not making smaller or lesser in amount, degree or size, but making everything more than it was before. It is no longer a question of scale, but of *being in the world*. *Re*duction as placing anew in the world, the creation of the condition for having more place in the world: a growth. Photographic slicing through is not a seizure or a removal, but an augmentation and reproduction: *slicing through as re-duction is a re-placing through reproduction*.

Photographic slicing is a *poietic* bringing into being – a *pro*duction, to return to the Agambian term, a bringing-forth into presence. It is a *re*duction that is a doubling: *re*duction as a form of *pro*duction of something new – an image, a thought.

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but the most comprehensive of these readings continues to be Miriam Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology",' in 'Weimar Film Theory,' ed. David Bathrick, Thomas Elsaesser, and Miriam Hansen, special issue, *New German Critique* 40 (1987): 179–224.

[9] Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema.'

[10] Andrew Benjamin, ed., *Walter Benjamin and Art* (London: Continuum, 2005).

[11] Susan Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered,' *October* 62 (1992): 3–41.

Photographic *re*duction is a form of reproduction that is a re-*pro*-duction: a *re*duction forth, that is a guiding or an extension in place of, a re-placement of the photographed in the world, so that the photographic form that came out of it – out of its laceration – can take its place, so that it can *pro*duce thought, bringing it into being. Slicing through the photographed is allowing for the opening of a new (stratified) temporality, and the creation of a space for thought to form – a space for thinking. Through photography, the photographed – *re*duced and re*pro*duced, sliced and split – becomes a photographic image of itself, an image in which the photographic form maintains its presence in all strata-presents at once – through which, that is, it is always present, always in presence, always of the present and in the present, always *is* (even when its perception appears to have passed, lost to the past).

Photographic splitting through is a poietic *pro*duction into being: a re*pro*duction that originates form a *re*duction. Within the process of re*pro*duction, the photographed – the thing in the world – may be compared to a cell, a structural and functional unit of life that is capable of reproduction through division. To understand this analogy, a short detour into the philosophy of cinema – where it was theorised – is necessary. Discussing cinema, Sergei Eisenstein claims that the 'shot is a montage *cell*. Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order…so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage'.[12] Borrowed from biology, the term cell is used to denote a divisibility, an ability to split and collide, forming – through conflict and encounter – something new. In cinema, this metaphoric terminology of the cell, which was adopted, albeit not without criticism, by many, including Deleuze,[13] relates

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[12] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram,' in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 37.
[13] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* [1985], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), esp. 35 and 163.

to the formation of the film image through montage. Each shot – each group of instances – is a cell of the montage that comprises it, and is formed by it through division. But this metaphor leads to an even more powerful analogy, when expanded further into the photographic discourse. My proposition is this: when photographically sliced, the photographed *acts as a cell* that undergoes a splitting process akin to the biological process of single organism asexual reproduction: a form of reproduction where a formation – an offspring – comes out of a single entity rather than from a union of entities. *The formation of the photographed is the photographic form and its image.* Photographing the thing is splitting through it – a process that does not reduce it, but *re*duces it, re-placing it in the world by means of re*pro*duction, a process of multiplication.

* * *

The figure split between the lines is left on the page [Figure 33]. The photographic blade left its mark, and she remains there, sliced, transformed. It is not a matter of a gap or a hole – the whole remains whole. She is split, spilling out, but not reduced. Or, rather, she is *re*duced, re-placed in the world, in books on shelves, in slides on screens, in studios awaiting further splitting. *Re*duction as augmentation. *Re*duction as means for re*pro*duction: not through mechanical replication, but through procreation, a *pro*duction of an offspring formation – a bringing into being of an image, of a thought. Like a cell that divides and doubles, she becomes two: herself and an image of herself – herself and the offspring formation that comes out of her. The split that happens through her, like a birth of the self, or a placing of the self in the world, it changes her. Coming out of it, the photographic image leaves its mark on the photographed, and not the other way around.

The photographic image is hers – it is part of her, it *belongs* to her. It is linked to her in a chain of incessant becoming and representation.

* * *

Sliced through by photography, the photographed is reproduced through a process akin to an asexual cell division, and becomes the 'mother cell' to an offspring formation – a photograph – that will forever carry its birth marks. Birth, as Nancy points out, is what is 'used to speak of what is absolutely in excess of representation',[14] it is the 'slipping away of presence through which everything comes to presence'.[15] The photographic form is born out of the slice split through the photographed: re*pro*duced out of a *re*duction. It is *pro*duced into being by being brought into presence, for 'The essence of pro-duction', as Agamben suggest, 'is to bring something into presence' – this is the reason, according to him, that 'Aristotle says "every art is concerned with giving birth"'.[16]

The formed offspring that is born, coming out of the split performed on the photographed, survives as an image of itself – it remains as a set of relations, shaping a photographic image. The photographic image is an offspring formation that carries the likeness of its progenitor, looking like it. Rancière's already mentioned critique of Barthes, suggesting that the latter reduces the photographic image to the Latin *imago*, a likeness of a past ancestor that is used to maintain the ghostly presence of the dead in the present-day of the living, returns to mind. Only now, rather than the photographic image acting *as* the photographed *progenitor*, it *is* its *progeny*. The relation of photography to the photographed thing in the world, I suggest, is not in being its temporal portal, an

[14] Nancy, introduction to *The Birth to Presence*, 2.
[15] Idem, 4.
[16] Agamben, 'Poiesis and Praxis,' 73.

invitation for the deceased to dwell among the living, or for the parent to haunt their offspring. The photographic form *is*, in constant movement and change, and through it, the photographed is present, not as a ghostly presence, but as a part of an incessant present. The photographed is the 'mother cell' – the genesis of the photographed, and the photograph its offspring formation: although the photograph *re*places the photographed in the world, it does *not come instead of it* – it comes out of it, carrying it forward. Being the progeny of a 'mother cell', the photograph does carry a degree of likeness to it – it is *of* it, coming out of it, out of its laceration. Bearing formal resemblance is part of what constitutes the photographic image, but it is not *the* image. As a photographic image, it *carries* the likeness of the photographed as an image object, allowing it to look out on its image carrier, but it is not itself that likeness.

The slicing and splitting through of photography brings about a third photographic relation. In the first relation, the image object being *for* the image subject, offers it presence, it *re*presents it by presenting it anew, *re*placing it in the world. The image object has the image subject as its function, standing on behalf of it: a *photographic representation that emerges out of a re-pro-ductive split*. In the second relation, the image subject being *to* the image object, becoming it, coming into being out of it, so that the image object is the shape that comes out of its form. The image subject changes into the image object, linking itself to it: *photographic becoming emerges out of a re-ductive slice*. Unlike the first two relations of representation and becoming, which form the photograph – they *are* its form – the third relation is formed by the photograph: it is the form the photograph assumes in relation to the world. It is a relation that points not to the constituting components of the photographic image, but to the photographic image as a whole, in its connection to the photographed thing that is a part of the world. It is necessary. Indeed, from the index to the death mask and the

trace, the theoretical propositions generated by the fever towards Indexicality are conceived and adopted to address this precise question of relation to the photographed thing in the world, and although different to each other, all of these phrasings – as well as many other more or less common variations – point towards the necessity of the third photographic relation.

It begins when a photograph of a thing is taken, with the thing becoming a photographed. As the photographed, it is sliced through by photography, a split that causes it to double and re*pro*duce, like a cell that multiplies itself, forming an offspring. That double – the offspring formation to which the thing is connected through the act of splitting – is the photographic form of the thing. For the photographed thing, being sliced through, *re*duced, split and re*pro*duced is a process of subjectification: in the making of the image, it becomes a part of the image as the image subject, while the image subject subjects to the photographed. But as Lomax demonstrates, following Foucault and Badiou, subjectification is always interwoven with subjugation by the lace of the apparatus.[17] Following Lomax, I add that *the subjectification of the photographed thing is the subjugation of the photograph*. The photograph belongs to the photographed. The third photographic relation takes the form of *the photograph is of the photographed*: an *extrinsic ontological relation of belonging*. Being born out of the photographed, the photographic form *directs* towards it: the photographed is the subject of the photographic image, giving its look to it, so that this look may point back to it. Being of the photographed, the photographic image *belongs* to it – an association by possession that is a subjugation of the photographic form to the photographed thing in the world. Being generated out of the photographed, the photographic form is a thing

[17] Yve Lomax, *Pure Means: Writing, Photographs, and the Insurrection of Being* (Ventnor, Isle of Wight: Copy Press, 2014), 29–31.

that is *created out of* the photographed, re*pro*duced from within it, so that the photographed constitutes the photographic form – a process that affects the photographed, *re*ducing it, marking it.

Originating from a birth, the third photographic relation of belonging is one of *kinship*. Etymologically formed of kin, from Old English *cynn*, 'family', 'kind' or 'nature', and -ship, a word-forming element meaning, among other things, 'condition', 'power' and 'relation between', from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root **(s)kep-*, 'to cut' or 'to split', kinship is a familial relation that comes out of a cut, or a split – that comes out of splitting. Yet photographic kinship is a belonging not in terms of acceptance or inclusion, but in terms of being in ownership, as property – indeed, the original sense of being familial. Originating from the Latin *familia*, 'household servants', familial is not to be confused with domestic, from the Latin *domus*, 'house' and by extension also its inhabitants, the parents with their children. Photographic re*pro*duction generates a familial relation of kinship and belonging inasmuch as it is one of enslavement, ownership and subjugation, not of attendance and care: a parentage without parenthood (a case that can, too often, be made for general familial relations in the world). Rather than the position of a carer, the 'mother' cell holds an authoritative, commanding position in relation to its offspring formation.

But if photographic belonging is a kinship that emerges out of the *re*ductive slice and the re*pro*ductive split, then the question returns to where this leaves photographic Indexicality, not only as a paradigm and a fever, but also as a conceptual field. For if photographic *re*duction is a slicing through the photographed, or a marking *on* the photographed, and photographic re*pro*duction is a split out of the photographed, then the place of Indexicality, and its assertion around slicing away the photographed, and the marking the photographed itself leaves on photographic image becomes uncertain.

If photography is a slicing through the photographed and a split out of it, if rather than imprinting the photographed onto the photograph, photography reaps the photograph out of the photographed, *if the marking is on and of the photographed*, then photographic Indexicality is turned on its head. It is not the photograph or the photographic image that are existentially marked by the photographed, forcing them to carry the imprint of that tactile encounter, but the photographed itself that bares the (birth)marks of the photograph – that is in a deictic relation to the photograph that comes out of its laceration and *re*places it in the world. The photographed points to the photograph exclaiming 'this is of me, this is mine', while both 'this' and 'me' are instable and unstill, ever subject to change, conveying a different presence in different presents.

Indexicality originates in a philosophical fever. But origin, as Benjamin observes, 'has nothing to do with genesis…The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existence came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance'.[18] Origin is a question of becoming, and discussing the origin of the photographic Index fever is discussing photographic becoming, and the photographic relations that emerge out of it, bringing with it – in their very coming into being – a fervent unrest. Photographic becoming is a poietic process of *pro*duction into being that comes about through a slicing that is a *re*duction and a splitting that is a re*pro*duction: the bringing into being of a photographic form that exists in a familial relation of belonging with the photographed. And although the familiality between the split 'mother cell' and the emerging daughter is one of subjugation rather than of care, the relation between the two – photographed and photograph – is marked by a longing to come together: a fervent drawing back to each

[18] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [1928], trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), 45.

other. Through the photographic image, the photograph calls to the photographed thing in the world – a calling that is dubbed Indexicality. A calling that *is* Indexical fever.

Photography and Indexicality are both notions that are bound with the body of the photographed. In the *poietic* process of photography, the photograph comes out of the body of the photographed – out of its sliced flesh. The notion of photographic Indexicality, on the other hand, 'is a corporeal trace',[19] it is what remains of that photographed in the form of an absence. The photographic image, I suggest, is dubbed Indexical following this shared corporeal trait: the relation of bodily kinship between photographed and photograph and its resulting calling is expressed through the corporeal sign of the index. Expanding on Barthes's words, it can be said that the notion of the index answers the purpose by serving as 'a sort of umbilical cord',[20] joining together the photographed 'mother cell' with its daughter. For Cadava and Cortés-Rocca the positioning of the index as an umbilical bond comes as the outcome of a photographic process that is described by them as 'alchemy',[21] recalling Elissa Marder's reading of Barthes, in which she suggests that photography 'alchemically transforms light into flesh'.[22] For them, photography comes out of light, and brings about a photograph that is umbilically connected to the flesh of the photographed through Indexicality: a transformation that is made possible through what is dubbed alchemy. Yet despite the profusion of this theoretical standpoint,[23] the photographic

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[19] Cadava and Cortés-Rocca, 'Love and Photography,' 18.
[20] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 81.
[21] Cadava and Cortés-Rocca, 'Love and Photography,' 18.
[22] Elissa Marder, 'Nothing to Say: Fragments on the Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' [2000], in *Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 156.
[23] See, for instance: Katy Barron and Anna Douglas, eds., *Alchemy: Twelve Contemporary Artists Exploring the Essence of Photography* (London: Purdy Hicks, 2006).

process has as little to do with alchemy, as it has with Indexicality. While alchemy is 'multiple and self replicating',[24] and, indeed, '*approaches* universality',[25] taking it to signify a magical transformation is an abuse of the term and its complexity.[26] Alchemy is employed here to do the same work that Indexicality then carries on, accounting for the relation that spans out of the change from photographed to photograph: like Indexicality, alchemy is a theoretical placeholder adopted to account for a trait. Both fail in doing so.

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Between the lines, the light of the sun hits the surface [Figure 34]. Taken at the dusk of day, as the light shifts form and gives place to long projected shadows, the image becomes a sundial delineating the choreography of sheens and lustrous, as they glimmer along the wall. Through a light that flashes in a bright room, a past-present registers itself as a temporal stratum. Layers of past-presents accumulate on each other, weighing on each other, moving into each other. The past-present flashes up, it remains in sight and in light. Layers accumulate: presences from multiple presents. They pass through the light. Past representation maintaining present with present becoming: a multiplicity of being *for* and being *to*. Light multiplies, placed in the world, placed through photography.

Photographic images belong to light: the photographic image *is* of light. It is *pro*duced through light, and its incessant being comes from light, it comes to light, photographically. Through photographic *poiesis*, light transform, taking forms, forming itself and the photograph. Through light, the photograph forms thought: *the photograph*

[24] Karen Pinkus, *Alchemical Mercury* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1.
[25] Idem, 10.
[26] Idem, 11–15.

thinks in light, forming thought through its light form, revealing light, giving it an intelligible form – a form that is wholly photographic.

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WHERE TO GO WITH PHOTOGRAPHY (A CONCLUSION)

In 2016, an anthology of Luigi Ghirri's *Complete Essays 1973–1991* was published in English for the first time. While his first photographic book, *Kodachrome* (1978), came to be not only a formal and conceptual challenge to the practice of photography at the time, but also a visual landmark, guiding generations of photographers, it is this ultimate book that marks Ghirri's true revolutionary importance. Although some of these sixty-eight provocations appeared in English as part of previous publications, this was the first time that Ghirri's thought was compiled into a single volume, presented to the Anglophone reader *as theory*. Three years earlier, in 2013, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI) in Rome presented an extensive survey of Ghirri's work; its title was 'Pensare per imaggini': to think in images. The words are his, but 'to think in images' is more than just Ghirri's own description of the sense of *his* photographic work – it is the sense of photography *in general*. While for Ghirri photography was a model for his own thought, I propose extending his claim into a broader observation: photography provides a model through which the photographed thing may form thoughts out of itself. As I have demonstrated, this formation of thought stands in opposition to the entire paradigm of analysis that rules photographic studies: it stands in opposition to Indexicality.

But Indexicality is difficult to get rid of. Being both ridden and riddled with an Indexicality fever, photography demands something else: it is not enough to reject Indexicality – a new proposition must be put in place. Taking Indexicality as a composed conceptual field that originates from a fever that is turned into a paradigm, my strategy holds that if all the modules that comprise the field of Indexicality are rejected, then the concept itself becomes void, and the paradigm becomes pointless,

allowing me to substitute it with a new proposition to answer its fever: a new theoretical schema for photography. The first half of my claim is that the photographic image is not itself Indexical of anything. That the photographic image is bound to the photographed through a Peircean semiotic logic of indication is not to suggest that a meaningful relation of existence holds the one in function of the other. Semiotics, I claim in the first part, cannot be employed towards an ontological argument. As for the suggestion of the image being either an Indexical mould or an Indexical trace, I attempt to invalidate such notions by evincing the formal, structural and temporal consequences these claims would demand for the photographic image and form. The photographic form, I demonstrate in the second part, is not timelessly still; nor is the image, as I show in the third part, a slice of anything else, be it time, life or the real. The photographic image is not a placeholder for that which holds still and may be beheld – it is a place giver: it re-places in the world. The photograph is a *poietic* formation that operates in a stratified temporality of passing presents. It is not brought into being out of the reduction of the photographed, but out of its re-placement in the world. Unmaking Indexicality into its semiotic and ontological modules reveals that while the notion of the pointer is correct, it is useless, and while those of the trace and the mould can be of enormous use, they are false.

What I suggest is that the photograph is a set of relations that is formed out of the photographed: out of its very flesh. This second half of my claim is a negation not only of Indexicality – for the mark of photography is on the photographed rather than the other way around – but also of the pathogen causing its fever – for the relation of belonging between the photographed and the photograph is what calls for Indexicality as a theoretical placeholder. Needing to answer to this relation of belonging is what created, enabled and allowed for the fortification of Indexicality as a paradigm.

Along with timeless stillness, which I replace with the notion of a timeful passing of presents, photographic reduction is probably of the most established concepts that I argue against in this study. But recasting photographic reduction as *re*duction does not take away from that photography follows a dimensional removal. In fact, a dimensional – quantitative rather than qualitative – reduction is a necessary aspect of photographic becoming. As I suggest elsewhere, the photographic image arises from a *riduzione illeggitima*, an *illegitimate reduction*: in the photographic image, space is not constructed, but destroyed, so that depth is a vanished factor setting in motion a set of relations.[1] Photographic dimensional reduction does not point at a lack, it brings-forth an opportunity: it creates a place for the formation of thought.

Photographs think – they form thought through their photographic form: through amassment and weighing, through passing and encounter, through slicing and splitting. A thought formation that releases the image from the need to point to, be an impress of, or be a trace of the photographed, for the photograph is the offspring formation of the photographed. This core statement of photo-*poiesis* is both a summary of its claims and an enunciation of its importance. In historical terms, it is a shift from over a century of Indexical writings, but one that is guided by those very words, as they are read next to photographic images. It is a return to the origins of photographic common places like holding still, being timelessly still, being a reduced slice, or reproducing a reduced version of the photographed, that is not only an observation of the context in which these came to be, and how they relate and fuel each other, but also an investigation into their performance and perseverance when juxtaposed with the images they intend to theorise. It is an argument that comes out of and back into

[1] Paz, 'Toward Photographic Thinking.'

the photographic image: a theorisation that is punctured and punctuated by images – a philosophy of photography that attempts to write the photograph itself.

More than a change in approach, the paradigmatic shift that I am proposing is a change in the force and direction of inquiry. Like the traditional – and itself old-fashioned – art historical paradigm that looks at the work of art in order to see its origins, bringing it back to the conditions of its making, and asking what it meant, how it functioned and for whom, Indexicality looks at photography to see its moment of coming into being. Its fever is a desire to understand photographic relations through the past, which is thought to be observable through the conditions of its taking and making. It is a historicising mode of looking – an insistence that through its look backwards to the past of the image claims for truth. Photo-*poiesis*, on the other hand, looks *forward*. It looks at the bringing forth of photography, at its continuous reformation, its expansion and accumulation.

In philosophical terms, photo-*poiesis* presents a new framework for the study of photography – one that distances from the prerequisite of being bound to the world in a shackle of truth. Indexicality shifts the photographic discourse away from what photography *can* make visible – from what it *pro*duces – towards that which photography is imagined making visible: towards that out of which it is produced. Freeing the field, photo-*poiesis* releases photography from the load of the Indexical paradigm, allowing a way out of its endless circle of truth, stillness and slices, which hinder its development, obfuscate its critical questions, and distract from its greatest forte. In its photographic iteration, the photographic form allows its many faces to be looked at: it brings into being. Photo-*poiesis* allows for the photographic image to move away from being read as a sign for something else, towards *being* in and of itself: a move from semiotics to phenomeno-ontology.

In a way, photo-*poiesis* is a move beyond the materiality of photography. Firstly, since it sees the photograph as an immaterial form – not a thing, but a set of relations. Each photographic form may have an infinite amount of material forms: a never finishing accumulation of iterations, repetitions, materialisations. All may be different – in size, in print quality, in surface quality, in usage, in location, in value – but all are images of the same photograph. The photograph is not limited to any of them, nor is it a sum of all of their appearances. It exists alone, above, as a bond. And secondly, because photo-*poiesis* considers photography itself as a movement of extra-material production and thinking – out of the photographed material, photography brings-forth a formation, it forms a thought. But this photographically formed thought may only ever be encountered in the photographic iteration, for that is the look the photograph has in the world, and that is the look it offers to it. This is why photo-*poiesis is* not so much a dematerialisation of photography, as much as it is its *post*-materialisation: an approach to photography that breaks outside the limits of its material manifestation.

Photo-*poiesis* is not, however, an attempt to theorise photography beside itself. Although it is posited upon internal photographic relations, and leads to a relation of belonging between the photographed and the photograph, photo-*poiesis* does not engage with the image's modes of transitivity, translation and circulation in the social network by which it is surrounded, and within which it operates.[2] Neither is photo-*poiesis* yet another motion to take down the walls of photography, only to use the debris towards building up annexes: it is not a motion towards an expanded field. The notion of photographic expansion has been around since at least the 1980s,[3] when the

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[2] This is the sort of work David Joselit is doing for painting, and see: David Joselit, 'Painting Beside Itself,' *October* 130 (2009): 125–34.

[3] In the words of Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography after art photography appears as an expanded rather than a diminished field', and see: Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography After Art Photography,'

discussion of this expanded field was posited upon the usage of photographic images towards and as a part of an artistic practice, and not upon an expansion of the expressive field of photography in itself.[4] It was as a critique rather than as a theory that it emerged. More recently, following what he observes to be a 'crisis' of the 'photographic object', and building upon the expansive model Krauss suggests for sculpture, George Baker imagines the expanded field of photography to oscillate between stasis, narrative and their negations, thus consisting of cinematic photography, projected images, digital montage, and modernist photography.[5] The problem with this structural expansion by means of opposition, however – and Baker is well aware of this – is that 'Though no longer defined in one code, practice remains within a field. Decentered, it is recentered: the field is (precisely) "expanded" rather than "deconstructed"'.[6]

Photo-*poiesis* is a method of approach: a philosophical schema that is a theoretical tool. Applied to photographic images, it can be used to reveal, unfold and unpack their look, their thought, and their function in the world. The theory of photo-*poiesis* can be used, for instance, in the study of photographic images that may be considered liminal, on the edges of photographic *pro*duction, like Stan Douglas's 2013 *Corrupt Files* series of corrupt photographic digital files, Paul Graham's 2009 *Films* series of magnifications of previously developed photographic film, and Marco Breuer's photographic images made by sanding, scratching, embossing and solarising chromogenic pieces of paper.

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in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 85.

[4] Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography After,' 75–85. An extended version of this essay appears in: Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography After Art Photography,' in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 103–23.

[5] George Baker, 'Photography's Expanded Field,' *October* 114 (2005): 120–40, quote on 120.

[6] Hal Foster makes this remark on Krauss's expanded field, but it remains equally valid for Baker's model as well, and see: Hal Foster, 'Re: Post' [1982], in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation,* ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 195.

Such an application of photo-*poiesis* will no doubt dress these, or any other potential images with the role of being test subjects and case studies at once, in an analysis that will itself be both an experiment and an exposition, both an uncertainty and an assurance. Above all, any such future application will serve as a testament to the work that still needs to be done.

While my attempt to rethink Indexicality succeeded in arriving at an alternative proposition, it is by no means complete. Indeed, there are still many questions that may arise, and open paths to which I have carved a gateway, but which I did not walk. Two of these are particularly pressing. Firstly, and perhaps more urgently, are two related concerns that intersect on the ethical plane. The first is on the practical level of jurisprudence. If, as I claimed, the photograph is subjugated to the photographed thing in the world, coming out of its splitting, then the question is who is allowed to possess, enjoy and dispose of the photograph: who owns the photograph? As Ariella Azoulay claims, the legal ownership – the copyright – of a photographic image is a temporarily given deposit, but it is not ownership in its fullest sense, for 'property and ownership are foreign to the logic of photography'.[7] The photographic image, according to Azoulay, belongs to society. But in her discussion, Azoulay addresses only the *material iteration* of photography – an image that is a thing in the world. The photograph itself – and this is where the ethical question comes to be significant – *cannot be owned*, for it is only a relation: it is not in and of the world.

Here, a second ethical concern arises on the transcendent level of metaphysics. Re*pro*duced, the photographed is split by the photographic blade in a multiplication that is performed directly on it, often without its consent. To photograph is to force

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[7] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (London: MIT Press, 2012), 103.

the photographed to form a thought out of itself, and looking at the photographic image of the thing is looking at the thought the thing presents through its progeny formation. But if photographic slicing and splitting is a forced re-placement in the world, then the need for an ethical theory of such multiplication becomes urgent. To be sure, Azoulay's claim that being photographed is one's political right, and thus one's ontological right to existence,[8] will offer the foundation of any such future theory. Indeed, building on Azoulay, it may be suggested that although the *pro*duction of a photograph is a forceful act on the photographed, the brutality of photography towards the photographed is a realisation of its right to be, to exist in the world, participating in it. But this is not enough. If the photographic image object is *for* the photographic image subject, then this prerogative of being represented, of having something to stand for the thing, re-placing it in the world, becomes a question of function: what are the ways in which the image object owes itself to the image subject? How does it pay its debts? Can an act of reversal turn this owing into owning? And under which conditions will such flipping occur? If the image subject is *to* the image object, then this prerogative of being *pro*duced and re*pro*duced, of becoming and bringing into being is a question of confinement: what does the image subject lose, surrender and exhaust in its transformation? When can its form break from the logic constraint on it by the shape of the figuration? And how does the image subject release itself from its forced link to the image object?

Beyond these ethical questions, the second major question that may arise concerns the very form of the photograph: if photography brings thought into being, *how* does it form this thought? Photographic *poiesis* comes out of *technê*: how does photography

[8] Idem, 86–132. She elaborates on this claim in Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso, 2015).

reveal thought and bring it forth? That is to say, what is the thinking mechanism – the formal apparatus – of the photographic form?

To begin answering these questions, one will have to return to the very beginning – the coming into being – of the photographic form. There is one word that repeats throughout this study, regardless of the concept, notion or idea that is being discussed: that word is light. Light made photographic images from their very start. As Didi-Huberman claims, even the very first photographic image – not the window view heliograph taken by Nicéphore Niépce, but Christ's sweat and blood impress taken by Saint Veronica – is not an index, but an '*achiropoïete icon',* an image made without the hand of man, that is 'transformed by a vector of *virgin passage* (crossing a surface without touching it)': while the holy shroud was – if one chooses to believe – indeed, 'physically forced to correspond', it has not assumed the holy face through tactile encounter, but through a '*luminous* vector' that transformed it.[9] The photographic form comes out of light.

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The sun blazes through the sky like the swift raise of Lucio Fontana's blade, bruising the surface, leaving it scorched and punctured [Figure 35]. Light here is what offers visibility: it gives what is visible and what is blacked out, what is solarised and what is cauterised. Light moves on the surface, leaving a mark, a scaring caused by direct exposure. It slices through the photographed, splitting it, re*pro*ducing it, *re*placing it in the world, *re*placing it as a photographic image. The incisive line it leaves remains on the photographic image, cutting through it. What is left is an image that comes through

[9] Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain),' trans. Thomas Repensek, *October* 29 (1984): 81.

light: not a remainder, but a reminder. Light forms the photograph – it is what gives the photograph its thought forming form. The photograph allows light to come through. It forms in light, but it also, at the same time, gives form *to* light: the photograph takes light and brings out a formation. It takes light, and *through* it, brings out a formation.

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As implied by its name, light is the primary source of *photo*graphy. In being primary, light takes a *prime* role in photographic *pro*duction – it is the main component in its bringing into being; it is a *primal* part of the photographic form – essential and fundamental; and it is a *primeval* part of the photographic image – the genesis of its re*pro*duction. At the same time, photography allows the primacy of light to be seen: according to Nancy, light looked at photographically comes as close as can be to what Medieval Latin speakers referred to as *lux*, the pure light emitted from a lucent body, upon which all other lights depend.[10] Encountering a material substance, *lux* transforms into *lumen*, a secondary form of light that dissipates and fills the space, and reaches the senses through the diaphanous matter that is the skin of the earth. Reaching a body, *lumen* refracts and reflects, illuminating it so that it gives out its *splendor*, the third type of light, which comes to the look as shine. Photography, Nancy suggests, can visualise 'a piece of *lumen* in something close to its purest state, almost the nascent state of *lux*'.[11] The photographic form comes through light: it *is* through light, and light looks out through its image.

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[10] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Lux Lumen Splendor' [1993], trans. Jonathan Derbyshire, in *Multiple Arts*, 171.
[11] Idem, 172.

The photograph is trans-lucent. In being translucent, it allows light through. Allowing for the passing of light, it allows for a showing of the superimposed – a shining through from below. The translucent is see-through, but not transparent, in that it is not invisible or unseen. Being translucent is what allows for the photographic form to exist in a stratified temporality: accumulating one on top of the other, the photographic strata-presents retain their visibility – they are a multiplicity of 'is', multiple passing presents that insist. But the translucent is also that which exists, which *is* itself beyond light, which comes *after* light, succeeding light, inheriting light: it is that which is *formed* by light, in that light gives it its form. The photograph is translucent: it is of light and light is through it, it is after light and light is within it. But even more than light is within the photograph, the photographic form is in light: it *is* in light, in a continuous accumulation of light, of light strata, of strata-presents. The photograph is of light, and its strata-presents are of light: superimposed and weighing on each other, they allow light to shine through in its lightness. The photograph is after light, and its strata-presents are after light: layers of presents formed by light, in a continuous formation. Through light, photographic becoming does not cease with emulsion, it does not cease with processing – it *does not cease* for, like its temporality, it *is*, incessantly.

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A deep blue bloc of colour is ruptured by a series of repeating bright fractures, a shine that moves on the surface, creating interruption, disrupting and dissolving the bloc into an accordion of lights and darks [Figure 36]. Along it, a long black cut moves across, like a seismic mark revealing the vibration of the image. It dances on the surface.

This photographic image is a scanogram, captured and digitised by a scanner: it comes from one office scanner capturing the projected light of a second one. Light is emitted

on the one end and, through light, it is absorbed on the other. It is an image of light, and by light. Light is the primary source of this photographic image, but it is also, and at once, an interruption that moves on and through it. Through the photographic image, light becomes visible: it is seen through it for the photograph is translucent, allowing light through.

Through photographic *pro*duction, light becomes an image: not through moulding, projecting, tracing or writing, but through giving itself to the look, and to intellection. Light becomes intelligible.

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The photographic condition of being *through* light, while also giving a visible form *to* light, favours the advancement of a theoretical proposition around photography being a form of light writing. There is – as already observed by Sontag – a mutual economy tying the late nineteenth century burgeoning perception of reality itself as a form of writing to the advent of Niépce's sun-written heliograms, and Fox Talbot's pencil of nature.[12] By that, I do not mean to repeat László Moholy-Nagy's famous words that 'Photography is the first means of giving tangible shape to light'.[13] The being of photography is precisely outside materiality and the tangible. At its core, photography is a philosophical project whose roots are intertwined with those of Western metaphysics, namely Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, so that the very 'history of Western philosophy can be read as the movement of *photagogia* (φωταγωγία) or the

12 Sontag, 'Image-World,' 160.
13 László Moholy-Nagy, 'Unprecedented Photography' [1927], in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips, trans. Joel Agee (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Aperture, 1989), 85.

"evoking of light"', of which photography is but a single practice.[14] Within the cultural economy of the nineteenth century, photography was able to rise to the glory of being a form of writing performed directly by light – a valuable philosophical conception, which, in turn, allowed those words of light to enter the philosophical domain, and sit comfortably in its theorisation. As Dag Petersson argues, the coming into being of Hegel's *Aufhebung* [sublation] – the becoming state of change and persistence, which is the actuating force of dialectics – depends on light's ability to assume an 'intelligible form': photography *is* light's assuming an intelligible form:[15] photography *as* intelligible light *as* dialectics.

It comes as no surprise that one of the chief references in Petersson's claim is Derrida (the other one is Benjamin). In *Aletheia*,[16] a meditation written for Kishin Shinoyama's 1993 photography book, *Light of Dark*, Derrida considers the relation between light (as in brightness) and being light (as in weightlessness): a contemplation that leads him towards an observation on (in)visibility and imminence. The photographic image, according to him, discloses 'the origin of light' and 'the visibility of the visible':[17] a revealing that arrives as a disruption to the suspension and reserve that is imminence – a disruption that buries the photographed in 'an irrecusable past'.[18] According to Derrida, the photographic image deposits the photographed in pensive suspension, a stillness that emanates from imminence and comes about through the writing of light.

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[14] Junko Theresa Mikuriya, introduction to *A History of Light: The Idea of Photography* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 5–7, quote on 7.
[15] Dag Petersson, *The Art of Reconciliation: Photography and the Conception of Dialectics in Benjamin, Hegel and Derrida* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xv.
[16] Aletheia is an Ancient Greek term for truth famously used by Heidegger to signify disclosure, and see: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, esp. 57, footnote 1. For its relation to light, shadow and trace see: Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Parable of the Cave and the Theaetetus* [1930], trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002).
[17] Jacques Derrida, 'Aletheia' [1993], trans. Pleshette DeArmitt and Kas Saghafi, *The Oxford Literary Review* 32:3 (2010): 172.
[18] Idem, 176.

Derrida continues to evoke the Socratic relation between knowledge [*savoir*] and seeing [*voir*], raising the question as to whether there could exist a 'word more Greek' than photography, the writing of light, in his 1996 essay, *Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean-François Bonhomme.*[19] Being still, here, is intended in its twofold acceptation: it is a suspended being that inhabits immobility, and a mode of continuous inhabiting, in spite of everything. Within that, photography is a mute pensive form of writing, performed in stillness, and through light: a suspended incessancy. For Derrida, photography oscillates between the lightness of light writing and the weight of a trace, so that the photographic image is an invitation to narrate, a depository of all imaginable tales, a disclosure of hidden truths, an archive of things buried without repair, a visual recount of taxonomies, a light register of (in)visibilities, a trace fragmented off of the photographed, and a pensive image inhabiting suspension. It is a mould and a trace, a still and slice, a pensive image of the past, and a weighing image made of light, and it is all of these at once.

But what remains of light writing without the still, the slice and the pensive? What happens to photographic writing of light without Indexicality? What happens if the photograph is not merely pensive, but is thinking – forming thoughts? One proposition could be that light is the thinking mechanism of the photographic form: the *technê* that is part of its *poiesis*. Light does not only assume an intelligible form through photography, but also allows the photograph to form thought, serving as its apparatus of intellection. It is through its light form that photography reveals and brings-forth, and it is through light that photography forms thought. Photography *thinks in light*. But what does it mean for photographic thought to be made of light?

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[19] Jacques Derrida, *Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean-François Bonhomme* [1996], trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Ashland, Ohio: Fordham University Press, 2010), 19.

What in the meeting of light and photographed things enables such formation? What becomes of photographic relations if they are formed by light? How can light reveal and bring-forth the thought of the image? And how and when is that thought intelligible? These are all the right questions.

As the paradigm shifts, the things without turn to haunt that which is within. Indexicality is difficult to part with, and photo-*poiesis* on its own is not enough. Like all philosophy, the philosophy of photography reflects its subject: like the photographic image, it is but a proposition, a one of many, and like the photographic form it must continue to change unless it rubs away, passing into the past.

* * *

At first look, all there is is black; but then, it is never truly dark, not when light shines through it [Figure 37]. The white was always an excess of light – photography exposing its look. In the light, everything can be seen. Can *you* see it? Do you see it now? Do you see the light room – the *camera lucida* – break from Barthes, break from stillness, break from the slice, break from its own projection? Sliced and split, it becomes a photographic form, it is *pro*duced, *re*duced and re*pro*duced. Placed in the world, forming thought, giving itself to intellection.

The photographic image forms and reforms in continuous transformation. It forms after light, it forms in light, it forms through light: and in its (trans)formation, it brings-forth the light of presence.

* * *

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