Photography and Fiction in Life-Writing
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Abstract
This thesis examines life-writing with self-proclaimed fictional elements and inserted photographs. By probing the different ways in which text and images relate to their subjects, I demonstrate how photographs function as a kind of political evidence in works by Doris Lessing, Norman Mailer, Vladimir Nabokov, W. G. Sebald, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf. I argue that inserted photographs ensure, more than the referential claims of the text, that the assertions made with fiction have relevance for a reality external to the works. The photographs thus radicalise the works' engagement with our shared reality, intensifying their political manifestation. Focusing on the scientific, commercial, and artistic aspects of the authenticating effect of photography, I pair authors to illustrate how photographs can help uncover the past (Nabokov and Lessing), market public personae (Stein and Mailer), and construct critical aesthetics (Woolf and Sebald). In examining twentieth- and twenty-first-century works by well-known authors I reveal that an imaginative use of images in life-writing has a tradition and a history. I also demonstrate that a collaborative relationship between text and images (rather than a competitive or undermining one) provides a valuable resource for imposing views on the world. My study provides insights into literature and photography, the ontology of photography, and the relationship between fiction and life-writing.

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Introduction: Degrees of Reference in Light- and Life-Writing

Photography often highlights or contributes to the failure of life-writing to represent lives. In *Picturing Ourselves*, Linda Haverty Rugg draws attention to 'literary authors whose autobiographical texts and photographs express a consciousness of the problem of referring to the self in language and in image'.[1] In *Light Writing and Life Writing*, Timothy Dow Adams examines how photography and autobiography often 'undercut' each other and undermine each other's 'sense of reference to the world'.[2] Studies that analyse the general influence of photography on literature also stress how photography obscures reality, occasioning an epistemological crisis (Karen Jacobs), a rejection of realism (Michael North), a loss of confidence in reality (Martin Jay), or a homogenization (Stuart Burrows) or stereotyping (Nancy Armstrong) in perceptions of reality.[3] Yet photography predominantly gives the impression of offering accurate representations of reality. As Susan Sontag observes, 'photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.'[4] This thesis shows how photographs, with their ability to seem like 'miniatures of reality', can strengthen textual representations of lives and increase the hold of works on the reader and the world. To use Sontag's words once more, it is 'the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness.'[5] We will see this to be the case with the photographs inserted into autobiographical and biographical works by Doris Lessing, Norman Mailer, Vladimir Nabokov, W. G. Sebald, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf. Comparing works published between 1928 and 2008, this thesis explores the scientific, commercial, and artistic potential of photography for life-writing. I pair authors to illustrate how

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[1] Linda Haverty Rugg, *Picturing Ourselves* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), p. 2.
[2] Timothy Dow Adams, *Light Writing and Life Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. xxi, 15.
[3] Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Stuart Burrows, *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); Karen Jacobs, *The Eye's Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Martin Jay, 'Photo-unrealism: The Contribution of the Camera to the Crisis of Ocularcentrism' in *Vision and Textuality*, ed. by Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 344-60; Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[4] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), p. 4.
[5] Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 6.

photographs can help uncover the past (Nabokov and Lessing), market public personae (Stein and Mailer), and construct critical aesthetics (Woolf and Sebald).

As representations, photographs are statements about the world, as Sontag indicates, but as imprints of the world created by light, they not only seem to be, but are in a sense, pieces of the world. As William Henry Fox Talbot explains in *The Pencil of Nature* (1844), the first book to be published with photographs, photographic images are 'formed or depicted by optical and chemical means alone', and thereby they substitute 'Nature', as the book title suggests, for 'the Artist and the Engraver'.[6] Rosalind Krauss describes the unique relationship a photograph has to its referent as 'indexical', a term borrowed from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiology that describes signs that refer to the objects they represent 'by virtue of being really affected' by them.[7] Peirce himself uses photography as an example to illustrate what he means by the signs he categorizes as indices:

> Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that 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.[8]

It is also the physical (chemical) production of photography that leads Roland Barthes to define 'that-has-been [ça a été]' as photography's *noeme*, its 'inimitable feature [trait inimitable]', and to the conclusion that photography is 'literally an emanation of the referent'.[9] He explains that photography is 'co-natural with its referent [co-naturelle à son référent]', the referent being 'the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph'.[10] I am interested in the ability of photographs to prove that their referents existed, but also in their inability to identify their referents and explain under which circumstances they

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[6] William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1844), p. 4.
[7] Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America', *October*, 4 (1977), 58-67; Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and others, 8 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-1967), II (1932), p. 143.
[8] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, II, p. 159.
[9] ['littéralement une emanation du référent'] Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), pp. 124-6; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 79-80. Italics Barthes.
[10] ['la chose *nécessairement* réelle qui a été place devant l'objectif, faute de quoi il n'y aurait pas de photographie'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, pp. 119-20; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 76. Italics Barthes.

are represented. Photographs may seem to resemble their subjects, but only because we think we know what or who their subjects are. A distinction between reference and resemblance, however, highlights how photographs can maintain their connection to their subjects even when their resemblance can be questioned. This study explores the consequence of photographs' referential, indexical aspect when their likeness to their subject is complicated by factors such as subjective perspective, biased selection, and outright manipulation.

Whereas photographs may not always offer reliable resemblance despite being traces of their subjects, writing may achieve great resemblance but never indexical reference. Barthes compares photography to writing specifically, claiming that writing, unlike photography, cannot give the certainty that something has been, cannot ratify what it represents, cannot authenticate itself.[11] This difference between photography and writing leads him to associate fiction with the second medium only: whereas photography 'is indifferent to all intermediaries: it does not invent; it is authentication itself', 'language is, by nature, fictional; the attempt to render language unfictional requires an enormous apparatus of measurements: we convoke logic, or, lacking that, sworn oath.'[12] Yet life-writing, like photography, claims to be referential. As Philippe Lejeune explains in his definition of autobiography and biography as '*referential* texts [textes *référentiels*]', their aim is 'not "the effect of the real," but the image of the real'.[13] The 'enormous apparatus of measurements' that writing, according to Barthes, must implement in order to render itself 'unfictional' is indeed enormous in life-writing. Not only do autobiography and biography often invoke logic and oaths, but theorists such as Lejeune have attempted to define the genres specifically in relation to 'referential contracts' that they make with the reader. It is precisely this kind of legal discourse that Paul de Man argues represents a futile attempt to

[11] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, pp. 133-4; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 85. Italics Barthes.
[12] ['Le langage est, par nature, fictionelle; pour essayer de rendre le langage infictionelle, il faut un énorme dispositif de mesures; on convoque la logique, ou, à défaut, le serment; mais la Photographie, elle, est indifférente à tout relais: elle n'invente pas; elle est l'authentification même'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 134-5; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 87. Barthes claims already in 1964 that photography breaks with 'the previous arts of fiction [les arts antérieurs de la fiction]'. Roland Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image', *Communications*, 4 (1964), 40-51 (p. 47); Roland Barthes, 'The Rhetoric of the Image', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 32-51 (p. 45).
[13] ['non 'l'effet de reel', mais l'image du reel'] Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 36; Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin and trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 22. Italics Lejeune.

compensate for the inability of language to secure reference. Using photography as an example for what life-writing is not, de Man questions whether autobiography 'depends on reference, as a photograph depends on its subject'. He argues that reference in autobiography is rather a figure of writing about the self, a figure that furthermore entails 'disfigurement' and 'defacement' as the written self cannot be the writing self.[14] J. M. Coetzee spells out how the writing of the self might necessarily entail fiction when he asks: 'Are all autobiographies, all life-narratives, not fictions, at least in the sense that they are constructions (fiction from Latin *fingere*, to shape or mould or form)?'[15] Like all language, life-writing is fictional, which complicates its referential objective.

Lejeune suggests that an 'autobiographical contract [pacte autobiographique]' can be established if the protagonist, narrator, and the author share the same name. He explains that reference, as in the identity of the speaker, cannot be based in written discourse (as it can in oral discourse) on extra-linguistic data, so autobiographies have to resort to the proper name, the name on the cover of the book, and 'by social convention [convention sociale]' the '*real person* [*personne* réelle]' responsible for the text.[16] I propose that inserted photographs provide a stronger referential contract than the proper name. Precisely because the camera is a mechanical apparatus, photographs provide a useful tool in the apparatus of asserting unfictionality: no voice needs to be identified, and the identity of the photographer is only of secondary importance. It is thus irrelevant for the function of the photographs in the works studied here that they are not always taken by the authors. Photographs cannot make the writing itself less fictional, but with their indexical relationship to their subjects they can ensure a referential connection for the work as whole. We will see the photographs engage with fiction, but only on the level of resemblance. Fiction, by contrast, saturates all levels of the writing.

The intimate relationship between life-writing and fiction has been a major concern for twentieth-century theorists and writers, including the authors examined in this study. It has

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[14] Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-facement', *MLN*, 94 (1979), 919-30 (pp. 920-23, 926).
[15] J. M. Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz, *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy* (London: Harvill Secker, 2015), p. 3. Italics Coetzee.
[16] Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, p. 23; Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, p. 11. Italics Lejeune.

become more accepted, as Paul John Eakin writes, 'that fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life'.[17] An acknowledgement that life-writing cannot escape fiction also offers opportunities. As Laura Marcus explains, 'the possibility that all experience might be fictive' can also become 'a legitimation of a literary appropriation of autobiography, a blurring of the boundaries between non-fiction and fictional writings and an escape from the fruitless endeavour to draw hard and fast distinctions between fact and fiction in self-writings.'[18] All the authors in this study take fiction's inherent presence in the writing (and experience) of life to some extent for granted, but they take a step further in the productive use of fiction by including fiction that presents itself as such with the sort of 'textual markers' that Dorrit Cohn argues indicate non-referential narratives. According to Cohn, fiction distinguishes itself with 'signposts of fictionality', technical ways in which narratives are constructed so that the narrator can 'know what cannot be known in the real world', for example the thoughts of others.[19] In this thesis, we will see the proclamation of fiction not just in narrative devices, but also in paratextual comments and statements made by both authors and narrators. The authors in this study thus not only insert photographs into works that identify themselves as autobiography or biography (often both), but they also signal in various ways their use of fiction. For example, with each new edition of his autobiography, Nabokov claims to remove more fiction; Lessing writes that she invents lives for her parents in the first half of *Alfred and Emily* (2008); Stein narrates her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) in the third person; Mailer presents *Marilyn* (1973) as a novel-biography hybrid; the protagonist of Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) is based on Vita Sackville-West, but he/she outlives several centuries; and in his interviews, Sebald talks about both the historical reality and the fictional stories in his works. Despite the presence of fiction, all of the works can be categorized as 'life-writing'. Hermione Lee explains that 'the term "life-writing" is sometimes used when the distinction between biography and

[17] Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 5.
[18] Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 201.
[19] Dorrit Cohn*, The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 8-9, 16, 26.

autobiography is being deliberately blurred, or when different ways of telling a life-story--memoir, autobiography, biography, diary, letters, autobiographical fiction--are being discussed together'.[20] The term Max Saunders uses, 'auto/biografiction', captures the inescapable interaction of biography, autobiography, and fiction that also characterises the works studied here. But whereas Saunders focuses on how works of fiction, in taking on forms of life-writing, reveal life-writing to be a construct (and thus relate to their subject only by resemblance, not reference), this study explores the coexistence in works of referential and non-referential claims (of facts and non-facts).[21] I am interested in how authors use fiction as a device to achieve certain aspects of writing (such as creativity, drama, and innovation), rather than how they stage the fiction inherent in the experience and writing of life.

This thesis demonstrates that the combination of photography's referential capacity and fiction's imaginative possibilities offers life-writing a persuasive rhetoric. I argue that inserted photographs ensure, more than the referential claims of the text, that the assertions made with fiction have relevance for a reality external to the works. With their indexical prowess, photographs forcefully open up the work, gesturing to a world outside. As Barthes writes, photographs have a 'pure deictic language [pur langage déïctique]'.[22] In commenting on the silence of photography, Barthes claims that only text can anchor its meaning.[23] In this study, we will see an inverse anchoring: the text still anchors meaning for the images, but the images anchor the relevance of those meanings for the world. I will show how photographs radicalise the works' engagement with our shared reality, thereby intensifying their political manifestation. We will see this in relation to cultural politics, family politics, power politics, class politics, and identity politics. As a kind of political evidence, the photographs have immense authenticating power. In fact, Barthes claims that, 'from a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation', a consequence of photography's fortitude in relation to reference and unreliability in relation to

[20] Hermione Lee, *Body Parts: Essays in Life-Writing* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005), p. 100.
[21] Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 7, 142, 524.
[22] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 16; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 5.
[23] Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image', p. 44; Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' p. 40.

resemblance.[24] I want to explore, however, not only how photographs authenticate, but also the authentication itself; specifically, the extent to which the photographs in these works of life-writing deliver the 'delicate empiricism [zarte Empirie]' that Walter Benjamin argued photography could provide. In describing August Sander's photographic portraits, Benjamin quotes one of the aphorisms in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years* [*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*] (1821/29): 'There is a delicate empiricism which so intimately involves itself with the object that it becomes true theory.'[25] The photographs in this study vary greatly, but they all seem to evince a 'delicate empiricism' with their intimate involvement with their subjects, the proximity that they as indexical signs have to their referents. Because of their indexicality, photographs can potentially aid 'the human being's legitimate claim to being reproduced', a value that Benjamin commends Russian films for achieving in both 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie' (1931) and 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' (1935).[26] The nearness of the copy to its original in photographs also means that the original can be actualized. Like the technological reproduction of artworks, which wrenches artworks from their initial settings and brings them in contact with viewers in new contexts, thus emancipating them from ritual and politicizing them, the subjects in the photographs inserted into life-writing are also brought to the attention of the reader, who might not have been aware of them, in settings that show them in a new and specific light.

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[24] ['D'un point de vue phénoménologique, dans la Photographie, le pouvoir d'authentification prime le pouvoir de representation.'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 139; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 89.

[25] ['Es gibt eine zarte Empirie, die sich mit dem Gegenstand innigst identisch macht und dadurch zur eigentlichen Theorie wird.'] Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), II (1977), pp. 368-85 (p. 380). Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), II: *1927-1934*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith (1999), pp. 507-30 (p. 520).

[26] ['den legitimen Anspruch, den der heutige Mensch auf sein Reproduziertwerden hat'] Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: Zweite Fassung', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), VII (1989), pp. 350-384 (p. 372); Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), III: 1935-1938, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (2006), pp. 101-33 (p. 114). Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 380; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 519.

Studies of how text and images undercut or resist each other often show the fallibility of totalizing views, stable meanings, or what we consider to be objective or natural.[27] In his historical overview of interactions between photography and literature, François Brunet briefly mentions Sebald and what he calls 'the broadly postmodern *rapprochement* of literature and photography', arguing that this new configuration incorporates photographs in 'a form of literature that is simultaneously resolutely fictional and explicitly autobiographical'. He argues that this form of literature 'has largely succeeded, at least with the literary and cultural avant-gardes, in displacing the traditional association of photography with realism and a neutral or impersonal memory apparatus'.[28] We will see, however, how an association of photography with realism, neutrality, and impersonality persists and how authors can use it to support their texts and to serve a kind of ethics not premised on a suspicion of reality, but rather an engagement with it. The authors can be seen as either politicizing aesthetics or aestheticizing politics, but whether they problematize the status quo or seek to sway public opinion, their combination of fiction and photographs in their life-writing proves effective. The interaction of text and images in these works highlights the political dimension of Gérard Genette's definition of paratext: 'a zone not just of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy'.[29] This study shows that a collaborative relationship between text and images (rather than a competitive or undermining one) provides a valuable resource for imposing views on the world.

The structure of the thesis follows the traditional demarcation of photography into three fields: science, industry, and art.[30] Starting with photography's scientific aspect, the first chapter examines how the medium's potential for knowledge informs Nabokov's and Lessing's

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[27] See W. J. T. Mitchell on the 'rhetoric of resistance' between photographs and language in 'photographic essays'. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 297-8.
[28] François Brunet, *Photography and Literature* (London: Reaktion, 2009), p. 139.
[29] ['une zone non seulement de transition, mais de *transaction*: lieu privilégié d'une pragmatique et d'une stratégie'] Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), p. 8; Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.
[30] Peter Henry Emerson, *Naturalist Photography* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1890), pp. 9-12.

engagement with memory. The life-writing of these authors illustrates, moreover, that the scientific aspect of photography can support opposing conceptions of memory. We will also see how Nabokov and Lessing give persuasive versions of their past by combining photographs with fiction. The next chapter examines how combinations of photographs and fiction in life-writing can enhance public versions of the self. I will demonstrate how Stein and Mailer exploit photography as a merchandise, making their works more appealing to a large spectrum of readers, while at the same time adhering to conceptions of highbrow cultural production. We will also see photography's unique potential to express aspects of corporeality, sex, and sexuality. The last chapter elucidates the role of photography as art, not necessarily because the photographs themselves are artistic, but because they serve an aesthetic function within the works; an aesthetic, furthermore, that questions the way we live our lives. We will see works by Woolf and Sebald reveal the critical potential of montage, the juxtaposition of genres and media that characterises all the works in this study. The fiction in these works is comprehensive, but the indexical aspect of the photographs still asserts itself and moreover proves itself integral to the critiques that the works set forth. In her study of autobiography, Linda Anderson sees Barthes's turn to photography in light of his 'dissatisfaction with the "reductiveness" of writing'.[31] We will see the authors in this study approach photography not only as a way to avoid the restrictions and determinisms of language, but as a medium that can show what they cannot or will not express in words. The three chapters of this thesis show furthermore how, for the reader, the indexical link of the photographs to their subjects can reassure, excite, and challenge.

Together, the authors in this thesis demonstrate that an imaginative use of images in life-writing has a tradition and a history.[32] At times, the authors seem to speak to each other directly. For example, Mailer mentions *Orlando* in *Marilyn*, and a photograph of Nabokov is inserted into one of Sebald's works. One can thus begin to discern a genealogy of combining

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[31] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 77.
[32] Other relevant authors include Paul Auster, John Berger, André Breton, Dave Eggers, Stephen Elliott, Henry James, Javier Marias, Alexander Masters, Michael Ondaatje, Philip Roth, William Hale White, and Richard Wollheim.

photographs and fiction in life-writing. With at least forty years between the main works of the two authors studied in each chapter, both generic similarities and diachronic variances reveal themselves. The dust jacket of Paul Auster's *Report from the Interior* (2013) captures a current fascination with the inclusion of photographs in life-writing: by ending his work with an album of images, Auster is claimed to be 'answering the challenges of autobiography in a way rarely, if ever, seen before'.[33] As Auster's work charts the 'interior' life of its author, it is striking that the album consists not of private photographs but images in the public domain such as film stills, book illustrations, and press photographs. This study not only shows that many authors have turned to photography in answering the challenges of life-writing, but that the photographs, like the *Report from the Interior*'s, appeal to exterior, collective experience, even when they are private snapshots. In her posthumously published memoirs, 'A Sketch of the Past', Woolf addresses her inability to capture the societal forces in which she is immersed: she imagines herself 'a fish in a stream; deflected, held in place', but she cannot describe the stream.[34] In this study, we will see how photographs help authors embed 'the stream' into their works.

[33] Paul Auster, *Report from the Interior* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013).
[34] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being*, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), pp. 64-137 (p. 80).

Chapter 1: Images of the Past: Photography, Fiction, and Memory in the Life-Writing of Vladimir Nabokov and Doris Lessing

Photography has been associated with memory since its invention. Charles Baudelaire deplored photography as an art form and denounced it as an industry, but he proclaimed that it could rescue from oblivion those 'precious things [les choses précieuses]' that 'demand a place in the archives of our memory [qui demandent une place dans les archives de notre mémoire]'.[1] In the twentieth century, however, we see a burgeoning skepticism toward photography's potential for memory. Siegfried Kracauer argues that memory and photography are at odds, for whereas the former retains images because they are 'personally significant [insofern es etwas meint]', the later only 'grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum [erfaßt das Gegenbene als ein räumliches (oder zeitliches) Kontinuum]'.[2] In their life-writing, Vladimir Nabokov and Doris Lessing follow Baudelaire rather than Kracauer in treating photographs as contributions to memory. They create relationships between their text and images that suggest reciprocity and reliability, although they also explicitly draw upon the imagination and the literary skills that they have honed as fiction writers. Nabokov and Lessing thus complicate life-writing's claim on memory, which like photography's, is far from granted. Not only is memory, even before put on paper, susceptible to lapses, biases, repressions, and unintentional errors, but as Paul John Eakin observes: 'memory and imagination become so intimately complementary in the autobiographical act that it is usually impossible for autobiographers and their readers to distinguish between them in practice.'[3] The very formulation of memories requires a degree of creativity that arguably cannot help altering the past in its rendition. Yet Nabokov and Lessing offer photographs as evidence for memories that moreover are manifestly non-referential.

In unravelling how photography functions in relation to memory and evidence in Nabokov's and Lessing's works we have to keep in mind that the photographs relate to the

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[1] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Public Moderne et la photographie', *Études photographiques*, 6 (1999) <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/185> [accessed 2 June 2018] (para. 1 of 8)
[2] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', in *Das Ornament der Masse*, by Siegfried Kracauer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 21-39 (p. 25); Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) pp. 47-63 (p. 50).
[3] Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 6.

authors' memories, not the readers'. As Peter Henry Emerson observes in relation to photography's scientific capacity, photographs can either 'refresh [man's] *memory* of absent persons or landscapes', or, if the persons or landscapes in the photographs are unknown to him, 'add to his *knowledge*'.[4] As information that exists independently of the authors' memories, the photographs can in principle contradict them, but we will see how they with their 'power of authentication' (as opposed to their 'power of representation') primarily corroborate them.[5] With their outside perspective, the photographs furthermore highlight the communal, collective, historical aspects of the authors' memories, their significance beyond the merely personal. We will see how, as substantial bits of historical information or knowledge, the photographs are particularly important to Nabokov's and Lessing's political engagements with their pasts as well as their commemorative projects. By exercising photography's persuasive power and the corroborating potential of illustration, Nabokov and Lessing provide a degree of certainty that adds credence to their texts, a particular efficacy concerning the versions of the past that they put forward, even if the texts present themselves as partly fictional.

Nabokov's autobiography has a rather long and intricate history. The first chapter on which Nabokov worked, chapter five, which is about his French governess, was written in French and published as 'Mademoiselle O' in the journal *Mesures* in 1936.[6] He had written the piece because he had been asked to read something new in French to a Francophone audience in Belgium, but it prompted him to devise 'the structure of a book-length autobiography'.[7] In 1937 Nabokov tried and failed to find publishers in London for a 'short autobiography he had written in English'.[8] Instead Nabokov wrote his novels *The Gift* [*Dar*] (1938), *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), and *Bend Sinister* (1947). In 1947, Nabokov wrote to Edmund Wilson:

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[4] Peter Henry Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivingston, 1890), p. 300. Italics Emerson.
[5] ['le pouvoir d'authentification prime le pouvoir de representation'], Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 139; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 89.
[6] V. Nabokoff-Sirine, 'Mademoiselle O', *Mesures*, II (1936), 147-172.
[7] Brian Boyd, 'Introduction', in *Speak, Memory* by Vladimir Nabokov (London: Everyman's Library, 1999), pp. ix-xxv (p. xxiii).
[8] Brian Boyd, 'Envelopes for the *Letters to Véra*', in *Letters to Véra*, trans. and ed. by Brain Boyd and Olga Voronina (London: Penguin, 2014), pp. xxi-li (p. xxxiv).

> I am writing two things now 1. a short novel about a man who liked little girls--and it's going to be called *The Kingdom by the Sea*--and 2. a new type of autobiography--a scientific attempt to unravel and trace back all the tangled threads of one's personality--and the provisional title is *The Person in Question*.[9]

Nabokov published his 'new type of autobiography' first, not as *The Person in Question* but as *Conclusive Evidence* in the United States in 1951 and as *Speak, Memory* in Britain the same year. *The Kingdom by the Sea* was published as *Lolita* in 1955, both *Conclusive Evidence* and *Pnin* (1957) having been for Nabokov, 'brief sunny escapes' from *Lolita*'s 'intolerable spell'.[10] Before their collection in *Conclusive Evidence*, however, all the chapters in Nabokov's autobiography had appeared intermittently in journals in the United States, where Nabokov had emigrated from Europe in 1940. Appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1943, 'Mademoiselle O' was the first chapter to be published.[11] The other chapters were published between 1948 and 1951 in the *New Yorker*, *Partisan Review*, and *Harper's Magazine*.[12] Nabokov's autobiography went through yet another transmutation when he translated *Conclusive Evidence* into Russian in 1954. Based on revisions made for this edition, as well as information that he had discovered about his family's history, he published *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* in 1966, 'a project he had wanted to tackle for ten years', adding 21 illustrations and an endpaper drawing of a map and butterfly, reproduced as a frontispiece in later editions.[13] Dispersed on plates with captions within the book, the illustrations consist of photographs depicting Nabokov and his family, the Nabokov house in St. Petersburg, butterflies, and a pastel of his mother by Léon Bakst.

Whereas *Speak, Memory* is the only work of his that Nabokov designated as an autobiography and also the only work to contain photographs, Lessing wrote several works of life-writing, many of them containing the same photographs. Like Nabokov's photographs, they

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[9] Nabokov quoted in Brain Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p. 117.
[10] Vladimir Nabokov, *Selected Letters: 1940-1977*, ed. by Dmitri Nabokov and Matthew J. Bruccoli (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovish, 1989), p. 140 (letter to Katherine A. White, 29 September 1953).
[11] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Mademoiselle O: A Story', *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1943, pp. 66-73.
[12] Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), pp. 9-10.
[13] Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*, pp. 502-3.

are predominantly black-and-white family photographs. *Alfred and Emily* (2008), Lessing's last work before she died in 2013, contains eleven photographs scattered throughout the work. They depict Lessing, her parents, her brother, and their farm in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The book consists of two parts, the first called 'Alfred and Emily: a novella', the second 'Alfred and Emily; Two Lives'. The dust jacket conditions the reader's engagement with the work, describing the first half as 'fictional' and the second half as 'a piercing examination' of Lessing's parents' relationship 'as it actually was'.[14] The photographs traverse both sections and are integrated without captions or mention in the main body of the text in a manner similar to that we will encounter in W. G. Sebald's works. About a decade before *Alfred and Emily*, Lessing published her autobiography in two volumes. There are 33 photographs in the first volume, *Under My Skin* (1994), and 29 in the second volume, *Walking in the Shade* (1997).[15] These illustrations are placed more traditionally, like Nabokov's, on plates with captions. Like the photographs in *Alfred and Emily*, five of which are included in *Under My Skin*, these show Lessing, her family, and the farm. They also show Lessing's home in Persia, her grandparents in England, her two husbands and three children, her psychoanalyst, as well as her social life in London, and a trip to Russia. Some of the photographs in *Alfred and Emily* and *Under My Skin* also make earlier appearances in Lessing's essay about her mother, 'Impertinent Daughters', published in various forms in 1984, 1985, and 1991, and her article about her father, 'My Father', published in 1963.[16] I will take all these photographs into consideration, as well as photographs that Lessing and Nabokov reference but do not display in their life-writing.

A comparison of Nabokov's and Lessing's works demonstrates that the combination of photographs and fiction in life-writing can support two widely different conceptions of memory, which in turn are informed by developments in theories of memory, the time in which the works were written, and the individual experiences and worldviews of the authors. Manuscripts reveal

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[14] Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008).
[15] Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin* (London: Harper Collins, 1994); Doris Lessing, *Walking in the Shade* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).
[16] Doris Lessing, 'My Father', *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 September 1963, pp. 4-5.
Doris Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, 14 (1984), 51-70; Doris Lessing, 'Autobiography (Part Two): My Mother's Life' *Granta*, 17 (1985), 225-38; Doris Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, 12 (1991), 181-204.

even more than the final products that photographs informed the authors' writing of their memories. The way Nabokov and Lessing try to access and present their memories suggests parallels to psychoanalysis, which Laura Marcus has shown shares many traits with autobiography. Among other things, they both 'involve the reconstruction of life in narrative and the shaping of events into a meaningful framework', and in both, 'fictions are often seen as more important, and revealing, than facts, while uncovering the past is viewed as a complex and difficult process.'[17] Nabokov and Lessing reconstruct their lives in narrative, shape events into a meaningful framework, engage with fiction, and reflect on the difficulty of their task, but they demonstrate two very different approaches to psychoanalysis. This is reflected in their attitudes to dreams. Nabokov deliberately does not include dreams in his writing:

> It is certainly not then--not in dreams--but when one is wide awake, at moments of robust joy and achievement, on the highest terrace of consciousness, that mortality has a chance to peer beyond its own limits, from the mast, from the past and its castle tower.[18]

Whereas Nabokov rejects dreams in favour of the lucidity acquired on 'the highest terrace of consciousness', dreams appear on a par with memories in Lessing's life-writing. Nabokov champions views from the highest elevation; Lessing seeks the submerged. Telling for their approach to the unconscious, Lessing spent several decades in Jungian psychoanalysis, whereas Nabokov described psychoanalysis as 'Freudian Rot'.[19] Both Nabokov and Lessing, however, make use of photography's potential for willed and spontaneous memories, factual as well as creative memories. By combining photographs and fiction, Nabokov and Lessing approach memory, truth, and creativity in ways that both utilize and transcend binaries between intention and intuition, control and inspiration, life and art. Beginning with Nabokov, I will show how his use of photographs as data in *Speak, Memory* underpins the empirical, aesthetic, and political dimensions of his memories. Moving on to Lessing's attempts at writing her past, from her earliest to her last, we will see how she incorporates photographic evocations that are more

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[17] Laura Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 214.
[18] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 50.
[19] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, pp. 35-6; Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 156.

intangible and mysterious. We will nonetheless still see photography function as documentation, as memory's assistant, and as evidence for the reader.

Illustrations as Data in *Speak, Memory*

Maria Malikova argues in her article on *Speak, Memory*'s illustrations that 'Nabokov's amazing blindness in regards to the art of photography, as well as his arrogant contempt for its language, resulted in the apparent inclusion of photographs in *Speak, Memory* apparently without a conscious aesthetic plan'.[20] Nabokov's manuscripts reveal, however, that the illustrations were subject to the 'massacrous revisions and rewritings' that he claimed all his writing was.[21] Nabokov heavily edited the captions, with words and sentences removed and added, and he also reworked the list and order of illustrations with additional photographs and changed titles. He moreover edited the photographs, lines on the original showing where they should be cropped. That Nabokov thought extensively about the order of the illustrations is revealed in the upper right-hand corner of the sheet on which he wrote his caption to the photograph of his wife and son's passport. He writes that the illustration 'should come last', an instruction not always followed in later editions.[22] Nabokov's placement of this illustration at the end, however, dovetails with its caption, which indicates that a few weeks after the passport photographs were taken 'the last chapter of our European period was to end as it ends in this book.'[23] Manuscripts thus reveal that the images and the narrative are intended to align both chronologically and thematically.

Nabokov's correspondence indicates satisfaction with the first edition's appearance. In a letter to his wife, he describes the endpaper as 'adorable' and the butterfly as 'surprisingly well

[20] Maria Malikova, 'Nabokov's Photo-Biography', trans. by Alexander Ponomariov, *Nabokov Online Journal*, 8 (2014) <http://www.nabokovonline.com/uploads/2/3/7/7/23779748/12_maria_malikova_vol_viii_2014.pdf> [accessed 7 January 2019] (p. 6 of 12)
[21] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 178.
[22] Holograph manuscript list of illustrations with captions [1965]. Vladimir Nabokov Papers. New York, The Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature (Berg), MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.
[23] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 289.

hatched'.[24] The butterfly can give the impression of being merely an aesthetically pleasing adornment, but this is a precise illustration of the ventral side of a male Parnassius Mnemosyne (Figure 1).

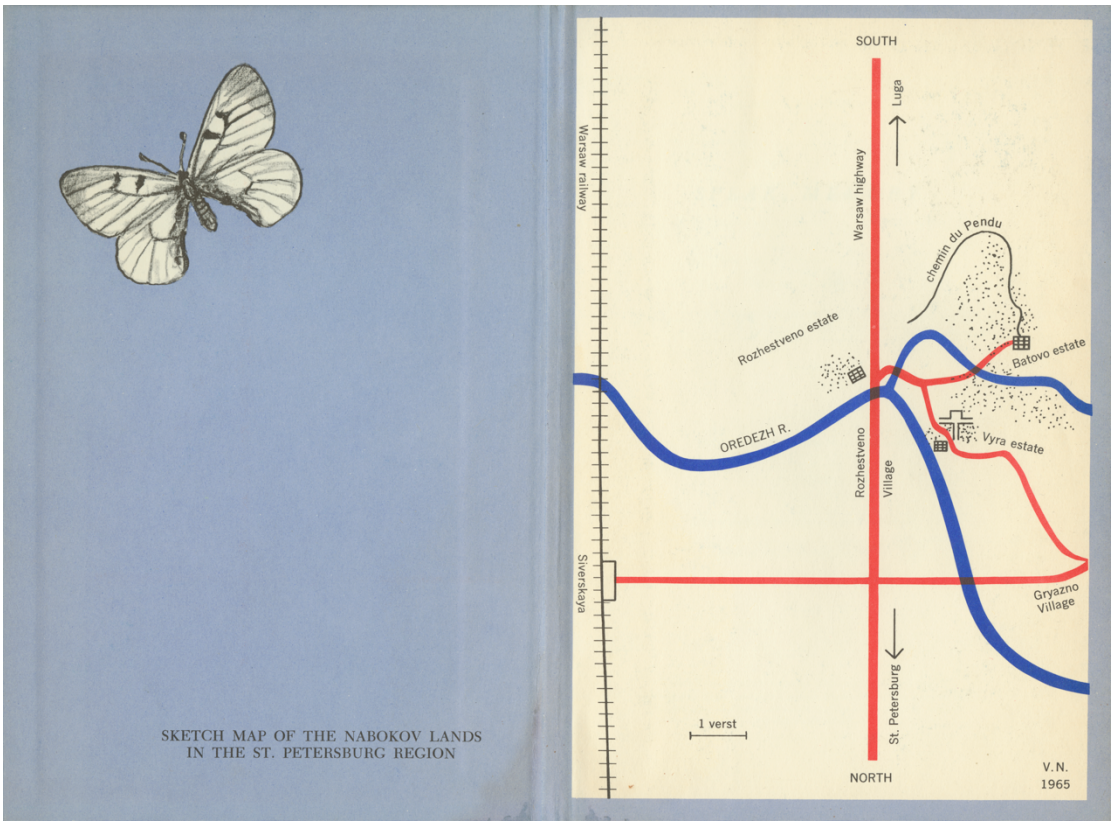


Figure 1 'Sketch map of the Nabokov lands in the St. Petersburg region', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), endpaper.

Nabokov describes this butterfly in *Speak, Memory*: as a thirteen-year-old boy he comes across the girl he likes while 'engaged in collecting some so-called Parnassians--*Parnassius mnemosyne*, to be exact'. Not only does the endpaper butterfly have this specific memory attached to it, its name has associations of literature (Parnassus is the mountain sacred to Apollo, god of poetry) and memory (Mnemosyne is the Greek goddess of memory), both themes in *Speak, Memory*, which Nabokov had planned to entitle *Speak, Mnemosyne* until he was told that 'little old ladies would not want to ask for a book whose title they could not pronounce.'[25] Nabokov mentions the endpaper in an interview in relation to how he as a

[24] Nabokov, *Letters to Véra*, pp. 502, 722 (2 October 1966).
[25] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 11, 210.

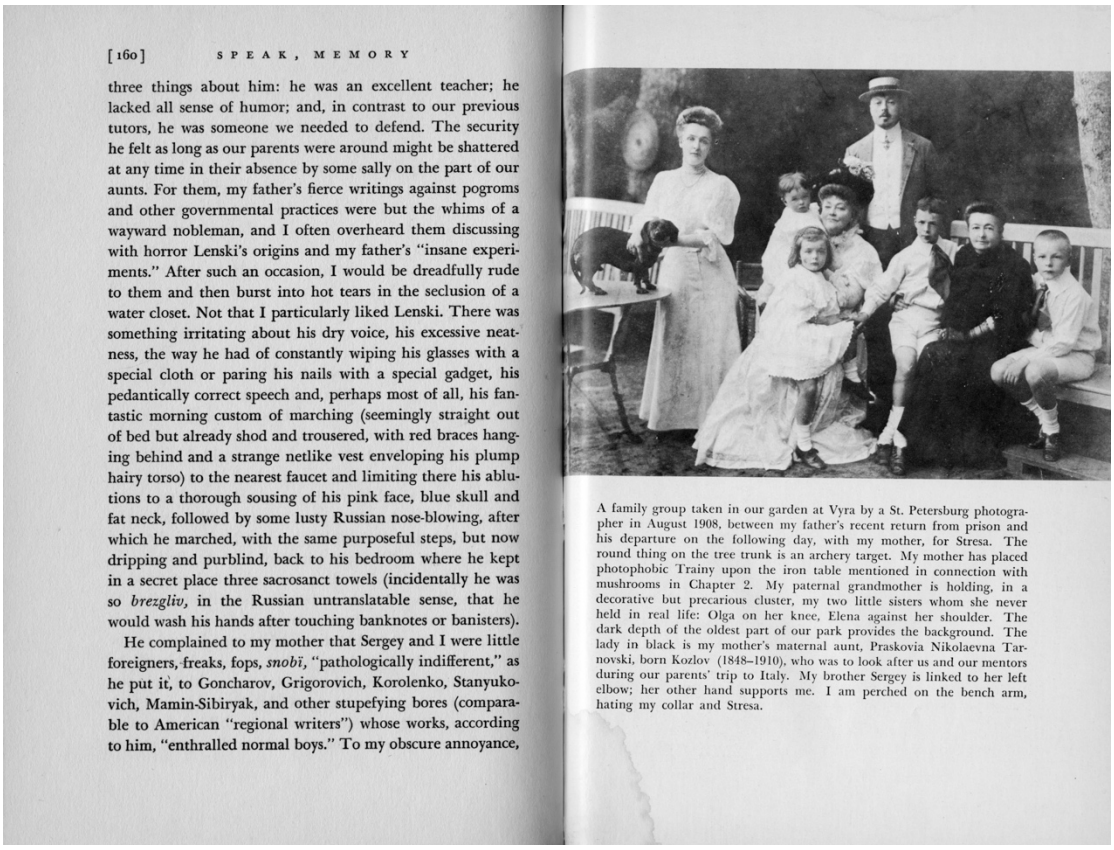
professor of literature tried 'to give factual data only'. [26] He thus hints that his illustrations will provide elucidating, reliable information just like his lectures, which themselves were also rich with explanatory visuals.[27] He reveals an aesthetic plan that like his work as a scholar is grounded in science.

Nabokov's captions make evident that the photographs serve an illustrative function by documenting them in a careful manner. Although they vary greatly in length, from eleven words to 266, the captions all carefully identify the photographs' subject, time, and place. Nabokov provides peoples' full names, their age at the time of the photographs, their birthdates, and dates of death. He also points out specific details that the reader may have missed, such as the pince-nez worn by his brother, the archery target on a tree trunk, or the 'slightly damaged' hindwing of a butterfly. This attention to detail is also extended to the photographs' temporal context. Not only does Nabokov indicate the years in which the photographs were taken, he also offers minute specifications such as the stages his father and uncles had reached in their education when the photograph of them was taken in around 1885, the dates of the trips to the Riviera and Biarritz that followed the December 1901 trip to Biarritz when he and his brother were photographed 'aged one and two, respectively', or that his 'father's recent return from prison and his departure on the following day' were the events that preceded and proceeded the photograph of the family assembled together at their country estate Vyra in 1908. Most captions specify exact locations and offer additional details such as where at Vyra, for example, the photographs were taken (the garden, the garden terrace), where Bakst's painting of his mother was painted (in the music room), and the names of residences where the Nabokovs stayed during their émigré years in Europe (the Établissement Thermal at Le Boulou and Les Hespèrides in Menton). The captions thus carefully situate the photographs within the narrative's *fabula* and securely attach them to events Nabokov deems important in his life.[28]

With his precise captions, Nabokov invites us to turn confidently to the photographs as illustrations for *Speak, Memory*'s text. Because the captions provide full names, for example, it

[26] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 90.
[27] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, pp. 104, 157.
[28] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing pp. 97, 129,128, 160, 161, 256, 257, 288.

can be deduced that the ‘Korff nose’ stems from Nabokov’s paternal grandmother, Baroness Maria von Korff, and the two photographs in which she appears, as well as the many of Nabokov himself, illustrate the ‘handsome Germanic organ’. The photographs provide evidence for the statements that Nabokov makes about his appearance at various stages of his life. The ‘brittle young fop’ and ‘the lank, fifteen-year-old lad I then was’, for example, can be seen in the photograph from 1915, where the author appears as a fashionable, slender, precocious teenager. The photographs also support Nabokov’s descriptions of his environment. In his account of the English education he received as a child, Nabokov writes that the characters from his grammar books ‘drift with a slow-motioned slouch’ across ‘the remotest backdrop of memory’: the illustrations offer the reader a glimpse of this backdrop, sometimes in a very direct and assertive way. Nabokov pinpoints, for example, where his room was in the photograph of their house in St. Petersburg. Some of the captions moreover make direct references to places in the main text where the photographs are especially illustrative. In the caption to ‘Family group, 1908, Vyra’, Nabokov informs the reader that the iron table in the photograph is ‘mentioned in connection with mushrooms in Chapter 2’ (Figure 2).



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three things about him: he was an excellent teacher; he lacked all sense of humor; and, in contrast to our previous tutors, he was someone we needed to defend. The security he felt as long as our parents were around might be shattered at any time in their absence by some sally on the part of our aunts. For them, my father's fierce writings against pogroms and other governmental practices were but the whims of a wayward nobleman, and I often overheard them discussing with horror Lenski's origins and my father's "insane experiments." After such an occasion, I would be dreadfully rude to them and then burst into hot tears in the seclusion of a water closet. Not that I particularly liked Lenski. There was something irritating about his dry voice, his excessive neatness, the way he had of constantly wiping his glasses with a special cloth or paring his nails with a special gadget, his pedantically correct speech and, perhaps most of all, his fantastic morning custom of marching (seemingly straight out of bed but already shod and trousered, with red braces hanging behind and a strange netlike vest enveloping his plump hairy torso) to the nearest faucet and limiting there his ablutions to a thorough sousing of his pink face, blue skull and fat neck, followed by some lusty Russian nose-blowing, after which he marched, with the same purposeful steps, but now dripping and purblind, back to his bedroom where he kept in a secret place three sacrosanct towels (incidentally he was so *brezgliv*, in the Russian untranslatable sense, that he would wash his hands after touching banknotes or banisters).

He complained to my mother that Sergey and I were little foreigners, freaks, fops, *snobī*, "pathologically indifferent," as he put it, to Goncharov, Grigorovich, Korolenko, Stanyukovich, Mamin-Sibiryak, and other stupefying bores (comparable to American "regional writers") whose works, according to him, "enthralled normal boys." To my obscure annoyance,

A family group taken in our garden at Vyra by a St. Petersburg photographer in August 1908, between my father's recent return from prison and his departure on the following day, with my mother, for Stresa. The round thing on the tree trunk is an archery target. My mother has placed photophobic Trainy upon the iron table mentioned in connection with mushrooms in Chapter 2. My paternal grandmother is holding, in a decorative but precarious cluster, my two little sisters whom she never held in real life: Olga on her knee, Elena against her shoulder. The dark depth of the oldest part of our park provides the background. The lady in black is my mother's maternal aunt, Praskovia Nikolaevna Tarnovski, born Kozlov (1848–1910), who was to look after us and our mentors during our parents' trip to Italy. My brother Sergey is linked to her left elbow; her other hand supports me. I am perched on the bench arm, hating my collar and Stresa.

Figure 2 'Family group, 1908, Vyra', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), facing p. 160.

In chapter two, where he describes his mother's habit of collecting mushrooms on wet days, Nabokov writes: 'Near a white garden bench, on a round garden table of iron, she would lay out her boletes in concentric circles to count and sort them.' The reader can see this bench and table in the photograph and imagine Nabokov's mother emerging from her mushroom quest, coming nearer 'from under the dripping trees', the trees themselves also visible in the background, including the one with an archery target that Nabokov draws attention to in the caption. By specifying what in the photographs is relevant, the captions stress the corroborative function of the illustrations. The photographs allow the reader to orientate him or herself in the scenery of Nabokov's childhood and early adulthood similarly to how the map on the endpaper allows the reader to follow the wanderings of Nabokov on his family's estates. Both Nabokov's map and his photographs present themselves as useful resources for navigating a past that they help bring to light. The way Nabokov calls attention to little details and their relevance for the narrative

suggests that the photographs are to be treated as truthful purveyors of their subjects, as bountiful sources for reliable, useful, and exact information.[29]

In her article on *Speak, Memory*'s illustrations Laurence Petit argues that Nabokov's erudite captions 'provide irrelevant information on peripheral details of the photograph', and that 'more than anything else, these captions seem to be primarily meant to destabilize the reader and create a relationship between text and image which is both ludic and highly suspect.' She sees the captions as a postmodern way for Nabokov to thwart autobiographical expectations:

> What subverts the autobiographical project […] is the opacity of the discourse on those photographs, a discourse that takes the form of captions added by Nabokov not for contextualizing, illustrative, or explanatory purposes, as is traditionally expected of captions, but mostly as a mask that the author uses to destabilize his reader and hide his trail in this supposed quest for the truth of the self.[30]

With Nabokov's reputation as an early postmodernist or a precursor to postmodernism, a suspicion of Nabokov's use of photographs is understandable.[31] A thorough examination of the photographs and their captions reveals, however, that they together provide reliable information about people and things in Nabokov's past. In the caption to the photograph of Nabokov's home in St. Petersburg, the most profuse and erudite caption, Nabokov informs the reader that the street of his childhood home has been changed from Morskaya to Herzen Street, and adds:

> Aleksandr Ivanovich Hertzen (1812-1870) was a famous liberal (whom this commemoration by a police state would hardly have gratified) as well as the talented author of *Bïloe I Dumï* (translatable as 'Bygones and Meditations'), one of my father's favorite books.[32]

This long explication of the street's new name may seem like an opaque digression or a destabilizing deflection, but Herzen is not an inconsequential figure for Nabokov or for *Speak, Memory*. Not only does Nabokov mention that Herzen is the author of one of his father's

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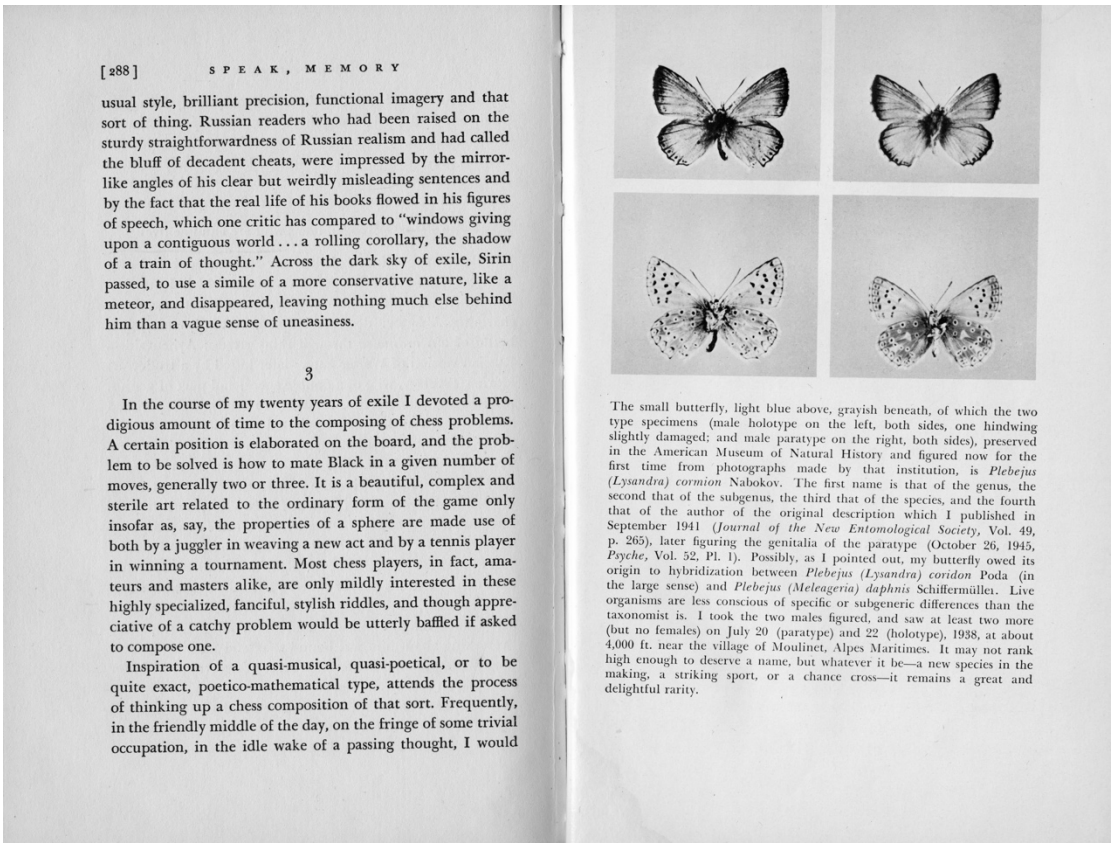
[29] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 44, 53, 80, 215, 243, facing pp. 64, 160, 193.
[30] Laurence Petit, 'Speak, Photographs? Visual Transparency and Verbal Opacity in Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*', *Nabokov Online Journal*, 3 (2009) <http://www.nabokovonline.com/uploads/2/3/7/7/23779748/v3_04_petit.pdf> [accessed 7 January 2019] (p. 4 of 11)
[31] For various readings of Nabokov as a precursor to postmodernism or himself an early postmodernist see the contributions in 'Nabokov: At the Crossroads of Modernism and Postmodernism', a volume edited by Maurice Couturier in *Cycnos*, 12 (1995).
[32] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 64. Nabokov's transliteration 'Hertzen' is not the traditional English spelling, which is Herzen.

favourite books, the named book is an autobiography considered a major work in Russia, according to Isaiah Berlin 'a great literary masterpiece', 'one of the great monuments to Russian literary and psychological genius, worthy to stand beside the great novels of Turgenev and Tolstoy.' As the writer of a famous autobiography, Herzen is thus also relevant for *Speak, Memory*. Also relevant is Herzen's personal life, as he, like Nabokov, lived in Europe as a Russian exile, an existence reflected in the title of his collection of essays, *From the Other Shore* (1847-1851). In fact, Nabokov's title for the Russian translation of his autobiography, *Other Shores*, invokes this title. This translation, enabling a Russian readership for Nabokov's autobiography, offers another parallel to Herzen, who 'during the heyday of his fame exercised a genuine influence within Russia itself--an unheard of phenomenon for an émigré'.[33] Far from being deceptive or irrelevant, the information Nabokov provides about the name of the street in the photograph is factual, specific, and pertinent. This example shows that Nabokov's captions do not destabilize readers but provide relevant information on crucial details of the photographs. Concessions, however, are not made to publishers' idea of the '"average reader"--who should not be made to think'.[34]

The most challenging caption is the one accompanying the four photographs that make up the illustration entitled 'The Cormion Blue, a rare butterfly' (Figure 3).

[33] Isaiah Berlin, 'Alexander Herzen', in *Russian Thinkers*, ed. by Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), pp. 186-209 (pp. 186, 189, 209).
[34] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 124.



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usual style, brilliant precision, functional imagery and that sort of thing. Russian readers who had been raised on the sturdy straightforwardness of Russian realism and had called the bluff of decadent cheats, were impressed by the mirror-like angles of his clear but weirdly misleading sentences and by the fact that the real life of his books flowed in his figures of speech, which one critic has compared to "windows giving upon a contiguous world . . . a rolling corollary, the shadow of a train of thought." Across the dark sky of exile, Sirin passed, to use a simile of a more conservative nature, like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness.

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In the course of my twenty years of exile I devoted a prodigious amount of time to the composing of chess problems. A certain position is elaborated on the board, and the problem to be solved is how to mate Black in a given number of moves, generally two or three. It is a beautiful, complex and sterile art related to the ordinary form of the game only insofar as, say, the properties of a sphere are made use of both by a juggler in weaving a new act and by a tennis player in winning a tournament. Most chess players, in fact, amateurs and masters alike, are only mildly interested in these highly specialized, fanciful, stylish riddles, and though appreciative of a catchy problem would be utterly baffled if asked to compose one.

Inspiration of a quasi-musical, quasi-poetical, or to be quite exact, poetico-mathematical type, attends the process of thinking up a chess composition of that sort. Frequently, in the friendly middle of the day, on the fringe of some trivial occupation, in the idle wake of a passing thought, I would

The small butterfly, light blue above, grayish beneath, of which the two type specimens (male holotype on the left, both sides, one hindwing slightly damaged; and male paratype on the right, both sides), preserved in the American Museum of Natural History and figured now for the first time from photographs made by that institution, is *Plebejus (Lysandra) cormion* Nabokov. The first name is that of the genus, the second that of the subgenus, the third that of the species, and the fourth that of the author of the original description which I published in September 1941 (*Journal of the New Entomological Society*, Vol. 49, p. 265), later figuring the genitalia of the paratype (October 26, 1945, *Psyche*, Vol. 52, Pl. 1). Possibly, as I pointed out, my butterfly owed its origin to hybridization between *Plebejus (Lysandra) coridon* Poda (in the large sense) and *Plebejus (Meleageria) daphnis* Schiffermüller. Live organisms are less conscious of specific or subgeneric differences than the taxonomist is. I took the two males figured, and saw at least two more (but no females) on July 20 (paratype) and 22 (holotype), 1938, at about 4,000 ft. near the village of Moulinet, Alpes Maritimes. It may not rank high enough to deserve a name, but whatever it be—a new species in the making, a striking sport, or a chance cross—it remains a great and delightful rarity.

Figure 3 'The Cormion Blue, a rare butterfly', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), facing p. 288.

The photographs depict the dorsal and ventral side of both the holotype and paratype of a butterfly discovered by the author, named by him *Nabokov Plebejus (Lysandra) cormion*. The four words of its name, as Nabokov explains in the caption, denote the genus, the subgenus, the species, and the author of the original description.[35] Nabokov first described the butterfly in an article in the *Journal of the New York Entomological Society*, also cited in the illustration's caption. Although the caption does not have as many taxonomic details, it retains the terminology and basic information of the scientific journal article, including a description of the butterflies' appearance, where they are held, where and when they were found, and at what altitude, as well as their resemblance to other species. [36] The illustrations may confound: it might not even register with the reader that the photographs (for taxonomic reasons) show both sides of two specimens, but it is the consequence of Nabokov's dedication to scientific detail.

[35] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 288.
[36] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Lysandra Cormion, A New European Butterfly', *Journal of the New York Entomological Society*, 49 (1941), 265-267.

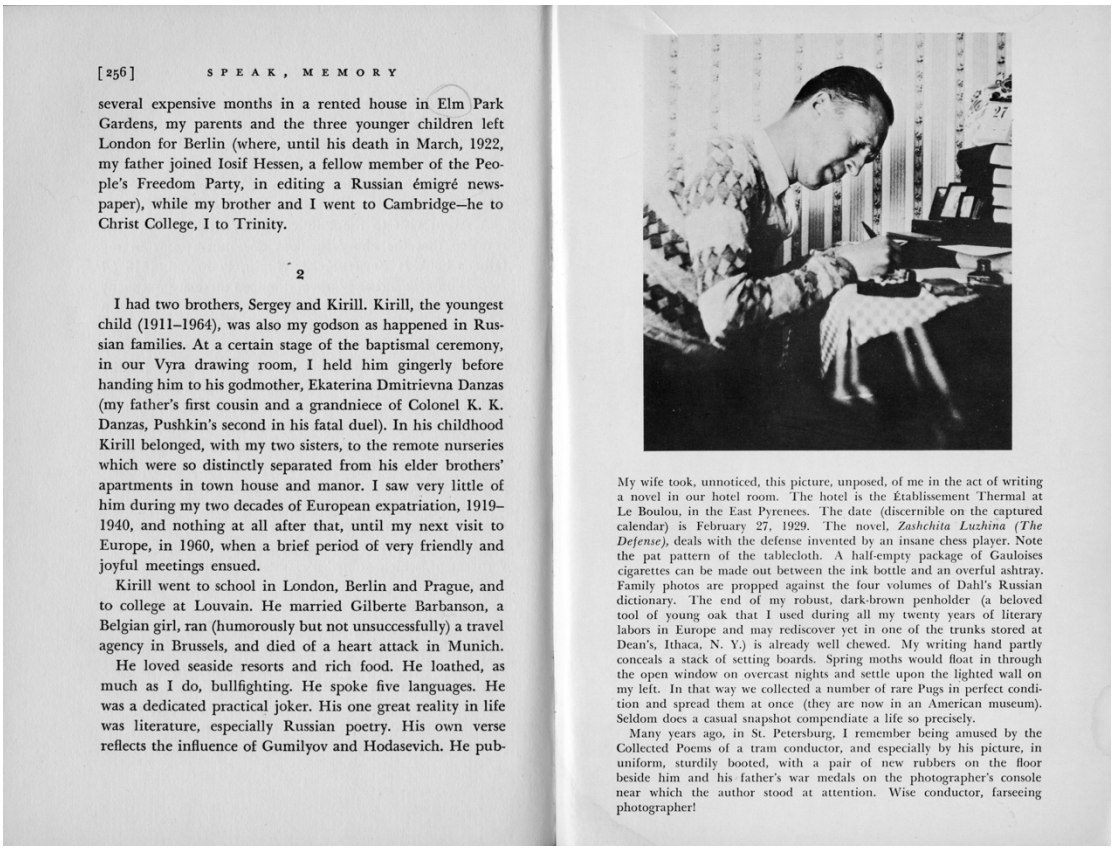
Studies have shown the influence of Nabokov's lepidopterological work in his fiction.[37] Nabokov himself, however, was dissatisfied with his allusions to butterflies in novels:

> No matter how diligently I rework the stuff, it remains pale and false and does not really express what I want it to express--what, indeed, it can only express in the special scientific terms of my entomological papers. The butterfly that lives forever on its type-labeled pin and in its O. D. ('original description') in a scientific journal dies a messy death in the fumes of the arty gush.[38]

Speak, Memory's illustration demonstrates that Nabokov can incorporate his entomological work into his life-writing in a way he could not with his novels. No 'arty gush' fumigates the Cormion Blue as it is described in the scientific journal-like caption or depicted in the photographs.

Placed side by side with Nabokov's family photographs, the butterfly photographs reinforce the impression that all the photographs serve an empirical purpose. With their facts, details, and information, the rest of Nabokov's captions emulate the inspection and precision of an 'O. D.', reinforcing the impression that the photographs, like the photographs of the 'Cormion Blue', function as scientific evidence. That Nabokov treats photographs of humans like photographs of butterflies is evident in the caption to the photograph of himself writing (Figure 4).[39]

[37] See essays in *Fine Lines*, ed. by Stephen H. Blackwell and Kurt Johnson (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 2016) and Kurt Johnson and Steve Coates, *Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Zoland Books, 1999).
[38] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 136.
[39] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 256.



[256] SPEAK, MEMORY

several expensive months in a rented house in Elm Park Gardens, my parents and the three younger children left London for Berlin (where, until his death in March, 1922, my father joined Iosif Hessen, a fellow member of the People's Freedom Party, in editing a Russian émigré newspaper), while my brother and I went to Cambridge—he to Christ College, I to Trinity.

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I had two brothers, Sergey and Kirill. Kirill, the youngest child (1911–1964), was also my godson as happened in Russian families. At a certain stage of the baptismal ceremony, in our Vyra drawing room, I held him gingerly before handing him to his godmother, Ekaterina Dmitrievna Danzas (my father's first cousin and a grandniece of Colonel K. K. Danzas, Pushkin's second in his fatal duel). In his childhood Kirill belonged, with my two sisters, to the remote nurseries which were so distinctly separated from his elder brothers' apartments in town house and manor. I saw very little of him during my two decades of European expatriation, 1919–1940, and nothing at all after that, until my next visit to Europe, in 1960, when a brief period of very friendly and joyful meetings ensued.

Kirill went to school in London, Berlin and Prague, and to college at Louvain. He married Gilberte Barbanson, a Belgian girl, ran (humorously but not unsuccessfully) a travel agency in Brussels, and died of a heart attack in Munich.

He loved seaside resorts and rich food. He loathed, as much as I do, bullfighting. He spoke five languages. He was a dedicated practical joker. His one great reality in life was literature, especially Russian poetry. His own verse reflects the influence of Gumilyov and Hodasevich. He pub-

My wife took, unnoticed, this picture, unposed, of me in the act of writing a novel in our hotel room. The hotel is the Établissement Thermal at Le Boulou, in the East Pyrenees. The date (discernible on the captured calendar) is February 27, 1929. The novel, *Zashchita Luzhina (The Defense)*, deals with the defense invented by an insane chess player. Note the pat pattern of the tablecloth. A half-empty package of Gauloises cigarettes can be made out between the ink bottle and an overful ashtray. Family photos are propped against the four volumes of Dahl's Russian dictionary. The end of my robust, dark-brown penholder (a beloved tool of young oak that I used during all my twenty years of literary labors in Europe and may rediscover yet in one of the trunks stored at Dean's, Ithaca, N. Y.) is already well chewed. My writing hand partly conceals a stack of setting boards. Spring moths would float in through the open window on overcast nights and settle upon the lighted wall on my left. In that way we collected a number of rare Pugs in perfect condition and spread them at once (they are now in an American museum). Seldom does a casual snapshot compendiate a life so precisely.

Many years ago, in St. Petersburg, I remember being amused by the Collected Poems of a tram conductor, and especially by his picture, in uniform, sturdily booted, with a pair of new rubbers on the floor beside him and his father's war medals on the photographer's console near which the author stood at attention. Wise conductor, farseeing photographer!

Figure 4 'In 1929, East Pyrenees', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), facing p. 256.

The caption states that he is writing *Zashchita Luzhina* (*The Defense*), an assertion that Nabokov's 1963 foreword to this work corroborates.[40] In the main text of *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov explains that the first profits he made from writing made this trip possible.[41] The photograph thus not only documents Nabokov writing, but also an important moment in his career as an author. It is therefore highly relevant that many of the details Nabokov pinpoints in the caption such as the inkbottle and the 'already well chewed' end of his penholder are related to his métier. In Nabokov's manuscript, 'Zashchita' is written in large handwriting in the upper right-hand corner of the page on which the caption is written, suggesting that the association of the photograph to his role as novelist is primary.[42] Nabokov ends the caption by recalling how in St. Petersburg he was amused by the Collected Poems of a tram conductor, and especially by

[40] Vladimir Nabokov, *The Defense*, trans. by Michael Scammell in collaboration with the author (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), p. 7.
[41] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 281.
[42] Berg, MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.

the author's picture. He thus suggests, *mise en abîme*, that the photograph of him writing is an author's photograph like the tram conductor's. Nabokov concludes: 'Wise conductor, farseeing photographer!' If this statement is understood to apply also to himself, Nabokov is wise because he has selected this photograph to present his authorial self to his audience, and his wife is far-seeing because she, according to the caption, 'took, unnoticed, this picture, unposed', of him.[43] The photograph is presented as being authentic in the sense that it is not composed, and at the same time nothing is left to coincidence as Nabokov has very consciously selected, presented, and analysed the photograph. Nabokov's caption treats himself as a specimen and establishes a relationship of cooperation, support, and correspondence between image and text.

The notion that photographs refer to their subjects in an indexical manner and that captions can therefore either correctly or incorrectly identify a photograph's subject is indicated by an account Nabokov gives in the very first paragraph of his foreword: 'A photograph (published recently in Gisèle Freund's *James Joyce in Paris*) commemorates this event [the publication of 'Mademoiselle O'], except that I am wrongly identified (in the *Mesures* group relaxing around a garden table of stone) as "Audiberti."'[44] As Siggy Frank has observed, this statement draws attention to the unreliability of photography.[45] The primary function of the story, however, is not to stress a tenuous relationship between the photograph and its referent, nor to invalidate the photograph, but rather to place it in its correct context, the publication of 'Mademoiselle O', and to right Freund's misidentification. With Nabokov's context and identification, the photograph acquires a new significance, which is fully utilized in the compendium published in celebration of his seventieth birthday (1970), where the photograph is reproduced alongside a caption that reiterates the correction made in *Speak, Memory*'s foreword.[46] The story of Freund's photograph in Nabokov's foreword foreshadows the way he uses illustrations, for the captions do in fact have a contextualizing, illustrative, and explanatory

[43] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 265.
[44] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 9.
[45] Siggy Frank, 'Revis(it)ing Memories: Photographs in Nabokov's Autobiography', in *Revising Nabokov Revising: The Proceedings of the International Nabokov Conference*, ed. by Mitsuyoshi Numano and Tadashi Wakashima (Kyoto: Nabokov Society of Japan, 2010), pp. 44-49 (p. 46).
[46] *Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations and Tributes*, ed. by Alfred Appel Jr. and Charles Chapman (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1970), facing p. 256.

purpose, which furthermore creates a relationship between text and images that is earnest and supportive rather than ludic and suspect.

Nabokov's Photographic Memory

The way Nabokov treats his photographs supports the way he presents his memories. Not only do the photographs seem to corroborate his recollections, but photography itself appears as a model for his memory. Nabokov's memories are foremost primarily visual. He repeatedly 'sees' an episode, a scene, an object, or a person from his past, and the verb 'see' is often joined by adverbs such as 'plainly' or adjuncts such as 'with great clarity'. Nabokov cherishes his 'earliest impressions' because they 'led the way to a veritable Eden of visual and tactile sensations', sensations that he shares with the reader. He takes his visual approach to memories one step further when he claims outright that 'all our memories' should be 'microfilmed'. Indeed, some of his memories are presented as if they are. Sometimes the memories themselves have photographic-like properties, such as the 'stereoscopic dreamland' that Nabokov finds himself in when he describes Mademoiselle O's first trip from the train station to Vyra, or the 'images' of his tutors that 'appear within memory's luminous disc as so many magic-lantern projections.' Nabokov begins his chapter on his Russian tutors by informing his reader, 'I am going to show a few slides', thus casting his account within a visual and photomechanical paradigm. Nabokov's description of how his memories are produced also has a photographic dimension: for example, his habit of wandering in his parents' rooms results in a 'repeated exposure' that leaves a 'definite and permanent image' in his mind. The gloom that resides in the rooms is furthermore described as 'sepia', his memory thus acquiring the shade of an early photograph. His approach to memory seems to be the same as his approach to homework, which he would 'tintype' in his brain. When Nabokov retrieves memories it is as though he is grappling with the lens of a camera. He can see the beauty of a girl's face through 'the carefully wiped lenses of time', but he is annoyed that multiple, sometimes simultaneous, romantic escapades create a 'defocalization' or a 'blurring' that prevents him from recalling how he parted with his first

love.[47] Thus, in several instances, processes associated with memory--from their production to their retention and retrieval--are conceptualized in relation to the workings of a camera. How he describes certain memories as stationary instances also has photographic qualities:

> There, for an instant, the figure of my father in his wind-rippled white summer suit would be displayed, gloriously sprawling in midair, his limbs in a curiously casual attitude, his handsome, imperturbable features turned to the sky.[48]

Nabokov remembers seeing his father though the window thrown into the air in celebration by peasants, but the way Nabokov remembers and describes this event gives the memory a frame like a photograph's and the feel of a snapshot.

Nabokov's descriptions of past experiences become especially photographic when he includes himself in the picture. Not only does Nabokov 'see' his memories, he also repeatedly sees himself in them: he sees his 'diminutive self' celebrating 'the birth of sentient life'; he sees himself as a child 'clambering over wet black rocks at the seaside'; his older self sees himself failing to capture a butterfly; at the beach he can 'be seen' on his 'knees trying to set a found comb aflame by means of a magnifying glass'; he 'suddenly' sees himself 'in the uniform of an officer's training school'; later he sees himself 'as a hundred different young men at once, all pursuing one changeful girl in a series of simultaneous or overlapping love affairs'; and missing his lost Russian past in Cambridge, the 'folds of his face' are contorted 'as an airman's face is disfigured by the fantastic speed of his flight'--in other words, he is seen in a moment of emotional distress.[49] According to Frank, the photographs of Nabokov inserted into *Speak, Memory* 'reiterate the problem of referring to himself as "I"' as 'Nabokov the autobiographer is far removed in time and place from his former self.'[50] As Roland Barthes observes, photographs turn subjects into objects in an alienating and death-like way.[51] This characteristic of photographs can also function, however, as a model for dealing with past identity, as a way for Nabokov to insert himself into his memories. Photography is presented as kind of benchmark

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[47] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 15, 24, 50, 89, 95, 99, 153, 154, 181, 230, 240.
[48] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 31.
[49] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 22, 25, 133, 147, 199, 240, 261.
[50] Frank, 'Revis(it)ing Memories: Photographs in Nabokov's Autobiography', p. 47.
[51] Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), pp. 29-30; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 13-4.

for memories, as it is for writing: Nabokov claims that he has been able to apply 'a precision of linear expression' learned from his drawing tutor, who made him depict objects from memory in 'the greatest possible detail', to 'certain camera-lucida needs of literary composition.'[52]

Nabokov not only describes his memory in photographic terms, he also claims the sort of reliability for his memory that he establishes for his photographs with his captions. When Nabokov can 'still identify' the villa that his family rented on the Adriatic 'in old pictures of Abbazia', the photographs prove the existence of the villa, but Nabokov's ability to identify it demonstrates the astuteness of his memory.[53] The prowess of his willful memory is shored up in the foreword when Nabokov writes that in translating the first edition into Russian, he dealt with 'the amnesic defects of the original--blank spots, blurry areas, domains of dimness', discovering that 'sometimes, by means of intense concentration, the neutral smudge might be forced to come into beautiful focus so that the sudden view could be identified, and the anonymous servant named.'[54] Consciousness, skill, and effort are the attributes that Nabokov gives his mastery of memory. The way Nabokov deals with his photographs gives credence to both them and to his photographic memories. It is a formula for authenticity that associates photography with reliability, verifiability, and the intentional selection of memories. In this, Nabokov follows Walter Benjamin's conception of photography in relation to memory:

> The techniques inspired by the camera and subsequent analogous types of apparatus extend the range of the *mémoire volontaire*; these techniques make it possible at any time to retain an event--as image and sound--through the apparatus.[55]

Both Nabokov's photographs and Nabokov himself seem to have been able 'at any time to retain an event'. The text and the images thus support each other, strengthening the authority

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[52] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 92.
[53] Nabokov *Speak, Memory*, p. 75. Nabokov's archive in Montreux includes an old picture from circa 1920 of the villa they rented in Abbazia. See *Vladimir Nabokov: A Pictorial Biography*, ed. by Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1999), p. 21.
[54] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 12.
[55] ['Die auf der Kamera und den späteren entsprechenden Apparaturen aufgebauten Verfahren erweitern den Umfang der mémoire volontaire; sie machen es möglich, ein Geschehen nach Bild und Laut jederzeit durch die Apparatur festzuhalten.'] Walter Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', in in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), I (1974), pp. 605-53 (p. 644); Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), IV: *1938-1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (2003), pp. 313-55 (p. 337). Italics Benjamin.

with which both are presented. Nabokov not only uses photographs to elucidate, underscore, and expand upon what is presented as his highly developed faculty for remembrance, photography itself is cast as an apex for memory processes.

Benjamin's concept of '*mémoire volontaire*' stems from Henri Bergson, the philosopher who in *Matière et mémoire* (1896) argued that authentic memories could only be accessed through involuntary and non-intellectual experiences prompted by the senses. According to Bergson, both the consciousness and the intellect are so preoccupied with action that they can only materialise the parts of the past that in the moment have practical relevance; sensations in the present, however, can prompt memories that have no practical purpose, but which nonetheless come alive in the present.[56] Memories prompted by the senses are thus considered more authentic than those sought by the intellect. Bergson does not write directly about photographs, but he uses photography as a metaphor when explaining the reigning but illusory conception of reality:

> Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform, and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself.[57]

Setting fixed views alongside each other, this 'cinematographical mechanism of thought [mécanisme cinématographique de la pensée]', or succession of photographs, gives only 'the illusion of mobility [l'illusion de la mobilité]'.[58] According to Bergson, one must try to bypass one's photographically-inclined intellect and instead install oneself via intuition in duration--the perpetual change and becoming that to him is 'the very stuff of reality [l'étoffe même de la

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[56] Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896), pp. 158, 165; Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Co, 1912), pp. 188, 197.

[57] ['Au lieu de nous attacher au devenir intérieur des choses, nous nous plaçons en dehors d'elles pour recomposer leur devenir artificiellement. Nous prenons des vues quaisi instantanées sur la réalité qui passé, et, comme ells sont caractéristiques de cette réalité, il nous suffit de les enfiler le long d'un devenir abstrait, uniforme, unvisible, situé au fond de l'appareil de la connaissance, pour imiter ce qu'il y a de caractéristique dans ce devenir lui-même.'] Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907), p. 331; Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), p. 306.

[58] Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. 295, 333; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 272, 307-8.

réalité]'.[59] Bergson's use of photography as a metaphor for a misguided engagement with the world suggests that actual photographs would only be able to aid voluntary memory rather than the involuntary memory that he valued.

Benjamin mentions Bergson in his association of photography with voluntary memory, but he also refers to Marcel Proust and his narrator's description in *Le temps retrouvé* of voluntary memories of Venice being as vapid as an exhibition of photographs.[60] Proust, himself inspired by Bergson, despaired of photography precisely because of its connection to voluntary, and therefore inauthentic, memory. When the narrator tries to recall Venice, he compares his attempt to do so with snapshots; these 'snapshots' lead him to question his own and literature's ability to recall the past, and are compared unfavourably to the memories of Venice that later are prompted by him stumbling like he did in front of Saint Mark's Cathedral.[61] The kind of memories championed in *À la recherché du temps perdu* are those prompted involuntarily by sensual experiences such as stumbling or tasting, as in the famous episode with the madeleine cake that catalyzes the narrator's memories of his childhood home in Combray. The narrator is here at the mercy of memory, which contrasts with the way photographs are willfully taken and observed. As Susan Sontag writes, 'one can't imagine the Overture to *Swann's Way* ending with the narrator's coming across a snapshot of the parish church at Combray and the savoring of *that* visual crumb'. Sontag does not argue with Proust's use of photography 'as a synonym for a shallow, too exclusively visual, merely voluntary relation to the past', but rather takes a step further in devaluing photography's potential for authentic memory, calling photography 'an invention of [memory] or a replacement'. [62] Theorists like Sontag, and Kracauer, who similarly sees photography as a negation of memory, build upon Proust's rejection of photography, although the emphasis shifts from the voluntary aspect of photography to its deception.

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[59] Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, p.195; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 272.
[60] Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', p. 646; Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', p. 338.
[61] Marcel Proust, *À la recherché du temps perdu*, 7 vols (Paris: Grasset, 1913-27), VII: *Le temps retrouvé* (1927), pp. 7-38.
[62] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), p. 164. Italics Sontag.

Proust and Bergson were two of Nabokov's 'few favorites'.[63] Like them, he asserts photography's voluntary nature in relation to memory, but he diverges from Bergson and Proust in attributing authenticity and authority to voluntary mnemonic methods. A little over a year after he published *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov makes a connection between it and *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In his foreword to *King, Queen, Knave* (1968), Nabokov writes the following about a plotline involving 'a scallop-shaped cigarette case': 'a similar object also figures, I see, in my *Speak, Memory*, 1966, and quite properly, too, for its shape is that of the famous *In Search of Lost Time* cake.'[64] The original context of the scallop-shaped cigarette case in Nabokov's autobiography suggests, however, that a different process of retrieving memories is at work in *Speak, Memory* than the one advocated in *À la recherché du temps perdu*. The cigarette case, which is actually described as 'oystershell-shaped', appears in a paragraph where Nabokov describes improvements made to this final edition of his autobiography:

> Certain tight parentheses have been opened and allowed to spill their still active contents. Or else an object, which had been a mere dummy chosen at random and of no factual significance in the account of an important event, kept bothering me every time I reread that passage in the course of correcting the proofs of various editions, until I finally made a great effort, and the arbitrary spectacles (which Mnemosyne must have needed more than anybody else) were metamorphosed into a clearly recalled oystershell-shaped cigarette case, gleaming in the wet grass at the foot of an aspen on the Chemin du Pendu.[65]

Despite their similar shape and their connection to childhood memories, Nabokov's cigarette case functions differently in relation to memory than Proust's madeleine, for while the taste of cake prompts involuntary memories for Proust's narrator Marcel, the cigarette case is the result of voluntary memory, the force of Nabokov's will to remember. Proust's narrator initially tries to distinguish the visual memory that he feels is connected to the sensation prompted by the taste of the *petite madeleine*, but it is only when he desists from these attempts that the memory suddenly appears.[66] The cigarette case, on the other hand, does not function as a catalyst for memories in *Speak, Memory*, but is rather Nabokov's reward for his 'great effort' and persistent

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[63] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 43.
[64] Vladimir Nabokov, *King Queen Knave*, trans. by Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with the author (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. vii.
[65] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 11-2.
[66] Marcel Proust, *À la recherché du temps perdu*, 7 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1913-27), I: *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913), pp. 54-8.

struggle with Mnemosyne. The passage with the oystershell-shaped cigarette case illustrates how Nabokov's approach to memory differs in one important respect from Proust's: while Marcel's efforts to consciously retrieve memory-images are doomed to fail, Nabokov's are presented as successful--the oystershell-shaped cigarette case is 'clearly recalled'.

***Speak, Memory*'s Fiction**

Although Nabokov presents his photographs and memories as voluntary and dependable, encouraging comparisons to his work as a scholar and a scientist rather than a novelist, *Speak, Memory* contains fiction. Nabokov envisioned *Conclusive Evidence* as 'a new kind of autobiography, or rather a new hybrid between that and a novel.' In the letter to Doubleday, in which he writes this, he also explains that he cannot affix a label to his work: 'By being too explicit at this point I should inevitably fall back on such expressions as "psychological novel" or "mystery story where the mystery is a man's past", and this would not render the sense of novelty and discovery which distinguishes the book as I have it in my mind.'[67] It is possible that Nabokov's work developed in a different direction after this letter was written.[68] Statements in interviews such that *Speak, Memory* was 'strictly autobiographic', unlike *Lolita*, which contained 'nothing autobiographic', or that in contrast to *Mary* [*Mashen'ka*] (1926), he adhered 'faithfully to the actual past', support this possibility.[69] At least one chapter, however, existed when Nabokov wrote his letter to Doubleday, and according to Nabokov, he devised all of his autobiography when he wrote this chapter ('Mademoiselle O').[70] Another possibility is that his work became less fictional with his revisions. This seems to be the claim when he writes in 1950 that 'most of the fiction' of 'Mademoiselle' was 'weeded out' for its publication in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Nine Stories*, and that 'the last remnants of fiction' were 'abolished' for its

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[67] Nabokov, *Selected Letters*, p. 69 (letter to Kenneth D. McCormick, 22 September 1946).
[68] Galya Diment argues that Nabokov denied 'fictionalizing' his autobiographical and biographical accounts because he did not want to be associated with 'idiotic *biographies romancées*'. Galya Diment, 'Nabokov's Biographical Impulse: Art of Writing Lives', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*, ed. by Julian W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 170-84 (p. 172).
[69] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, pp. 77, 154.
[70] Boyd, 'Introduction', p. xxiii. See also Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 11.

publication in *Conclusive Evidence*.[71] Revision is also a theme in *Speak, Memory*, which Nabokov notably gave the subtitle, *An Autobiography Revisited*. Indeed, the addition of photographs has to be seen in the context of the greater accuracy that he in his foreword claims for this 'final' edition. He recounts that *Conclusive Evidence* was judged at family reunions on a trip to Europe: 'Certain matters were dismissed by my advisers as legends or rumors or, if genuine, were proved to be related to events or periods other than those to which frail memory had attached them.' Nabokov apparently took the critique seriously, the consequence being a thorough revision:

> What I still have not been able to rework through want of specific documentation, I have now preferred to delete for the sake of over-all truth. On the other hand, a number of facts relating to ancestors and other personages have come to light and have been incorporated in this final version of *Speak, Memory*.[72]

For the sake of 'over-all truth', Nabokov has thus both removed and added material. He does not mention the addition of photographs, but considering how they support the text, it makes good sense that they were included as part of a revision to make the autobiography more factual. Yet all editions of his autobiography include the most blatantly fictional episode where Nabokov narrates his governess's thoughts and feelings while she travels from the train station to Vyra for the first time, a sleigh ride he himself admits he did not witness. All versions of 'Mademoiselle O' also begin with Nabokov setting out to save his French governess from his use of her in fiction, the 'man' in him revolting against 'the fictionist', and end with him doubting whether he has been successful: 'Have I really salvaged her from fiction?' he asks.[73] Despite small revisions, the different versions of Nabokov's autobiographies, including their publication as articles, are strikingly similar. As its last rendition, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* should be the least fictional, but even *Conclusive Evidence* was

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[71] Vladimir Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', *New Yorker*, 28 December 1998/4 January 1999, pp. 129-33 (p. 129).
[72] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 14.
[73] Nabokoff-Sirine, 'Mademoiselle O', *Mesures*, pp. 147, 172; Vladimir Nabokov, *Conclusive Evidence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 58, 78; Nabokov, 'Mademoiselle O: A Story', *Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 66, 73; Vladimir Nabokov, *Nine Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1947), pp. 20-34 (pp. 20, 33); Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 95, 117.

published with an 'Author's Note' before the tittle page stressing its reliability and objectivity, stating: 'This account of the author's European past is as truthful as he could possibly make it.'

It is not clear what Nabokov means by fiction when he states that he has 'abolished' it, especially as the versions are so similar. In his letter to Doubleday, he explains that his work will be affiliated to the novel 'by having a definite plot'. A plot suggests a sequence of events ordered by art, not life. This is also how Nabokov seems to view his autobiography in a sixteenth chapter, written in 1950, but first published in 1989 by *The New Yorker*, long after the author's death in 1977.[74] Styled as a review of *Conclusive Evidence,* Nabokov writes about himself in the third person. The narrator associates Nabokov's voluntary, controlled manner of accessing and presenting his memories with 'art', but he insists the memories themselves 'belong to unadulterated life'. He explains:

> Nabokov's method is to explore the remotest regions of his past life for what may be termed thematic trails or currents. Once found, this or that theme is followed up through the years. In the course of its development it guides the author into new regions of life.[75]

Nabokov signals this artistic approach to life-writing in *Speak, Memory* when he claims that 'the true purpose of autobiography' should be the following of 'thematic designs though one's life.'[76] The sixteenth chapter lists some of these themes: besides the 'rainbow', 'walks and trails', and 'exile' themes, there are motifs such as 'jigsaw puzzles; an armorial checkerboard; certain "rhythmic patterns," the "contrapuntal" nature of fate; life's "blending of lines of play"; a chess game on board ship while Russia recedes; Sirin's novels; his interest in chess problems; the "emblemata" on pieces of broken pottery; a final picture puzzle completing the spiral of the theme.'[77] All of the mentioned themes and motifs do in fact characterise different chapters of *Speak, Memory*. Unlike the messy, unruly, disjointed experience of life, the strings of *Speak, Memory*'s narrative are beautifully arranged and aligned.

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[74] According to Boyd, Nabokov had intended the sixteenth chapter as a 'key' to the rest of the autobiography. Brian Boyd, *Stalking Nabokov* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 276.
[75] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 124.
[76] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 27.
[77] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 126.

Leaving aside what Nabokov himself meant by fiction, it is clear that *Speak, Memory* contains traits of the novel. Besides the narration of others' thoughts and the plots bound together with themes, there is Nabokov's prose. To some extent, Nabokov seems to have prioritized style over sincerity in his memoir. When he was asked about what he wrote about time and memory in *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov responded:

> My exploration of time's prison as described in the first chapter of *Speak, Memory* was only a stylistic device meant to introduce my subject. […] Everyone can sort out convenient patterns of related themes in the past development of his life. Here again I had to provide pegs and echoes when furnishing my receptions halls.[78]

One of the primary characteristics of Nabokov's style is the way one memory image transforms into another. It is a slightly different form of metamorphosis from the one that called forth the oystershell-shaped cigarette case. Whereas the metamorphosis of the cigarette case was a case of better precision, replacing a mere dummy, this metamorphosis transforms one memory into another by way of association, metaphor, and metonymy. For example, the image of his father hanging in the sky, which has photograph-like properties, transforms into an image of him lying in his open coffin.[79] This is the kind of association between memories that Bergson condemns as artificial products of the mind.[80] Brain Boyd, Nabokov's biographer, argues that 'the verbal glide from the villagers' gratitude to [Nabokov's] father's last rites' may give readers the impression of being 'a tour de force too accomplished to be aiming at any response but meek acclamation', and uses an entry from Nabokov's diary to prove that the passage in fact corresponds to 'real life'.[81] In other words, Boyd's worry is that Nabokov's autobiography is too artful to be convincing. The photographs serve a function similar to that of Nabokov's diary in Boyd's remark: they appear as tokens of 'reality', ensuring that Nabokov's text, which can seem like a novel, is not read as such. They function like the photograph of Nabokov's son, which is mentioned in the text as providing a kind of blueprint for Nabokov's memory:

> There our child kneeled motionless to be photographed in a quivering haze of sun against the scintillation of the sea, which is a milky blur in the snapshots we have

[78] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, pp. 141-2.
[79] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 31-2.
[80] Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, pp. 179-80; Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 214.
[81] Boyd, *Stalking Nabokov*, pp. 266-7.

> preserved but was, in life, silvery blue, with great patches of purple-blue farther out.[82]

Nabokov's text boasts magnificent colours, unlike the black-and-white photographs, but the way the photographs are treated ensure that the colours, despite their brilliance, can be trusted. It is a coupling of art and reliability that Nabokov also stresses several times in his sixteenth chapter. The reviewer admires Nabokov's 'retrospective acumen and creative concentration' and the work's combination of 'the diamond-pattern of art and the muscles of sinuous memory'.[83] Nabokov seems to suggest that his specific brand of (photographic) memory enriches his art (whilst remaining separate from it). Like his memory, however, his art is very much conscious. In dealing with the past, Nabokov uses 'artistic selection, artistic blending, artistic re-combination of actual events'. [84] His judgment, willpower, and intellect are very much involved: his metamorphoses are voluntary and complementary to his use of photographs. The final verdict in Nabokov's pseudo review is that the autobiography 'is "conclusive evidence" in regard to many things, among which the most obvious is that this world is not as bad as it seems.' *Speak, Memory* shows the beauty of life and of memory, and is itself considered one of the most beautiful autobiographies ever written, appearing on lists of best books of all time, equaling his best novels in tone and quality, and finding, like the sixteenth chapter predicts, 'a permanent place on the book lover's shelf'.[85]

Nabokov's Subversive Testimony

Nabokov's writing may be both reliable and beautiful, but it is also highly subjective and idiosyncratic. It turns even more solipsistic toward the end when he addresses a 'you', presumably his wife, Véra. When Nabokov describes the last garden that he visits with his wife and son before they immigrate to the United States, he proclaims the objectivity of his memory, but he also admits the restrictions of its perspective. He explains that his 'eye of memory is so firmly focused upon a small figure squatting on the ground', meaning his son, that the many

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[82] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 308.
[83] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 126.
[84] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 186.
[85] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 133.

'Gardens and Parks' (the title that Nabokov gave this chapter as an article) merge into one. He can remember the setting of one specific memory, however:

> Our child must have been almost three on that breezy day in Berlin (where, of course, no one could escape familiarity with the ubiquitous picture of the Führer) when we stood, he and I, before a bed of pallid pansies, each of their upturned faces showing a dark mustache-like smudge, and had great fun, at my rather silly prompting, commenting on their resemblance to a crowd of bobbing little Hitlers.[86]

Interestingly, it is a visual detail that anchors this story in time and space: the omnipresent photographic reproductions of Hitler. Nabokov explains: 'Now and then a recognized patch of historical background aids local identification--and substitutes other bonds for those a personal vision suggests.' The photographic illustrations in *Speak, Memory* provide such 'local identifications', and as such they act as alternatives to Nabokov's 'personal vision'. They offer a perspective that is different from Nabokov's 'eye of memory'.

The ability of photographs to provide a view of the past that is independent of Nabokov's means that they can step in when memories trouble him. The most upsetting memories for Nabokov concern his relationship to his brother Sergey. Nabokov can hardly write about his brother in *Speak, Memory*:

> For various reasons I find it inordinately hard to speak about my other brother. That twisted quest for Sebastian Knight (1940), with its gloriettes and self-mate combinations, is really nothing in comparison to the task I balked in the first version of this memoir and am faced with now. Except for the two or three poor little adventures I have sketched in earlier chapters, his boyhood and mine seldom mingled. He is a mere shadow in the background of my richest and most detailed recollections. I was the coddled one; he, the witness of coddling. [87]

Nabokov's memories of Sergey are fraught with guilt: he remembers creeping up and prodding him in the ribs while he was playing piano ('a miserable memory') and overtaking him repeatedly in the roller-skating ring ('one of those galling little pictures that revolve on and on in one's mind'). Nabokov also regrets that he had to leave Paris without forewarning and his brother 'had to stutter his astonishment to an indifferent concierge.'[88] He never again saw Sergey, who died in a concentration camp, and Nabokov ends his written portrait of him with an homage full of remorse:

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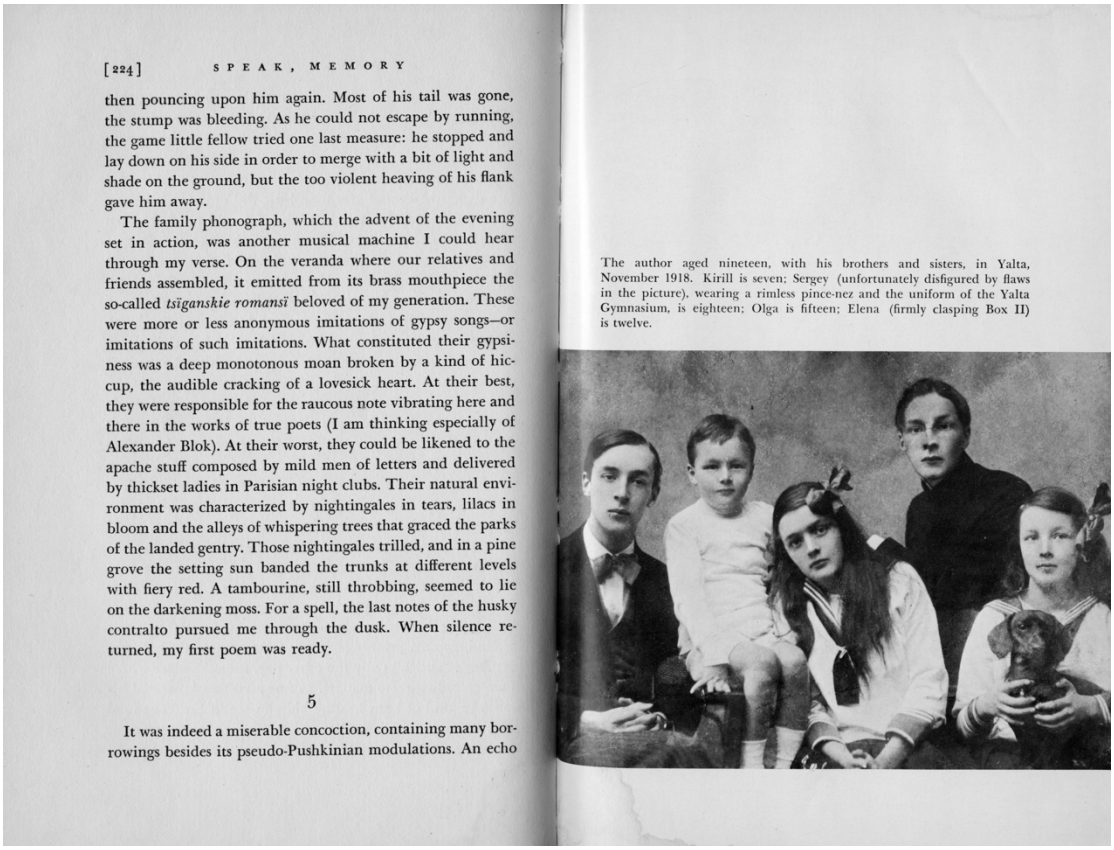
[86] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 305
[87] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 257.
[88] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 205, 257, 258.

> It is one of those lives that hopelessly claim a belated something--compassion, understanding, no matter what--which the mere recognition of such a want can neither replace nor redeem.[89]

Nabokov struggles to give his brother 'a belated something' in the text, Sergey at most haunting the edge of the page, but he is well represented in the illustrations. He first appears alongside Nabokov in the 1901 Biarritz photograph, which was added to the compilation of illustrations at a later stage, almost as if its inclusion were due to a remorseful afterthought.[90] Nabokov writes in the caption that he and his brother look like the same infant, 'wigless and wigged', underscoring their holding-hands togetherness. Sergey appears next in the family group photograph at Vyra, sitting next to their aunt. Nabokov writes that he is 'linked to her left elbow'. As the photograph shows, he is the only child in the group denied an embrace (Figure 2). Finally, he appears in the Yalta photograph of Nabokov with his siblings (Figure 5).



[224] SPEAK, MEMORY

then pouncing upon him again. Most of his tail was gone, the stump was bleeding. As he could not escape by running, the game little fellow tried one last measure: he stopped and lay down on his side in order to merge with a bit of light and shade on the ground, but the too violent heaving of his flank gave him away.

The family phonograph, which the advent of the evening set in action, was another musical machine I could hear through my verse. On the veranda where our relatives and friends assembled, it emitted from its brass mouthpiece the so-called *tsïganskie romansï* beloved of my generation. These were more or less anonymous imitations of gypsy songs—or imitations of such imitations. What constituted their gypsiness was a deep monotonous moan broken by a kind of hiccup, the audible cracking of a lovesick heart. At their best, they were responsible for the raucous note vibrating here and there in the works of true poets (I am thinking especially of Alexander Blok). At their worst, they could be likened to the apache stuff composed by mild men of letters and delivered by thickset ladies in Parisian night clubs. Their natural environment was characterized by nightingales in tears, lilacs in bloom and the alleys of whispering trees that graced the parks of the landed gentry. Those nightingales trilled, and in a pine grove the setting sun banded the trunks at different levels with fiery red. A tambourine, still throbbing, seemed to lie on the darkening moss. For a spell, the last notes of the husky contralto pursued me through the dusk. When silence returned, my first poem was ready.

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It was indeed a miserable concoction, containing many borrowings besides its pseudo-Pushkinian modulations. An echo

The author aged nineteen, with his brothers and sisters, in Yalta, November 1918. Kirill is seven; Sergey (unfortunately disfigured by flaws in the picture), wearing a rimless pince-nez and the uniform of the Yalta Gymnasium, is eighteen; Olga is fifteen; Elena (firmly clasping Box II) is twelve.

Figure 5 'In 1918, with brothers and sisters, Yalta', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), facing p. 224.

[89] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 258.
[90] Berg, MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.

Nabokov writes in the caption that Sergey is 'unfortunately disfigured by flaws in the picture'. Nabokov writes in the manuscript that flaws in the picture also disfigure his sister Elena, but the focus of the caption in the final edition is Sergey.[91] Nabokov's guilt in relation to his brother seems to take precedence, making Nabokov seek him out and privilege him in his selection of photographs and in his captions. He is given a place in the illustrations that Nabokov could not give to him in the text (or in life): Nabokov relies on photography to do most of the commemorative work, his text only offering the barest minimum of details.

Photographs can compensate when words fall short, but they can also help correct misconceptions. In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov mentions the 'vulgar cartoons' that existed of his father, a political figure, during his childhood: 'my father and Milyukov handing over Saint Russia on a plate to World Jewry and that sort of thing'. The four photographs of Nabokov's father in *Speak, Memory* show him as an innocent school boy about to start university 'at an astonishingly early age', as an affectionate father with Nabokov on his knee, as a loved husband sitting comfortably in the embrace of his wife, and as a proud family man presiding over the four children, wife, mother, and aunt placed before him in the foreground (figure 2). All the photographs display his soft features and evince a calm disposition. They prove the 'handsome, imperturbably features' that Nabokov describes in his photograph-like memory of him 'sprawling in midair', the instant that transforms into the *lit de parade* image of his father. Nabokov writes that his father would have been 'tremendously tickled by the helpless though vicious hash Soviet lexicographers have made of his opinions and achievements in their rare biographical comments on him.'[92] Nabokov does not seem amused, however, and his loving and beautiful account of his father, and the confirmation provided by the photographs, work towards a different legacy for his father. With the testimony of the photographs and the beauty of his

[91] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 224; Berg, MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.
[92] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 31, 175, 188, illustrations facing pp. 97, 128, 129, 160.

prose, Nabokov makes his version of Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov more enticing and endearing than any lexicographer's.[93]

Nabokov stated unequivocally that 'a work of art has no importance whatever to society'. He claimed not to 'give a damn for the group, the community, the masses, and so forth' and was equally 'bored' by writers who joined 'the social-comment racket'. He considered novels with political messages inferior and made fun of American writers' preference for 'a dash of Marxist blood' in their heroes, and British writers' 'acutely and ridiculously class-conscious' protagonists. In his interviews, Nabokov also presented himself as apolitical, yet nevertheless revealed strong political views. In his interview with *Life* in 1964, he begins by diminishing the extent of his involvement with politics by claiming that he has 'never belonged to any political party', but continues by asserting the he 'has always loathed and despised dictatorships and police states, as well as any sort of oppression', and becomes even more opinionated when he later in the interview states: 'I deplore the attitude of foolish or dishonest people who ridiculously equate Stalin with McCarthy, Auschwitz with the atom bomb, and the ruthless imperialism of the USSR with the earnest and unselfish assistance extended by the USA to nations in distress.'[94] Nabokov aptly gave his collection of interviews the title *Strong Opinions*, but those strong opinions were also political. *Speak, Memory* does not have an overt political message, despite the severe effects the Bolshevik Revolution had on his life such as his family's exile and his father's murder by a political assassin. Nabokov refrains from political comment and sums up his approach when he states that in writing about his early childhood he is following a 'private footpath' that 'runs parallel to the road of that troubled decade'. The closest he comes to describing the troubles is the following sweeping and noncommittal statement: 'The old and the new, the liberal touch and the patriarchal one, fatal poverty and fatalistic wealth got fantastically interwoven in that strange first decade of our

[93] Recent Nabokov scholarship has paid more attention to his father, thus furthering the legacy instigated by Nabokov. See Gavriel Shapiro, *The Tender Friendship and the Charm of Perfect Accord: Nabokov and His Father* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).
[94] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, pp. 33, 41, 47-50, 113.

century.'[95] An interviewer asked Nabokov in 1969 if his 'attachment to childhood' was 'specially nostalgic and intense' because he was 'abruptly and forever banished from the place where it evolved by the Russian Revolution'. Nabokov's response demonstrates his reluctance to situate his nostalgia within a historical and political context: 'Yes, that's right. But the stress is not on the Russian Revolution. It could have been anything, an earthquake, an illness, an individual departure prompted by a private disaster. The accent is on the abruptness of the change.'[96]

The photographs clearly counter the reticence of the text in relation to Nabokov's and his family's dispossession. Nabokov states clearly in *Speak, Memory* how he feels about the possessions he had to leave behind in Russia:

> My old (since 1917) quarrel with the Soviet dictatorship is wholly unrelated to any question of property. My contempt for the émigré who 'hates the Reds' because they 'stole' his money and land is complete. The nostalgia I have been cherishing all these years is a hypertrophied sense of lost childhood, not sorrow for lost banknotes. [97]

In using terms such as 'nostalgia' and 'hypertrophied sense of lost childhood', Nabokov suggests the private and apolitical nature of his engagement with his past, and he leaves his 'quarrel with the Soviet dictatorship' unexplained. Nabokov distances himself from the 'idiot who, because he lost a fortune in some crash, thinks he understands me', but the possessions and the lifestyle he left behind are apparent in the illustrations: the Nabokovs' grand mansion in St. Petersburg, their extravagant and luxurious clothes, holidays in France, their estate park at Vyra--not to mention their illustrious ranks and professions, which attire and captions highlight. The map on the endpaper shows not only Vyra, his family's estate, but also Batovo, his grandmother's estate, and Rozhdestveno, the manor that Nabokov himself inherited from his uncle as a teenager, but which was nationalized after the family's emigration (Figure 1). The endpaper highlights the discrepancy between the continued significance of those places for Nabokov and his inability to actually follow the routes on the map and visit the estates that were

[95] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 29-30.
[96] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 148.
[97] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 73.

wrested from him and his family.[98] The caption to the St. Petersburg house not only highlights its extravagant 'Italianate' style, but Nabokov's prevention from seeing it: the photography is taken by an 'obliging American tourist', the sedan at the curb 'presumably' his.[99] The photograph of Rozhdestveno on the 1969 Penguin edition of *Speak, Memory* similarly dramatises Nabokov dispossession. Praising the cover as an illustration for both his autobiography and *Mary*, Nabokov writes in the foreword to the English translation of this autobiographcial novel that the photograph shows the manor 'as it is today'--in other words, as he himself cannot see it in person.[100] The caption to Bakst's portrait of his mother informs the reader what happened to some of the Nabokovs' possessions after their exile. After describing the portrait, Nabokov mentions the other works by Bakst that his parents owned and how these works and others by Alexander Bénois were transported from the Nabokov house to 'the Alexander III (now State) Museum'.[101] Nabokov relates the scope of his parents' art collection, the methods by which they lost it, and where the property they no longer own presently resides. Nabokov uses both the previous and current name for the museum, further underscoring the rupture caused by the Bolshevik Revolution.

Nabokov's photographs acquire a special significance due to the Revolution, a preciousness that his description of his mother's attachment to her photographs in exile emphasises: 'A soapbox covered with green cloth supported the dim little photographs in crumbling frames she liked to have near her couch.'[102] It is likely that the soapbox photographs are similar to the family photographs illustrating *Speak, Memory*, if indeed they are not the exact ones used. In 1923 Nabokov wrote to Véra from Prague, where he was visiting his mother, that he and his siblings would have their picture taken 'in exactly the same poses as one

[98] Using as its scale one verst, a Russian unit of length that became obsolete when the Soviet Union adopted the metric system in 1924, the map signals that it belongs to a lost time and revolts against a Soviet-led change in measurement practice.
[99] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 64.
[100] Vladimir Nabokov, *Mary*, trans. by Michael Glenny in collaboration with the author (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. xii.
[101] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 161.
[102] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 49-50.

of our Yalta photographs. Boxy, too.'[103] This Yalta photograph could very well be the thirteenth illustration in *Speak, Memory*, where Nabokov poses with his siblings and Box II, their dachshund, in Yalta (Figure 5).[104] A similar photograph appears in *The Gift*, a novel that takes place in the Russian émigré milieu in Berlin of which Nabokov was a part. A girl with a deep side-parting is described as holding a dog, which mirrors Nabokov's sister Elena in the photograph, although the girl holds a dachshund rather than a fox terrier, and someone else has 'not come out, her features blurred', which is what Nabokov writes in the manuscript has happened to Elena in the Yalta photograph.[105] The narrator's mother gives him the photograph, which had 'been saved by a miracle and had become priceless', for 'choosing her son a present, she was guided not by what was most costly to get but what was most difficult to part with.'[106] This story highlights the extent to which exiled families such as Nabokov's cherished photographs such as those displayed in *Speak, Memory*. In his autobiography, Nabokov makes a connection between the photographs that his mother keeps in a soapbox and the memories that she has stored in her soul:

> She did not really need them, for nothing had been lost. As a company of traveling players carry with them everywhere, while they still remember their lines, a windy heath, a misty castle, an enchanted island, so she had with her all that her soul had stored.[107]

Like her son, Nabokov's mother has impeccable memory. Despite the sharpness of her memory, however, she still likes to have the photographs near her. Like the cast of her husband's hand and the watercolour of his grave, which in the narrative are described immediately before the soapbox, the metonymic connection of the photographs to the past seem to comfort her.

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[103] Nabokov, *Letters to Véra*, p. 171 (4 April 1932).
[104] Boyd and Veronina also make a connection between this Prague letter and the *Speak, Memory* photograph of Nabokov with his siblings. They reproduce this photograph in their illustrations and advise the reader in the caption to see the letter of 4 April 1932. Boyd and Veronina in Nabokov, *Letters to Véra*, facing p. 386.
[105] ['невышедшая почему-то Ивонна Ивановна, черты смазаны'] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Dar', in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, ed. by Natalia Artemenko-Tolstoy, 5 vols (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 1999-2000), IV (2000), pp. 188-541 (p. 269). Vladimir Nabokov, *The Gift*, trans. by Michael Scammell with the collaboration of the author (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p. 87. Berg, MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.
[106] ['фотография, одна, чудом сберeглась и стала бесценной […] выбирая сыну подарок, она руководилась уже не тем, что всего дороже приобрести, а тем, с чем всего труднее расстаться.'] Nabokov, 'Dar', p. 269; Nabokov, *The Gift*, p. 87.
[107] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 49-50.

Nabokov ruminates at one point that it is 'both logical and emblematic' that of their 'Russian heritage the hardiest survivor proved to be a traveling bag'. The photographs, however, may be even hardier survivors, especially with their inclusion in *Speak, Memory*, which promises them an endurance far surpassing a traveling bag's. The photographs not only picture the past, they are themselves objects saved from that past. By inserting Bakst's portrait into *Speak, Memory*, for example, Nabokov also indirectly takes back possession of it. In St. Petersburg, his father's study displayed 'glinting family photographs' as well as the portrait of his mother by Bakst, and at Vyra, his mother's room contained daguerreotypes. As vestiges of their life in Russia, the photographs pay both tribute and testimony to that life. Nabokov relates that the artworks by Benois and Konstantin Somov, which also adorned the walls of his mother's room, are now 'in some Soviet Museum', but that the memory of the pavilion where he constructed his first poem, and which he remembers reciting to his mother while staring at her walls, 'will never be nationalized'.[108] The photographs that accompanied the Nabokovs into exile also escaped state appropriation. By publishing them in *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov ensures a public legacy for them that is tethered to him and his version of the past.

If Nabokov's photographs are taken into account, the nostalgia of his autobiography acquires a more political slant. In her study of nostalgia in *Speak, Memory*, Svetlana Boym describes how the photographs pale in comparison to the text. Boym emphasises that Nabokov 'refuses the literal truth' of photographs and that he instead 'questions documentary evidence'.[109] If Nabokov's treatment of photographs as evidence is acknowledged, however, *Speak, Memory* acquires a force more subversive than nostalgia. For it is not enough to see the photographs as merely nostalgic, they also act as proofs and relics for a family that Nabokov describes as 'now extinct'.[110] Nabokov does not elaborate on why his family is extinct, but the Bolshevik Revolution is implied, and the word 'extinct' captures its violence and destruction. Barthes's nuanced description of the relationship between photography and memory sheds light on how the photographs may act for the reader:

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[108] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 143, 190, 226.
[109] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 263.
[110] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 79.

> In front of a photograph, our consciousness does not necessarily take the nostalgic path of memory (how many photographs are outside of individual time), but for every photograph existing in the world, the path of certainty: the Photograph's essence is to ratify what it represents.[111]

Nabokov's photographs are outside of the readers' 'individual time', but they encourage sympathy for Nabokov's nostalgia, and more importantly, they ratify what they represent: they add an element of certainty to the past that Nabokov so beautifully and carefully gives a version of in his text. In his mock review, Nabokov reveals his concern with misconceptions about Russia's history. The reviewer proposes Nabokov's autobiography as a corrective to the way 'information concerning Tsarist Russia is thoroughly permeated by Communist propaganda and pro-Soviet accounts'. He claims American readers will be surprised to learn 'how freely opinion could be expressed and how much could be done by civilized people in pre-Revolutionary Russia'.[112] The addition of photographs brings Nabokov's beautiful, endearing but subjective narrative momentously into the realm of history. His sympathetic portrait of pre-revolutionary Russia becomes more definite and convincing with photographs of its victims, and a little less subtle. Together, the text and images give a precise and positive impression of a world destroyed by the Soviet regime, which is not inconsequential in a decade marked by Soviet expansion. Nabokov notably supported America's war in Vietnam and even wrote to Lyndon B. Johnson commending the President on the 'admirable' work he was 'accomplishing'.[113] The reliability attributed to the photographs is thus vital for the credence they give to a political position subdued in the text.

The photographs' political significance is apparent in the way *Speak, Memory* was publicized. The dust jacket informs the reader that Nabokov has tracked 'down family photographs in order to present a fuller picture of the background from which he sprang,' the blurb itself giving an account of that background:

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[111] ['Devant une photo, la conscience ne prend pas nécessairement la voie nostalgique de souvenir (combien de photographies sont hors du temps individuel), mais pour toute photo existant au monde, la voie de la certitude: l'essence de la Photographie est de ratifier ce qu'elle représente.'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 133; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 85.
[112] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 126-7.
[113] Nabokov, *Selected Letters*, p. 378 (9 October 1965).

> The Nabokovs were cultured, liberal aristocrats, brave, eccentric, unconventional, and above all, intensely human. Their world was one of splendid country estates, politics, literature and gaiety until it was swept away by the Russian revolution.

The dust jacket thus entices the reader with how the photographs document and dramatise Nabokov's life before the Bolshevik Revolution. A flyer from the *Book-Of-The-Month Club News* highlights the material significance of this disruption, despite Nabokov's own denigration of it:

> The one point which most people would make the center of their life story he passes over in a page or two. Before he reached the age of 18, he became, by inheritance, a millionaire. A short time later, in the Russian Revolution, he lost it all. He passes it lightly over because material poverty, though uncomfortable and humiliating, is to him unimportant. What mattered far more to him was the spiritual impoverishment of being cut off from Russian life, the Russian land and the Russian language he loves so dearly.[114]

Nabokov's downplaying of his misfortune heightens rather than negates its fascination. Both the misfortune and Nabokov's de-emphasis of it thus played a major part in *Speak, Memory*'s advertisement and reception. The autobiography itself concludes with a sentence about the ship that brought Nabokov, his wife, and son to America:

> It was most satisfying to make out among the jumbled angles of roof and walls, a splendid ship's funnel, showing from behind the clothesline as something in a scrambled picture--Find What the Sailor Has Hidden--that the finder cannot unsee once it had been seen.[115]

The readers of *Speak, Memory* can similarly not 'unsee' its illustrations. The photographs entail an unavoidable witnessing of a life that Nabokov describes with love and beauty in the text.

In contrast to the Russia photographs, the illustrations from Nabokov's émigré years reject any notion of nostalgia. Nabokov writes in the caption to the Menton photograph, where he stands with his son in front of a boarding house, that he gets 'no special kick out of revisiting old émigré haunts in those incidental countries.'[116] The difficulty of the Nabokovs' situation is accentuated with the last photograph in *Speak, Memory*, 'The author's wife and son, Paris, 1940' (Figure 6).

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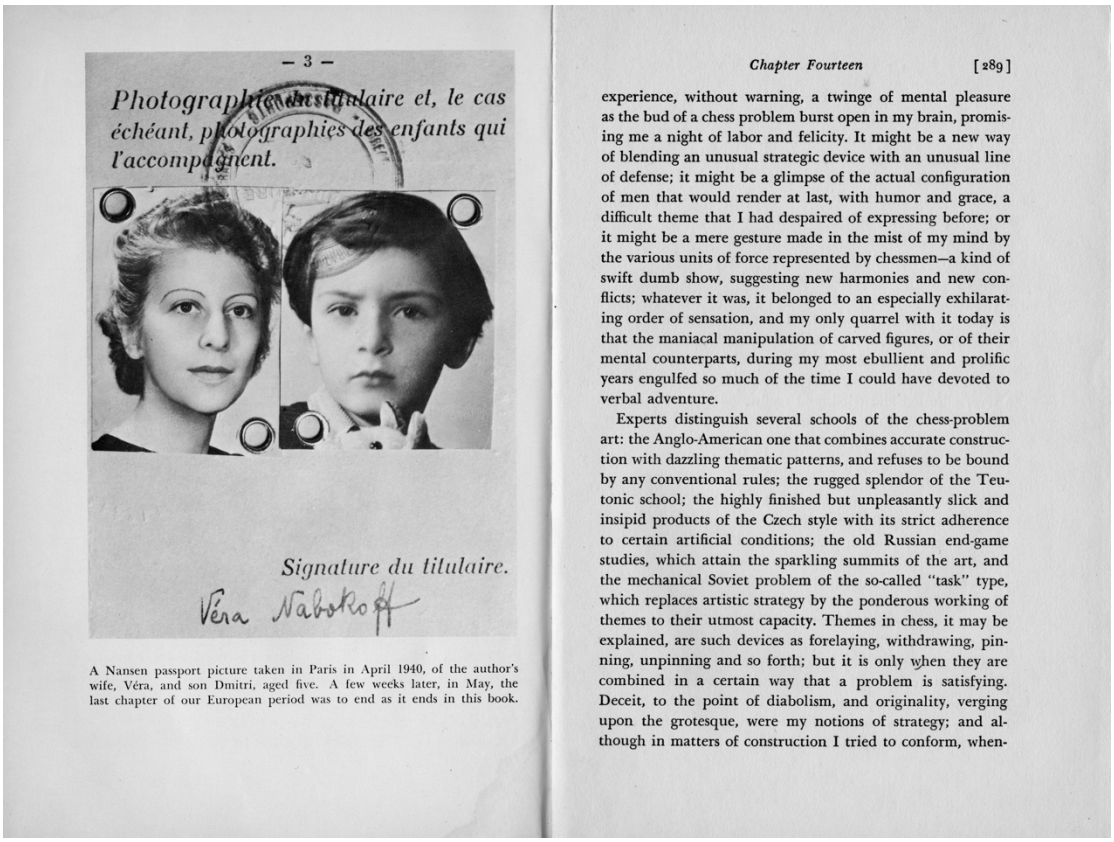
[114] Flyer enclosed in a first edition of *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* bought secondhand.
[115] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 310.
[116] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 257.



– 3 –

Photographie du titulaire et, le cas échéant, photographies des enfants qui l'accompagnent.

Signature du titulaire.

Véra Nabokoff

A Nansen passport picture taken in Paris in April 1940, of the author's wife, Véra, and son Dmitri, aged five. A few weeks later, in May, the last chapter of our European period was to end as it ends in this book.

Chapter Fourteen [289]

experience, without warning, a twinge of mental pleasure as the bud of a chess problem burst open in my brain, promising me a night of labor and felicity. It might be a new way of blending an unusual strategic device with an unusual line of defense; it might be a glimpse of the actual configuration of men that would render at last, with humor and grace, a difficult theme that I had despaired of expressing before; or it might be a mere gesture made in the mist of my mind by the various units of force represented by chessmen—a kind of swift dumb show, suggesting new harmonies and new conflicts; whatever it was, it belonged to an especially exhilarating order of sensation, and my only quarrel with it today is that the maniacal manipulation of carved figures, or of their mental counterparts, during my most ebullient and prolific years engulfed so much of the time I could have devoted to verbal adventure.

Experts distinguish several schools of the chess-problem art: the Anglo-American one that combines accurate construction with dazzling thematic patterns, and refuses to be bound by any conventional rules; the rugged splendor of the Teutonic school; the highly finished but unpleasantly slick and insipid products of the Czech style with its strict adherence to certain artificial conditions; the old Russian end-game studies, which attain the sparkling summits of the art, and the mechanical Soviet problem of the so-called "task" type, which replaces artistic strategy by the ponderous working of themes to their utmost capacity. Themes in chess, it may be explained, are such devices as forelaying, withdrawing, pinning, unpinning and so forth; but it is only when they are combined in a certain way that a problem is satisfying. Deceit, to the point of diabolism, and originality, verging upon the grotesque, were my notions of strategy; and although in matters of construction I tried to conform, when-

Figure 6 'The author's wife and son, Paris, 1940', Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), facing p. 289.

It is the only photograph of Véra. As Nabokov's photography albums in the Berg collection prove, he could have chosen many other photographs of his wife and son, but a passport photograph highlights the precariousness of their time in Europe. The caption specifies it as a Nansen passport, a document that the narrative explains in detail:

> The League of Nations equipped émigrés who had lost their Russian citizenship with a so-called 'Nansen' passport, a very inferior document of a sickly green hue. Its holder was little better than a criminal on parole and had to go through most hideous ordeals every time he wished to travel from one country to another.[117]

Nabokov emphasises the degrading aspects of a Nansen passport, describing how its holder is treated like a felon, a bastard, and a ghost. Actually, the passport prevented its owner from becoming stateless, a feat for which the Nansen International Office for Refugees received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1938. The photographed passport, however, illustrates Nabokov's account of his and his family's suffering:

[117] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, pp. 276-7.

> Our utter physical dependence on this or that nation, which had coldly granted us political refuge, became painfully evident when some trashy 'visa,' some diabolical 'identity card' had to be obtained or prolonged, for then an avid bureaucratic hell would attempt to close upon the petitioner and he might wilt while his dossier waxed fatter and fatter in the desks of rat-whiskered consuls and policemen.[118]

The passport photograph shows Véra and Dmitri subjected to 'bureaucratic hell', the official stamp covering their heads visually and symbolically demonstrating their subjugation. In *Mary*, the narrator describes the dismal process and implications of taking a passport photograph for a Russian émigré in Berlin:

> An arrow on the wall pointed across the street to a photographer's studio, where in twenty minutes one could obtain a miserable likeness of oneself: half a dozen identical physiognomies, of which one was stuck onto the yellow page of the passport, another one went into the police archives, while the rest were probably distributed among the officials' private collections.[119]

The passport in *Speak, Memory*'s illustrations demonstrates, documents, and was itself a source for the miseries of an exile existence: the dispersion of the self, a shadow existence in foreign lands, loss of ownership (of things, of oneself), a foreign appropriation of one's identity, subjection, and subservience.

The photographs of Nabokov's wife and son in the passport ensure, however, that the degradation is combined with proud resistance. Despite the 'inferior', 'trashy', and 'diabolical' visa, Véra and Dmitri look beautiful, self-possessed, bold: Véra's hair and face are elegantly made up, the top of a plush toy rabbit invades the bottom of Dmitri's photograph, their mouths are relaxed, the corners upturned; Véra's direct and steady stare suggests confidence, and Dmitri's slightly furrowed brow signals defiance.[120] The passport was critical for the Nabokovs' escape from Europe, which was on the brink of the Second World War. When they left on one of the last ships that sailed to the United States, Véra and Dmitri, who were Jewish, escaped the possibility of being interned in a concentration camp. The passport is a testimony to the torment

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[118] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 276.
[119] ['Стрелка на стене указывала через улицу на мастерскую фотографа, где в двадцать минут можно было получить свое жалкое изображение: полдюжины одинаковых физиономий, из которых одна наклеивалась на желтый лист паспорта, еще одна поступала в полицейский архив, а остальные, вероятно, расходились по частным коллекциям чиновников.'] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Mashen'ka', in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, ed. by Natalia Artemenko-Tolstoy, 5 vols (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 1999-2000), II (1999), pp. 42-127 (p. 103); Nabokov, *Mary*, p. 79.
[120] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 276.

of an exile in Europe, and as a requisite for immigration, it also represents freedom, for the Nabokovs could not follow in the footsteps of *Mary*'s hero, who thinks 'with pleasurable excitement how he would cross the frontier without a single visa'.[121] As Boyd reveals, Véra was told while waiting for French officials to issue them *visas de sortie* that their passports had been lost. Although she feared the consequences, she risked a bribe, and after several obstacles the passports were located.[122] Nabokov does not provide the details of this story in *Speak, Memory*, writing only that 'after months of soliciting and cursing, the emetic of a bribe had been administered to the right rat at the right office.'[123] He does not reveal Véra's role and sacrifice, but by including her passport, which also sports her signature, he pays tribute to her endurance and courage, the photograph acting as a photographic trace, a written trace (her signature), and a trace of her sacrifice, her courage on behalf of the family. By focusing on beautiful 'themes', Nabokov steers *Speak, Memory* away from crude 'social-comment racket' and prevents it from becoming one of the political books that he abhorred.[124] Yet Nabokov's autobiography gains political urgency and weight with photographs that detail the daily tribulations that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia caused. Especially in light of the contemporary Soviet context, the photographs must be appreciated for the way they help Nabokov give a quietly subversive testimony of his past.

Speak, Inspiration: Nabokov and Lessing Viewing Photographs

Nabokov's insistence that his memories are voluntary corresponds with his dismissal of Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious, a theory that Bergson's conceptualization and valorization of involuntary memory foreshadows. Yet Nabokov's captions also indicate instances of spontaneous memories. In his caption to 'His brother and he, 1901, Biarritz', Nabokov writes: 'A shining wet roof--that is all I remember from that first trip to the South of

[121] ['с приятным волненьем подумал о том, как без всяких виз проберется через границу'] Nabokov, 'Mashen'ka', p. 127; Nabokov, *Mary*, p. 114.
[122] Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 515.
[123] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 292.
[124] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, pp. 41, 113.

France.' The syntax of the sentence--the memory first, the explanation after--suggests that Nabokov had not thought of this until he looked at the photograph. The dash in the sentence construction underscores this sense of sudden epiphany, a sudden realisation that the photograph has brought about despite not showing a roof. Nabokov again uses punctuation that is unusual for him in the caption to the Menton photograph, where he reflects upon his émigré years, but then suddenly interjects that he remembers that the winter mosquitoes were terrible, which he then follows with a long visceral description, interspersed with dashes and ending with an exclamation point. The specific details of the photographs that Nabokov mentions in captions, like the sedan in front of the St. Petersburg house, which Nabokov observes in an almost postscript-like appendage to his caption, furthermore supports the impression that he is looking at the photographs while writing. He frequently jumps from an observation to a mnemonic association with a lot less flourish than the reader is accustomed to in the main text. For example, the following digression in the caption to the Pyrenees photograph:

> Spring moths would float in through the open window on overcast nights and settle upon the lighted wall on my left. In that way we collected a number of rare Pugs in perfect condition and spread them at once (they are now in an American museum).[125]

The detail of the wall seems to prompt the memory of collecting moths, which Nabokov then elaborates, adding the location of where the specimens now are held. Nabokov seems to transcribe the immediate associations that looking has prompted. Sometimes Nabokov's comments almost have the character of a note to oneself, for example in regard to the penholder in this photograph, which he 'may rediscover yet in one of the trunks stored at Dean's, Ithica, N. Y.' This information is like the location of the butterflies in an American museum enclosed in brackets, underscoring its tangential relevance.

The material cut from Nabokov's manuscript reveals even more digressions and sparked memories. Nabokov writes down his impulse, for example, that 'it might be fun' to write to the Soviet museum that has the Bakst portrait 'for more information and see what answer one would get.' In relation to the parting of his hair in the photograph of him with his

[125] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, facing p. 256.

father, he writes: 'A hair brush dipped in water, and given a brisk shake before application, was usually responsible for that sort of smart parting'. The syntax is strikingly similar to the caption with the wet roof: the memory comes first, the explanation after. A description of what he wears in the photograph of him in 1915, a description not included in the published version, leads him, like in the Menton caption, to 'remember' something: 'I remember bitterly resenting my Father's refusal to have his own tailor make my clothes at this juvenile juncture.' Material in Nabokov's archive also suggests that the photograph of the family house in St. Petersburg inspired a short story that he considered using as a 'motto' for his autobiography, but which he in the end omitted:

> The house was there. Right there. I never imagined the place would have changed so completely. How dreadful--I don't recognize a thing. No use walking any further. Sorry, Hopkinson, to have made you come such a long way. I had been looking forward to a perfect orgy of nostalgia and recognition! That man over there seems to be growing suspicious. Speak to him. Turisti'. Amerikantsi'. Oh, wait a minute. Tell him I am a ghost. You surely know the Russian word for 'ghost'? Mechta. Prizrak. Metafizi cheskiy capitalist. Run, Hopkinson![126]

Nabokov never went back to Russia. The vignette clearly signals its own fictionality with its imagined return, as well as with its use of free indirect speech, dialogue, fantasy, humour, and adventure. Yet one cannot help but see a connection to the photograph of the St. Petersburg house, especially with the story's external street perspective. The photograph also recalls the photograph that the narrator in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* regrets he has not been able to find (exactly the same one if *Sebastian Knight* is read autobiographically): 'a picture of the house where Sebastian was born'. The narrator does have, however, an 'old picture postcard' of a St. Petersburg street which he has placed on his desk 'to keep the child of memory amused for the moment'.[127] As the first photograph in *Speak, Memory*, the St. Petersburg house photograph also has pride of place, and like the narrator's 'old picture postcard' in *Sebastian Knight*, it also seems to act as memory's playmate. If *Speak, Memory*'s title is an invocation written in the imperative, then the photographs can be seen as coming to memory's aid. Nabokov may claim

[126] Berg, MS Nabokov, [Speak, memory] Notes for illustrations.
[127] Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: New Directions, 1941), pp. 5-6.

he does not need them, but the photographs do not merely support perfectly recalled memories, they also seem to act as toys for stimulating new memories, even imaginary ones.

Nabokov's reaction to details in the photographs suggests that the photographs had 'punctum' for him. Despite claiming that there is 'nothing Proustian in a photograph', Barthes's theory of the 'punctum' suggests there can be.[128] According to Barthes, we can have two different experiences when we view photographs. 'Studium' stands for the cultural way we engage with photographs, which can entail 'general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity'.[129] 'Punctum', on the other hand, describes an experience that punctuates (disturbs, breaks) the 'studium'. Barthes writes: 'This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest in the field of *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me'.[130] The reader participates with Nabokov's photographs on the level of 'studium', seeing them as Barthes often sees photographs in this mode, as 'political testimony' or 'good historical scenes', in this case, of Nabokov's life in Russia and Europe.[131] Nabokov's captions, however, suggest that for him details have risen of their 'own accord into affective consciousness', which is another way Barthes describes the experience of 'punctum'.[132] Malikova gives the lack of 'punctum' in Nabokov's photographs as one of the reasons why they have no 'conscious aesthetic plan'. [133] With Nabokov's reaction to details, however, the captions suggest even in their final state that the photographs did in fact pierce or prick him--'*point*' being the verb Barthes uses in French to describe the phenomenon.[134] Malikova disregards the proviso that 'punctum' is always and exclusively a subjective experience, being an individual reaction rather than an inherent quality of a

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[128] ['rien de proustien dans une photo'], Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 129; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 82.
[129] ['une sorte d'investissement général, empressé, certes, mais sans acuité particulière'], Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 48; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.
[130] ['Cette fois, ce n'est pas moi qui vais le chercher (comme j'investis de ma conscience souveraine le champ de *studium*), c'est lui qui part de la scène, comme une fleche, et vient me percer.'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, pp. 48-9; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.
[131] ['C'est par le *studium* que je m'intéresse à beaucoup de photographies, soit que je les receive comme des témoignages politiques, soit que je les goûte comme de bons tableaux historiques'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 48; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.
[132] ['laisser le détail remonter seul à la conscience affective'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 89; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 55.
[133] Malikova, 'Nabokov's Photo-Biography', p. 8.
[134] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 49; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 27. Italics Barthes.

photograph. As Barthes confesses, 'to give examples of *punctum* is, in a certain fashion, to *give myself up*'. [135] This means that 'punctum' cannot be replicated or universalized; 'punctum' is not something that can be created for the reader. Like Bergson and Proust's conception of 'authentic' memory, 'punctum' is entirely subjective and outside control.

Indirectly tying his theory of the 'punctum' to involuntary memory, Barthes quotes from *À la recherche du temps perdu* when he describes the photograph that for him epitomises his experience of 'punctum', the photograph of his mother that for him delivers her essence:

> For once, photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother's face, 'whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory'.[136]

Nabokov's use of photographs as playthings that inspire memories highlight a bias towards photography on Proust's, and Bergson's, part. Bergson's and Proust's denunciation of photography omits the possibility that photographs can stimulate the ocular sense. Looking at photographs is usually a willed, conscious act, but viewing may spur sensations, memories, feelings, and ideas that are not precipitated. Photography's ability to 'at any time to retain an event' may associate it with voluntary memory, but viewing photographs can like stumbling on a curb or tasting a cake call forth memories that have nothing to do with the flexing of a well-trained memory 'muscle'. Nabokov's interactions with photographs thus suggest photography's potential for both voluntary and involuntary memory, the two kinds taking turns and informing each other.

Whereas Nabokov only hints at entertaining 'the child of memory' with photographs, carefully managing and censoring sparked memories and stories, Lessing seeks and cultivates submissions to photographic evocations. The way she uses photographs to prompt, direct, and play with her memories is evident in her first attempts to write about her parents in 'My Father'

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[135] ['donner des examples de *punctum*, c'est, d'une certain façon, *me livrer*'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 73; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 43. Italics Barthes.

[136] ['Pour une fois, la photographie me donnait un sentiment aussi sûr que le souvenir, tel que l'éprouva Proust, lorsque se baissant un jour pour se déchausser il aperçut brusquement dans ca mémoire le visage de sa grand-mère veritable, "dont pour la première fois je retrouvais dans un souvenir involuntaire et complet la réalité vivante".'] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 109; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 70.

and ‘Impertinent Daughters’. Lessing’s description of photographs in these biographical pieces gives the impression of being the method by which she writes about them. Both pieces begin by describing photographs, as if the writing has these photographs as its generative source. In ‘My Father’, the description of photographs seems to be Lessing’s answer to the task she sets herself in the first paragraph of the article: ‘I’ve written about him before, but novels, stories, don’t have to be “true.” Writing this article is difficult because it has to be “true.”’[137] She turns to photographs as her first recourse in overcoming the challenges of rendering a ‘true’ portrait of her father, her description of the photographs following immediately after her self-imposed imperative and preceding all other reflections and memories. She simply states that ‘there are photographs of him,’ and then continues to describe three of them. Like Nabokov’s captions, Lessing’s prose is descriptive and enumerative with a lot of adjectives and commas. Dashes, brackets, explanations, and interjections follow observations of details in the photographs. This is how Lessing describes the first photograph of her father, also displayed in the article: ‘The largest is of an officer in the 1914-18 war. A new uniform--buttoned, badged, strapped, tabbed--confines a handsome, dark young man who holds himself stiffly to confront what he certainly thought of as his duty.’ Her language is even more searching, detailed, and doubting in her manuscript. When she describes her father’s eyes, she interrupts herself mid-sentence: ‘His eyes are steady and enuiring [*sic*] and above all-- but would I read what I do into those eyes if I did not know what he became later?’[138] She includes this contrast between what she sees and what she remembers in her article, writing: ‘His eyes are steady, serious, responsible, and show no signs of what he became later.’[139] That the photographs provide both mnemonic and creative sustenance is most evident in the quotations that develop from Lessing’s descriptions of the last two photographs. A photograph of her father as a teenager leads Lessing to claim that ‘it is his mouth you notice’, adding: ‘His moustache was to hide it: “Had to do something--a damned

[137] Lessing, ‘My Father’, p. 4.
[138] Doris Lessing Papers. Austin, Harry Ransom Center (HRC), MS 2460, box 28, folder 3. Lessing’s drafts reveal that photographs also lead to descriptions of her father in Persia.
[139] Lessing, ‘My Father’, p. 4.

fleshy mouth. Always made me uncomfortable, that mouth of mine."' Her father's voice also intrudes in her description of a baby photograph of him:

> Earlier a baby (eyes already alert) appears in a lace waterfall that cascades from the pillowy bosom of a fat, plain woman to her feet. It is the face of a head cook. 'Lord, but my mother was a practical female--almost as bad as you!' as he used to say, or throw at my mother in moments of exasperation.

Although it is possible that her father said these things about his mouth and his mother, it is unlikely that Lessing remembers her father's words verbatim. In order to give a 'truthful' portrait of her father, Lessing turns to photographs of him from before she was born, but viewing these photographs ignites memories that also segue into fiction, or at least fictional modes.

Photographs act even more overtly as impetuses for narrative in Lessing's essay about her mother. She surmises, for example, what lies behind a photograph of her parents: 'It is clear that he is only just holding himself together, but he is in a proper suit, certainly because she has told him he must make the effort.'[140] Lessing not only constructs stories about single photographs, however, photographs premise the whole biography. The first sentence of the essay introduces a photograph: 'A photograph of my mother shows her as a large, round-faced schoolgirl, full of the confidence I have to associate with her being Victorian.' After describing her mother's hair and dress, Lessing turns to another photograph. This one, 'taken forty-five years later', features both her parents, and although she describes them both, she focuses on her mother, who now, according to Lessing, 'appears as a lean, severe old thing, bravely looking out from a world of disappointment and frustration'. Lessing explains that 'the difference between these photographs is what this memoir has to be about'. Lessing's memoir is thus an example of ekphrasis, the text inspired by static but pregnant photographs like Achilles's shield, which Homer, according to G. E. Lessing, transforms into a 'living picture of an action [das lebendige Gemälde einer Handlung]'.[141] Lessing situates her writing in the conceptual space created by the striking juxtaposition of two photographs, which in turn gives this space graphic

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[140] Lessing, 'My Father', p. 4.
[141] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voß, 1766), p. 184; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon*, trans. by Robert Phillimore (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), p. 176.

contours and thematic tension, but she also increasingly fills the space with fictional devices. She not only quotes comments said by her parents more than half a century ago as she does in 'My Father', she also uses free indirect speech to give voice to her mother's thoughts, and especially her prejudices. As the narrative progresses, this novelistic device becomes more pronounced. Lessing seamlessly shifts from her authorial voice to what she imagines would have been her mother's internal voice without quotation marks. As a consequence, Lessing switches between writing about herself in the first person and the third person, using 'the girl' or 'her daughter' about herself. Her editor objected to these 'uneven shifts', but Lessing kept them, despite their uncertain implications for the essay's genre. [142]

In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov chides Mnemosyne as a 'very careless girl', but implies that he with his analytical and rigorous mind can correct her, giving precisely and beautifully delineated form to his memories.[143] Lessing makes a similar diagnosis in the first volume of her autobiography, *Under My Skin*, calling memory 'a careless and lazy organ', but her remedy is different. She downplays her command over memory and instead emphasises the process of writing:

> You forget. You remember. As I brooded over the material for this book, faces and places emerged from the dark. 'Good Lord! So there you are! Haven't thought about you for years!' Not only the perspective but what you are looking at changes. When you write about anything--in a novel, an article--you learn a lot you did not know before. I learned a good deal writing this. Again and again I have had to say, 'That was the reason was it? Why didn't I think that before?' Or even, 'Wait… it wasn't like that.' Memory is a careless and lazy organ, not only a self-flattering one. And not always self-flattering. More than once I have said: 'No, I wasn't as bad as I've been thinking,' as well as discovering that I was.[144]

Like Nabokov, Lessing stages memory as an obstacle, but she suggests that memories may emerge through the gradual and somewhat uncontrolled, intuitive, and impulsive process of writing. Nabokov, in contrast, casts his 'almost pathological keenness of the retrospective faculty' as a trait he has inherited.[145] Of course, Nabokov also has a writing process, one marked by heavy revision, and it was precisely in this context that we saw most clearly the influence of

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[142] Brie Burkeman (Jonathan Clowes LTD), fax to Doris Lessing, 2 May 1991. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[143] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 13.
[144] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 13.
[145] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, p. 75.

photographs unfold.[146] Lessing makes more evident the influence of photography in her published writing, exhibiting the way she taps their evocative power, even for fiction.

Lessing's fumbling approach to memory reflects 'the kind of writer' that she is: 'one who uses the process of writing to find out what you think, and even what you are'.[147] Lessing considers herself the 'most truthful' when she is 'being a writer', but this is not because it is rigorous and stringent, which was how we saw Nabokov claim authority for his memory-writing.[148] In comparison to Nabokov's writing, Lessing's is rather formless and relaxed. She gives the impression of talking or thinking out loud, in particular when she seems to quote internal monologue (such as 'Good Lord! So there you are! Haven't thought about you for years!' in the above quotation). Lessing herself seems to put a high premium on speech. In describing how she herself is taken to task for things she wrote a long time ago, Lessing remarks: 'Briefly and in passing: it is a sad thing that what is written has permanence, whereas what is said is often unnoticed.'[149] The way she expresses this sentiment has itself speaking qualities, as she makes it 'in passing'. Not only does Lessing's writing emulate unchecked, casual conversation, sometimes causing her anguish later in life, it is also lax in relation to when and where she uses fiction. Lessing insists that autobiographies, unlike novels, 'have to be the truth'--or 'at least the attempt must be made', but she gives her shifts between first and third person in her autobiography *Under My Skin* as an example of how 'if you have been at it for decades, you have learned the tricks so thoroughly the material demands them and you use them'.[150] In a novel, 'memories true and false become part of the fabric of the story'; Lessing does not condone this for autobiography, but she does express the past with 'novelist's tricks' such as dialogue, free indirect speech, and third-person narration.[151] Lessing's probing, truth-searching writing process thus involves photographs and novelistic devices in an exchange that

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[146] Nabokov even revised his interviews collected in *Strong Opinions*, letting the reader know this in his foreword. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. ix-xi.
[147] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 228.
[148] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 166.
[149] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 212.
[150] Doris Lessing, 'Writing Autobiography', in *Time Bites: Views and Reviews*, by Doris Lessing (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), pp. 90-103 (pp. 95, 100).
[151] Lessing, 'Writing Autobiography', p. 96.

creates results not always controlled or intended, although some of Lessing's memories do seem to have photographic qualities like Nabokov's. In *Under My Skin* Lessing recounts how she as child would examine the day's events in order to prevent nightmares, 'reducing the interminable day to something like a picture storybook'.[152] As Marcus observes, 'Lessing suggests a connection between this process and the clear perception of discrete "moments" in her childhood, which endure, unchanged, in memory'. Marcus rightly draws attention to the photographic quality of these 'moments' and how they resemble cinema when adjoined.[153] As sources for inspiration, however, photographs primarily contribute to a creative process that Tom Sperlinger has shown in relation to Lessing's novels was characterised by speed and thinking while typing.[154] In her life-writing, we see this process resulting in memories less discrete and definitive than Nabokov's, particularly Lessing's memories about her parents.

The way Nabokov and particularly Lessing seem to include spontaneous reactions to photographs in their writing raises the question of whether it is possible to give voice to the unconscious. The conditions for writing about memory are different in life-writing than in a novel such as *À la recherché du temps perdu*. As Nabokov points out in one of his lectures, Marcel the narrator is not Marcel Proust the author.[155] Proust can describe sensory-induced involuntary memories as they are happening because he is narrating the experiences of a character. Because Nabokov and Lessing identify themselves as both authors and narrators, the transcription of their memories might be seen to necessarily imply voluntary action. Lessing's speech-like writing, however, calls to mind Freud's 'talking cure', the basis for all later psychoanalytic treatment, where patients by talking freely (under the guidance and prompting of the analyst) come to express and thus face things they have repressed. According to the psychoanalyst Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, however, attempts to 'reproduce' or 'mimic' in writing

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[152] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 120.
[153] Laura Marcus, 'From *The Grass is Singing* to *The Golden Notebook*', in *Doris Lessing and the Forming of History*, ed. by Kevin Brazil, David Sergeant, and Tom Sperlinger (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 84-96 (p. 89).
[154] Tom Sperlinger, 'Lessing's Interruptions', in *Doris Lessing and the Forming of History*, pp. 137-51 (pp. 137-9).
[155] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*, ed. by Fredson Bowers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 208.

what is called 'primary process' in psychoanalysis can only ever be artificial exercises. Autobiography cannot be like psychoanalysis as it is impossible 'to transpose spoken free association into writing--the sudden recalls, the transferential shifts, the repetitions and the discontinuity of discourse'. He points out that every writer 'must constantly be attentive to the choice of the right words, to their tone, to the sweep of the sentence, to the rhythm, to the shape his book will gradually take.'[156] Nabokov's and Lessing's engagements with photography suggest, however, that this medium can prompt unintentional reactions, offering a unique opportunity to sidestep consciousness to the degree that this is possible in thinking, talking, and writing. J. M. Coetzee describes the paradox of not being able to know what about your life might be the most important, writing in his conversation book with the psychoanalyst Arabella Kurtz:

> Given the wealth of material I hold in memory, the material of a lifetime, what should or must I leave out, bearing in mind Freud's warning that what I omit without thinking (i. e. without conscious thought) may be the key to the deepest truth about me? Yet how is it logically possible for me to know what I am unthinkingly leaving out?[157]

Viewing images of the past while writing might be one way of discovering what one might otherwise have unwittingly omitted. Photographs may offer an alternative route for unearthing hidden influences. Pontalis himself seems to appeal to photography's evocative power when he starts a chapter about his father with a photograph of them together: 'On the table where I write, before my eyes, there is a photograph.'[158] He also heads to an island 'in order to feel impelled to write in a more wandering way'.[159] It is not at all certain that writing the unconscious is impossible. Carl Gustav Jung, for one, advocates consciously submitting oneself to the impulses of the unconscious, also in writing. He even recounts how his own unconscious impelled him to

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[156] J. -B. Pontalis, *Love of Beginnings*, trans. by James Greene with Marie-Christine Réguis (London: Free Association Books, 1993), pp. xvi-iii. Preface to the English edition.
[157] J. M. Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz, *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy* (London: Harvill Secker, 2015), p. 2.
[158] ['Sur la table où j'écris, sous mes yeux, une photographie.'] J. –B. Pontalis, *L'amour des commencements* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 31; Pontalis, *Love of Beginnings*, p. 23.
[159] Pontalis, *Love of Beginnings*, p. xiii.

write in a bombastic style he himself found embarrassing.[160] And in 'visionary [visionäre]' literature, he sees the expression of 'primordial experience [Urerlebnis]' that hides in our unconscious.[161] Whether giving voice to the unconscious is possible or not, the impression that writing with photographs can spur uncontrolled memories gives the memories a sense of authority in a context where authenticity is associated with unconscious processes.

Photographs as Sources for a Made-Up Past

Lessing's concept of memory recalls Bergson and Proust's. She describes what she calls 'real' memories as flashes and she uses the sensual aspect of memories to measure how 'real' they are. Her explanation of 'real remembering' emphasises a visceral transportation back in time. On the topic of childbirth, Lessing writes: 'Real remembering is--even for a flash, even a moment--being back in the experience'. Lessing is not in her life-writing completely overwhelmed by memories prompted by the taste of cake-infused tea or a stumble on cobblestones--she is after all consciously writing her memoirs--but viewing photographs seems to inform her explorative, fluid approach. Like Bergson and Proust, however, Lessing also contrasts 'real' memory with photography. Lessing uses photography as an example of how we sometimes 'make up our pasts'. According to Lessing, 'you can actually watch your mind doing it, taking a little fragment of fact and then spinning a tale out of it.' She writes that this is not only 'the fault of story-tellers', and gives as an example a parent showing a photograph to a child, 'and at once the child builds from the words and the photograph a memory, which becomes hers'. Lessing is thus careful in *Under My Skin* to mention the gate in a photograph that she has 'added' to her first 'real memory, violent, smelly--physical', which is of her sitting

[160] Carl Gustav Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, recorded and ed. by Aniela Jaffé (Zürich: Ex Libris, 1962), pp. 177, 181, 188-9; Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and ed. by Aniela Jaffé, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 173, 177-8, 183-4.
[161] Carl Gustav Jung, 'Psychologie und Dichtung', in *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. by Emil Ermatinger (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1930), pp. 315-30 (pp. 317, 322-3); Carl Gustav Jung, *Modern Man in Search of Soul*, trans. by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcout Brace and Company, 1933), pp. 155, 162.

in front of her father on a horse.[162] Like Sontag, Lessing faults photographs for inventing or replacing memory, but this does not mean she disavows them. On the contrary, she acknowledges the influence of photographs on her memories and, as we have seen, she yields to their fictionalising effect when she uses devices such as dialogue and free indirect speech in her responses to them.

In *Alfred and Emily*, Lessing turns to photographs not only to inspire unverifiable memories but tales that like Nabokov's imagined return to St. Petersburg are fictional in the sense that they could not have happened. The second half of *Alfred and Emily* offers what is perhaps Lessing's most fluid, disorganized, probing writing about her past and is presented as non-fiction. The first half, however, is designated a 'novella', a deliberately made-up past. Here Lessing uses an omniscient narrator, who she in a few instances reveals is also herself, to tell chronologically and in a well-structured manner the lives she images her parents would have had if there had been no First World War. The two photographs of Lessing's parents that preface this section thus in principle depict two fictional characters. Lessing herself identifies photography as a source for fiction in the 'Explanation' chapter of the 'novella'. She reveals that she has based the husband she gives her mother on a photograph. She explains: 'William, Emily McVeagh's husband, came from the little picture of my mother's great love that lived on her dressing-table.' Lessing does not cite her mother's great love as the origin of this invention, but rather his picture, which she notably describes as 'living' on her mother's table. She continues on to describe the photograph and her rationale for the relationship she gives her mother to this doctor:

> It was a sensitive, cautious face, the sort of face you'd cast in a film as the lover too shy to speak his love, or whose first love died young, leaving him grieving and for ever unable to love another. Even as a child I would look at that face and think, Well, you wouldn't have had much fun with that one.[163]

In the life Lessing invents for her mother, the doctor indeed proves disappointing, although Lessing gives him a heart attack, enabling Emily to fulfill her potential as a founder of schools with the fortune she inherits. It is not the first time that her mother's photograph of her beloved

[162] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 13, 18-9, 218, 230.
[163] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, pp. 140-1.

doctor appears in Lessing's oeuvre. As so often with photographs in Lessing's life-writing, a description of it in 'Impertinent Daughters' is followed by a quotation, this one credited to Lessing's father: '"Your poor mother," he would say, "he was a good chap, that young doctor."'[164] The photograph thus captured Lessing's imagination and stimulated her storytelling long before *Alfred and Emily*.

Lessing's invented lives also suggest that her writing was influenced by photographs of her parents, particularly the two she uses to preface the 'novella' (Figure 7).

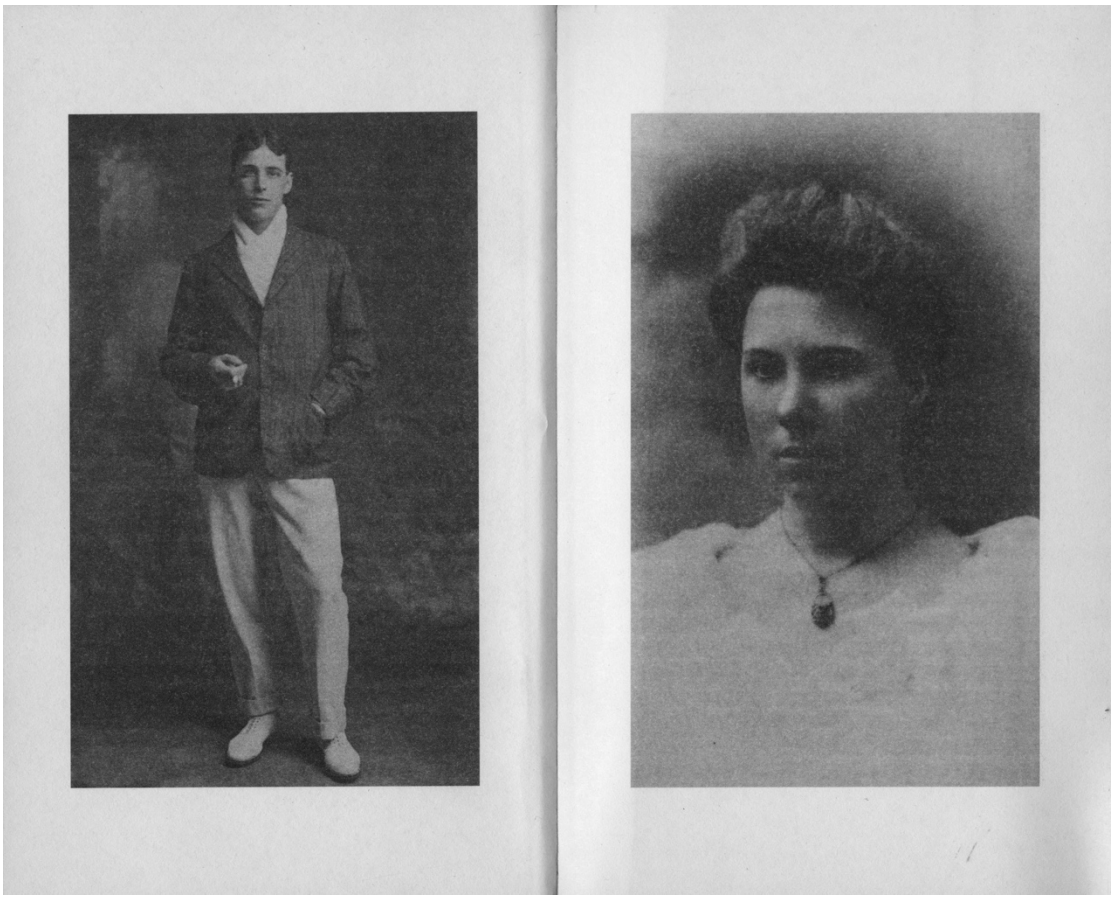

Figure 7 Frontispiece photographs of Alfred and Emily, Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), pp. x-xi.

Lessing wrote already in *Under My Skin* that she 'only had to look at' old pictures of her father in order to surmise what he would have been without the First World War: 'my father had been strong, vigorous, in command of himself, this is how he would have gone on--and now he was

[164] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, p. 183.

an invalid, with no hope of ever being well again.'[165] The first frontispiece photograph is a full-length portrait of Lessing's father as a young man (Figure 7). He has no false leg or uniform; he is robust, sleekly dressed, and has a nonchalant and debonair attitude with one leg bent, one hand in his pocket. Corresponding to the photograph, the text introduces Alfred as 'strikingly good-looking, dark and well built' and he is described as 'handsome' at least four times in the work. He also keeps the leg that he lost in the First World War and remains healthy and strong, being even in late life 'energetic, always-on-the-move'. His posture and fine clothes also remain with him throughout his life in Lessing's fictional version; he is described towards the end of the 'novella' as 'still a tall, well-made man, holding himself straight', and wearing a luxurious jacket.[166] In contrast, Lessing describes how her father deteriorated along with his dress in 'My Father': 'my father sank towards his death (at 61). Everything changed in him. He had been a dandy and fastidious, now he hated to change out of shabby khaki. He had been sociable, now he was misanthropic.'[167] The 'novella' depicts the strong, vigorous, genial traits that Lessing reads into early photographs of her father, traits that earn him respect as a farmer and a father in his community until the end of his life.

To the right of Alfred's photograph is a head-and-shoulders portrait of Lessing's mother Emily as a young woman (Figure 7). Although her features are soft, her expression is steadfast, serious, and stern. In the narrative, Emily, like Alfred, preserves the health she exudes in her early photograph, being described as both 'robust' and 'well-fleshed'. Her serious expression also reverberates in the life Lessing invents for her. She is introduced as having 'presence and attack', and she is 'immediately mistress of herself and of circumstances'. She remains 'strong and forthright', keeps her 'decided, definite, bold character'; and even in late life she is described as having a 'stern face'. The dress that Emily wears in the photograph is of particular importance in relation to character development and plotline. The frilly white cloth is suggestive of the dress she wears to a dance, 'knowing she looked gawky and uncomfortable'. The omniscient narrator proves her right, describing Emily as 'awkward and stiff, probably because

[165] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 156.
[166] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, pp. 4, 8, 9, 13, 46, 76, 102.
[167] Lessing, 'My Father', p. 4.

she hated how she looked'.[168] When Emily changes into other clothes, the narrator describes Alfred's reaction:

> Alfred was thinking, Now, who is this bobby-dazzler, who can she be? And then immediately recognized Emily, who was as far from the flowery-muslin-frocked maiden as could be imagined. She wore a dark blue skirt, and a blouse of dark stripes that had a small white linen collar.[169]

Alfred, who remains Emily's friend throughout the narrative, recognizes the discordance of the muslin dress with Emily's true character. Lessing thus uses a dress like the one in the photograph to dramatise how her mother would have developed into a sophisticated and sensible woman had the First World War not intervened. Clothing is a prism through which Lessing conceptualizes the war's derailment of her parents' lives. In 'Impertinent Daughters' Lessing meditates on the clothes Alfred and Emily wear in their wedding photograph, displayed both in this essay and later in *Alfred and Emily* (Figure 11):

> My father was elegant, as always, when he still cared about clothes. My mother wore a dress she clearly had given a lot of thought to: only recently, when I was writing the Jane Somers books, did I realise that my mother (who could, I think, be something like Jane Somers if she lived now) very much enjoyed clothes, even though for most of her life she did not have the money to buy them, or the opportunity to wear them.[170]

For Lessing, clothes in photographs reveal not only how her parents once were but inspire fictional versions of them.

The 'Explanation' chapter and the second part of *Alfred and Emily*, 'Two Lives', tie the fictional 'novella' to Lessing's memories of her parents. The three photographs displayed in the 'Explanation' chapter all show the influence of the First World War, the first two showing her father in uniform. The first photograph is the one also displayed in 'My Father'. Lessing's draft for this article reveals the cruel significance that this, the 'largest' photograph of her father, already had for her then: 'The largest (of course; I cannot help bitterly thinking) is of an officer in the First World War.'[171] Significantly, the last photograph not only shows Lessing's wounded father in a hospital bed, but also her mother sitting next to him in her nurse's uniform. Lessing

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[168] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, pp. 5, 17, 19-20, 48, 53, 64, 95-6.
[169] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 22.
[170] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, p. 58.
[171] Manuscript of 'My Father'. HRC, MS 2460, box 28, folder 3.

argues later in 'Two Lives' that the First World War wounded not just her father, but also her mother. Lessing laments: 'It took me years--and years--and years--to see it: my mother had no visible scars, no wounds, but she was as much a victim of the war as my poor father.'[172] This realisation means that Lessing feels she does not know the 'real' person her mother was or should have been:

> For a long time I knew I had never known my father, as he really was, before the war, but it took me years to see that I had not known my mother, as she really was, either. The real Emily McVeagh was an educator, who told stories and brought me books. That is how I want to remember her.[173]

The photographs of Lessing's parents in the 'Explanation' as well as the photographs of Lessing's family life on the farm in Southern Rhodesia in the second half of *Alfred and Emily* show the direction her parents' lives really took, why Lessing fabricated new ones, and why the two have to be seen together. Alfred and Emily are the same in all the photographs, thus demonstratively fastening the fictional lives to the non-fictional. With the photographs of her parents before the war Lessing expands upon how she wants to remember them: those glimmers she saw of personalities that she feels they were denied. The fictional lives are in a way no less true than the non-fictional ones as Lessing believes the war wrenched her parents' lives out of their 'proper course'.[174]

The lives Lessing invents for her parents not only have to do with their lives but her own. What her parents could have become is a motif that runs through all of Lessing's life-writing. [175] Not only did Lessing constantly hear this refrain from her parents, making it an important feature of her life, but, more fundamentally, her investigation of what they could have become corresponds with her statement in *Under My Skin* that we 'jealously' pore over our parents' lives 'as if they hold the key to [our] own.'[176] The photographs that predate Lessing's life can thus also help her process the influence of her parents' lives on her own. In 'Impertinent

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[172] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 172.
[173] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 192.
[174] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 9.
[175] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, p. 183; Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, p. 56; Lessing, 'My Father', p. 4; Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 46, 79, 80, 156, 174; Lessing, *Walking in the Shade,* pp. 144-5.
[176] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 37.

Daughters', Lessing connects the hospital photograph of her mother as a nurse and her father as a wounded soldier to herself:

> I have a photograph of him in bed in the Royal Free Hospital, a handsome man, but minus a leg and inwardly in torment. Beside him Sister McVeagh sits wearing her full white veil, sewing, her eyes on her handwork. 'Before she was thought of,' says the caption, meaning me, their first child. The date is September 1917.[177]

Like the original caption, which indirectly connects the meeting of Lessing's parents in the hospital to her existence, Lessing ties her birth to the First World War. She writes in *Under My Skin* that she used 'to joke that it was the war that had given birth' to her, although she describes it as 'no joke', for she felt the war 'like a dark grey cloud, like poison gas' hanging over her childhood.[178] It is thus telling that when she invents a world where the First World War never happens, she writes herself out of history, she leaves herself unborn. Lessing states her belief in *Alfred and Emily* that her 'father's rage at the Trenches took [her] over' when she was very young, never leaving her: 'It is as if that old war is in my own memory.'[179] Lessing makes this sentiment explicit in the foreword and offers it as the rationale that underlies the whole of project of *Alfred and Emily*:

> That war, the Great War, the war that would end all war, squatted over my childhood. The trenches were as present to me as anything I actually saw around me. And here I still am, trying to get out from under that monstrous legacy, trying to get free.[180]

Lessing insisted throughout her oeuvre that she felt her parent's emotions, experiences, and memories; that they were continued in her.[181] Lessing sees also her misguided commitment to Communism and the Soviet Union as a reaction to her parents and their destruction by the First World War.[182] In *Walking in the Shade*, Lessing hesitantly and circuitously describes how her 'Search' developed after she quit Communism, mentioning 'spiritualism', 'mysticism', and her Sufi teacher Idries Shah. A line can thus be drawn backwards from Sufism to Communism and from Communism to the First World War and her parents. The lives Lessing invents for her

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[177] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta,* p. 56.
[178] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 10.
[179] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 258.
[180] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. viii.
[181] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 9-10, 272, 372-3; Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, pp. 63, 239-40.
[182] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, pp. 73, 81, 238.

parents with the help of photographs thus acquire an almost therapeutic significance. Lessing turns to photographs as keys that offer access not only to the lives her parents should have had, but the deepest recesses of own. In *Walking in the Shade* Lessing writes: 'There is a pattern in my mind, there must be, where order breaks into disorder and extremity. It came from World War I and my parents' destruction by it.' According to Lessing, she staves off any inclination towards madness or breakdown by writing about it. The way photographs nourish Lessing's writing process, especially her fictional inventions, thus help her write herself out of 'potentials for disaster'.[183] Photographs seem to help Lessing in particular with the obstacles that she faces in writing about her mother, detailed in 'Impertinent Daughters':

> I keep coming up against barriers, and they are not much different now from what they were then. She paralysed me as a child by the anger and pity I felt. Now only pity is left, but it still makes it hard to write about her. What an awful life she had, my poor mother![184]

Inventing lives for her parents seems to have been cathartic for Lessing. After she completed the 'novella', Lessing confided that she had 'enjoyed the first half so much', but that the second half would not be 'nearly so pleasant'.[185] While engaging imaginatively with the past amused Lessing, writing the non-fictional 'Two Lives' daunted her.

It may seem unlikely that photographs with their matter-of-fact quality can help Lessing explore the hinterlands of her mind, such as the memories she feels she has inherited, but photographs may actually have psychoanalytical potential. According to Benjamin, another nature speaks to the camera than to the eye, above all in such a way that 'a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious'.[186] He claims that photography, like psychoanalysis, reveals aspects of the unconscious: whereas we learn about the 'instinctual unconscious [Triebhaft-Unbewußten]' through psychoanalysis, we discover the

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[183] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, pp. 243-4.
[184] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, p. 68.
[185] Doris Lessing, letter to Sarah, 19 March 2007. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[186] ['Es ist ja eine andere Natur, welche zur Kamera als welche zum Auge spricht; anders vor allem so, daß an die Stelle eines vom Menschen mit Bewußtsein durchwirkten Raums ein unbewußt durchwirkter tritt.'] Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), II (1977), pp. 368-385 (p. 371); Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), II: *1927-1934*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith (1999), pp. 507-30 (p. 510).

'optical unconscious [Optisch-Unbewußten]' through photography.[187] By the 'optical unconscious', he means 'physiognomic aspects, image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things--meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams.'[188] In their capacity to 'retain' events, photographs may thus reveal things about Lessing's parents that hitherto have escaped her notice, but which nonetheless have affected her and perhaps even appeared in her dreams. For Lessing, the connection between parents and dreams is a close one. She begins 'My Father' by stating that 'we use our parents like recurring dreams, to be entered into when needed; they are always there for love or for hate'.[189] Lessing takes dreams very seriously, describing them in *Under My Skin* as a 'friend' and as a theme or stream that dominated her childhood.[190] Marcus has shown how film inflects Lessing's dream depictions in *The Golden Notebook*.[191] In Lessing's life-writing we see dreams take on other forms as well: as fantasies about her parents. Although incredibly repetitious, Lessing's writing about her parents is always evolving, always different in her works. The photographs, however, are the same. She keeps coming back to them as if they offer limitless sustenance for expressing her mother-father 'dreams'.

Lessing's use of fiction and dreams does not mean she does not consider her life-writing truthful. Lessing is adamant throughout her life-writing that its goal is 'truth'. Her belief that 'truth' should at least be attempted is reflecting when she takes Simone de Beauvoir to task for saying 'about some things she had no intention of telling the truth'. Lessing argues the reader must ask 'why bother?'[192] The extent to which Lessing sees dreams as part of the truth is evident in *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974). Lessing designates this dystopian, fantastical novel 'a dream autobiography', claiming it consists of dreams and memories both personal and

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[187] ['Von diesem Optisch-Unbewußten erfäht er erst durch sie [die Photographie], wie von dem Triebhaft-Unbewußten durch die Psychoanalyse.'] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 371; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', pp. 510-2.
[188] ['die physiognomischen Aspekte, Bildwelten, welche in Wachträumen Unterschlupf gefunden zu haben'] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie' p. 371; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 512.
[189] Lessing, 'My Father', p. 4.
[190] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 119-20, 297.
[191] Marcus, 'From *The Grass is Singing* to *The Golden Notebook*: Film, Literature and Psychoanalysis', pp. 90-4.
[192] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 11.

communal (Lessing uses here 'dreams' and 'memories' interchangeably). The account she gives of the reaction to *Memoirs of a Survivor* highlights how she considers dreams integral to life-writing and how she conceives this attitude to differ from mainstream perceptions:

> When I wrote *Memoirs of a Survivor* I called it, 'An Attempt at an Autobiography', but no one was interested. […] They did not understand it, they said. For thousands of years, we--humankind--have told ourselves tales and stories, and these were always analogies and metaphors, parables and allegories; they were elusive and equivocal; they hinted and alluded, they shadowed forth in a glass darkly. But after three centuries of the Realistic Novel, in many people this part of the brain has atrophied. [193]

Lessing considers storytelling techniques to be deep, primal, truthful processes that the compartmentalization in literary history has obscured. She has an open attitude to the unexplained, the unverifiable, like Jung, who cultivated the spiritual, the mystical, and the 'primal stuff [Urstoff]' of our unconscious.[194] In a similar manner to Lessing, he describes the primordial experience that he sees expressed in visionary literature as a vision viewed 'as in a glass, darkly [in dunkelm Spiegel]', and he claims authors often have to use 'mythology [mythologische Figur]' to give it expression.[195] Jung relates the unconscious to 'the matrix of a mythopoeic imagination which has vanished from our rational age':

> Though such imagination is present everywhere, it is both tabooed and dreaded, so that it even appears to be a risky experiment or a questionable adventure to entrust oneself to the uncertain path that leads into the depth of the unconscious.[196]

For Lessing, we need a new attitude to literary genres if we are to take the imagination seriously again. She thus also claims about a period of her life described in *The Golden Notebook* that 'fiction makes a better job of the truth'.[197] Far from being opposites, she considers truth and fiction to be at least as complimentary as truth and autobiography. Most spectacularly, and with the use of photographs, *Alfred and Emily* overthrows bifurcating notions of: 'On one side

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[193] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 28-9.
[194] Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, pp. 154, 157, 203; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, pp. 150, 152, 199.
[195] Jung, 'Psychologie und Dichtung', p. 324; Jung, *Modern Man in Search of Soul*, p. 164.
[196] ['eine Matrix der mythenbildenden Phantasie, die unserem rationale Zeitalter entschwunden ist. Die mystische Phantasie ist zwar überall vorhanden, aber sie ist ebensosehr verpönt wie geführchtet, und es erscheint sogar als riskiertes Experiment oder als zweifelhaftes Abenteuer, sich dem unsicheren Pfad, der in die Tiefen des Unbewußten führt, anzuvertrauen.'] Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, p. 192; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 188.
[197] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 314.

realism – the truth. On the other, in another box, imagination – fantasy.'[198] The extent to which Lessing sees photography as compatible with fiction is evident in 'How Things Were', a short story where her mother returns to the Royal Free Hospital as a ghost. Lessing informs the reader that a photograph exists of her mother in the nurse's uniform that she describes in the text.[199] Boldly mixing fiction and non-fiction throughout her oeuvre, Lessing actively engages with the 'oneiromancy and mythogeny' that led Nabokov to ridicule psychoanalysis.[200] It is an approach to the unconscious, however, that stays clear of what Jung calls Freud's 'monotony of interpretation [Monotonie der Deutung]', his finding in the depths of the psyche only 'repressed sexuality [verdrängte Sexualität]'. Lessing allows rather for 'the paradox and ambiguity [der Paradoxie und Doppeldeutigkeit]' that Jung ascribes to the unconscious, not reducing art to psychological processes, but probing hidden, mysterious psychological processes in order to inspire art.[201]

Lessing's Photographs as Evidence

Lessing uses photographs in her oeuvre as sources for tentative, unverifiable, imagined memories, but she also uses them, like Nabokov, as evidence. In fact, Lessing ends her chapter in *Under My Skin* devoted to her earliest 'real' memories, the memories that she has opposed to photograph-induced memories, by turning to a memory associated with a photograph of her aged three, included in the illustrations. It is as if she has looked at this photograph after writing down as much as she could remember of her 'real' memories, which follow each other in a disconnected succession. Lessing introduces the photograph: 'There survives a photograph of a thoughtful little girl, a credit to everyone concerned, but as it happens I remember what I was feeling.'[202] Lessing uses the photograph to entertain the child of memory even though the memories conflict with what the photograph displays. After describing her sensations and

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[198] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 307.
[199] Doris Lessing, 'How Things Were', in *The Gift: New Writing for the NHS*, ed. by David Morley (Exeter: Stride, 2002), pp. 248-50 (p. 249).
[200] Nabokov, 'A Critic at Large: *Conclusive Evidence*', p. 133.
[201] Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, pp. 154, 157, 173; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, pp. 149-50, 152, 166, 169.
[202] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 38.

feelings in the studio, Lessing concludes by summarizing her experience with a simile and presenting it as a symbol for her childhood:

> I felt low and nervous and guilty, because I was causing so much trouble: as usual it was as if my mother had tied, but too fast and awkwardly, a large clumsy parcel--me--and I did not fit in anywhere, and might suddenly come untied and fall apart and let her down. I felt weary. This small sad weariness is the base or background for all my memories.[203]

Lessing's likeness to a 'large clumsy parcel' can be seen in the photograph, and with the decoding offered by Lessing's commentary, its unraveling can be detected below the surface. Lessing may be suspicious of photography's influence on memory, but she nonetheless turns to them actively in her text, not just in acknowledging their power, but as sources and validations for her memories. Lessing is sensitive to the deceptive power of photography, but she still uses them in a positivistic manner, for example in proving that she as a baby was not 'a mere rack of bones' as her mother used to tell her.[204]

It is crucial that Lessing displays the parcel photograph, showing it to the reader. In a letter to Stuart Proffitt, her editor at Harper Collins, Lessing takes the initiative in including the photographs in her autobiography, making clear that they must go into the work 'because they are in the text'.[205] She writes to another contact at Harper Collins that there are 'some interesting photographs when I was a chiild [*sic*] and adolescent, some of which are in the text'. She elaborates about one of them: 'There is a little truthful one of me when I was about fifteen. Very far from "Tigger".'[206] In the autobiography, Lessing describes her clever, jesting, chatty 'Tigger' personality as 'a protection from the person I really was'. By selecting the 'truthful' photograph as frontispiece, Lessing thus opens the first volume of her autobiography with what she considers a 'true' depiction of her 'true' personality. Conversely, Lessing writes that she looks 'a jolly young matron' in her wedding photographs (one of which is included in the illustrations), adding: 'It was "Tigger" who was getting married.' The photograph is thus true to the personality she assumed during her wedding, although the reader knows this personality was

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[203] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 39.
[204] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 23.
[205] Doris Lessing, letter to Stuart Proffitt, 2 November 1993. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[206] Doris Lessing, letter to Terry, 7 December 1993. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.

only a 'mask'.[207] Lessing demonstrates a keen awareness of what photographs put on show, consciously using two photographs as evidence for different personalities. Her correspondence also reveals that she was attuned to the powerful effect of photographs on readers. She suggested to her publishers that they use a photograph of her with a dog for the cover. She writes in a letter: 'A suggestion: perhaps the snap of me and my dog would be good for the cover? Of course people would expect a cat …' A cat would be expected as Lessing wrote a biography of two cats, *Particularly Cats* (1967). A dog would reveal another side to Lessing and surprise her readers. Lessing also expresses a mischievous attitude to the exhibition of her photographs when she writes in a handwritten postscript to one of her letters to her publisher: 'Shall send you a bright picture, but I was over 30. No one need know'.[208] The first volume of Lessing's autobiography ends before she turns thirty, so the photograph would show an older Lessing than the one described in the text. Lessing's seditious attitude in her letter demonstrates that she envisioned her photographs acting as corroborative material even when they were not.

Lessing moreover invites the reader to look at her photographs as proof when the stories are fictional. The ethereal quality of the photographs that preface *Alfred and Emily*'s 'novella' lends itself well to support her fantasies. Lessing's parents are almost unrecognizable. Not only are their faces youthful, innocent, and luminous, partly due to the soft focus of the photographs, but the studio settings, which contain no other elements than cloud-like blurry backdrops, amplify the photographs' serene, dream-like quality. As I have shown, the appearance of her parents in the photographs furthermore support the notion that although their lives are fictional in the sense that they did not happen, they are not fictional in the sense that they are implausible. They lend credibility to Lessing's hypothetical revision of history. The rest of the photographs in *Alfred and Emily* prove the fate that actually met her parents, the First World War and farming in Africa, but also the character they developed and Lessing's relationship to them. The relationship between mother and daughter is particularly evident in the collation of three photographs in the middle of the second half of the book (Figure 8).

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[207] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 89, 133, 207.
[208] Doris Lessing, letter to Terry, 7 December 1993. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.

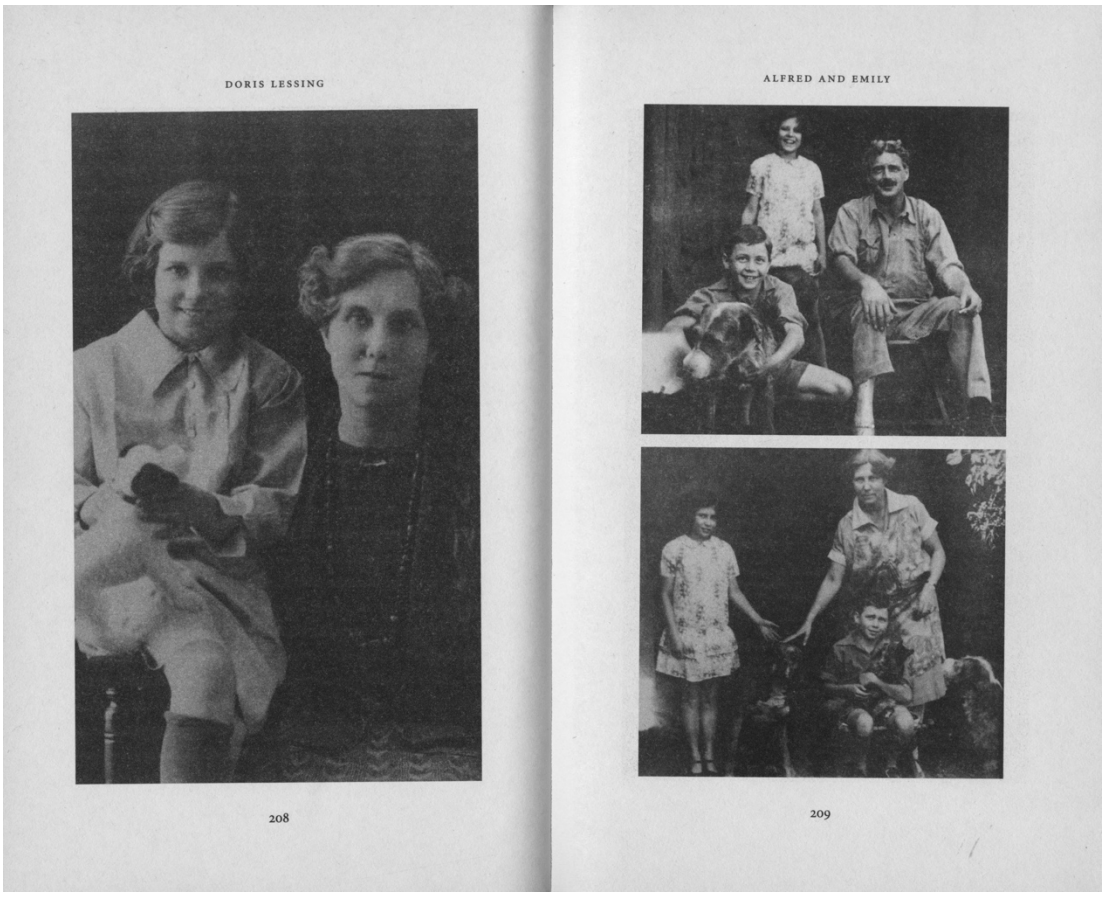


Figure 8 Photographs of Lessing's family, Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), pp. 208-9.

The first photograph shows Lessing as a child and her mother sitting next to each other in a studio looking straight at the camera. Whereas Lessing is smiling, holding her plush toy dog in her hands, her mother sits stiffly with a dour expression on her face, her lips compressed to a thin straight line. In a BBC documentary Lessing says that her mother has a 'dying duck' face in this photograph, and in *Under My Skin* she writes that her mother looks 'ill and unhappy' and that she 'had put a lot of face powder and rouge on to be photographed'.[209] Whereas Lessing comes across as lively and forthcoming, her mother seems pasty and aloof. This photograph is placed across from two photographs that are very similar to each other, one with Lessing, her brother and their father, and one with Lessing, her brother, and their mother. The trio, either with the father or the mother, is captured outside in the same setting, inviting comparisons between the two. In the first photograph, Lessing is laughing and her brother and father are

[209] *Doris Lessing: The Reluctant Heroine*, dir. by Alan Yentob (BBC, 2008); Lessing, *Under My Skin*, facing p. 326.

smiling. Their bodies are relaxed, their attitudes are happy, and the atmosphere is carefree. In contrast, Lessing and her brother look uncomfortable in the photograph with their mother. They smile uncertainly and their brows are furrowed, and the mother's facial expression is serious and strained. Lessing and her mother pose awkwardly, each with a hand held out rigidly, halfheartedly towards a dog, while Lessing's brother anxiously cradles another in his lap. The juxtaposition is amplified compositionally. The two children and their father are in close physical proximity to each other, creating a pleasing triangular structure. In the photograph with the mother, they are disjointed, each individual inhabiting his or her own space, Lessing completely separate, standing isolated to the side. In compiling these photographs, Lessing provides evidence for her disastrous relationship to her mother. Like Nabokov, Lessing treats photography as a powerful tool to support her version of the past, particularly how she perceived her mother. The seemingly objective eye of the camera complements Lessing's subjective viewpoint that her mother had a difficult nature, a nature that also makes her unhappy in the life Lessing invents for her.

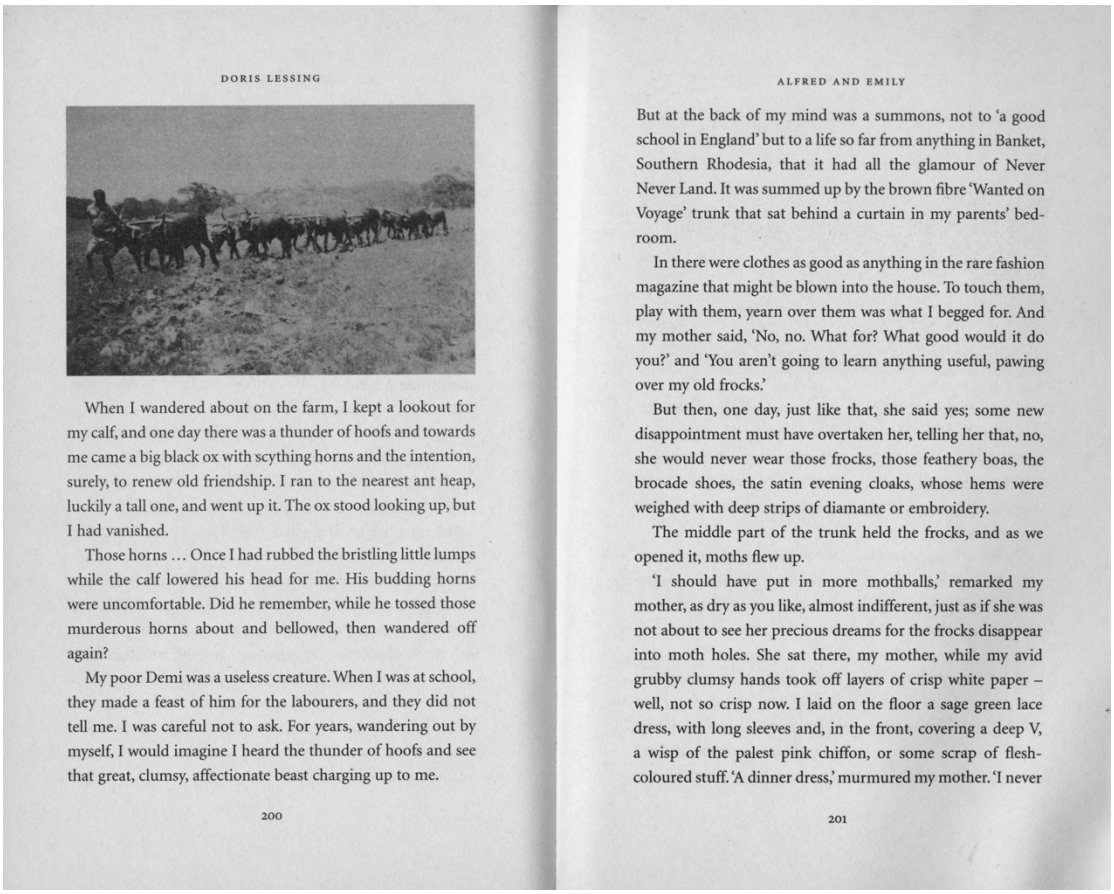
That photographs can offer a perspective that supersedes Lessing's own comes to the fore in relation to her trip to Russia. It was the discrepancy of her Russia memories with her travel companion's that first made her realise 'how utterly unreliable memories can be'.[210] Lessing explains in *Walking in the Shade*:

> I found we were not remembering the same things: it was not a question of remembering the same things differently but as if we had been on two different trips. This experience, which was shocking to me, began my attempts to understand the extraordinary slipperiness of memory: before that, I had taken it for granted that people with the same experiences would remember the same things.[211]

The five photographs that Lessing includes of her Russia trip, which primarily show Lessing and her travel companions on their excursions, provide a perspective that transcends the irreconcilable memories of Lessing and her travel companion. The way photographs can offer a mechanically produced viewpoint that can both support and transcend Lessing's own perspective reinforces and strengthens the didactic aspect of her life-writing. The photographs

[210] Lessing, 'Writing Autobiography', p. 96.
[211] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 61.

of her family's farm that she includes in almost all her auto/biographical works provide particularly illuminating information about Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in the 1920s and 30s. One of the reasons Lessing gives for writing her autobiography is her realisation that she was 'part of an extraordinary time, the end of the British Empire in Africa' and her recognition that 'people no longer know what that time was like, even those who live in Southern Africa.'[212] In *Alfred and Emily*, a photograph of a farmhand leading a herd of cattle in the veldt appears in a section that begins with Lessing's childhood poem 'My Black Calf'(Figure 9).



DORIS LESSING

When I wandered about on the farm, I kept a lookout for my calf, and one day there was a thunder of hoofs and towards me came a big black ox with scything horns and the intention, surely, to renew old friendship. I ran to the nearest ant heap, luckily a tall one, and went up it. The ox stood looking up, but I had vanished.

Those horns … Once I had rubbed the bristling little lumps while the calf lowered his head for me. His budding horns were uncomfortable. Did he remember, while he tossed those murderous horns about and bellowed, then wandered off again?

My poor Demi was a useless creature. When I was at school, they made a feast of him for the labourers, and they did not tell me. I was careful not to ask. For years, wandering out by myself, I would imagine I heard the thunder of hoofs and see that great, clumsy, affectionate beast charging up to me.

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ALFRED AND EMILY

But at the back of my mind was a summons, not to 'a good school in England' but to a life so far from anything in Banket, Southern Rhodesia, that it had all the glamour of Never Never Land. It was summed up by the brown fibre 'Wanted on Voyage' trunk that sat behind a curtain in my parents' bedroom.

In there were clothes as good as anything in the rare fashion magazine that might be blown into the house. To touch them, play with them, yearn over them was what I begged for. And my mother said, 'No, no. What for? What good would it do you?' and 'You aren't going to learn anything useful, pawing over my old frocks.'

But then, one day, just like that, she said yes; some new disappointment must have overtaken her, telling her that, no, she would never wear those frocks, those feathery boas, the brocade shoes, the satin evening cloaks, whose hems were weighed with deep strips of diamante or embroidery.

The middle part of the trunk held the frocks, and as we opened it, moths flew up.

'I should have put in more mothballs,' remarked my mother, as dry as you like, almost indifferent, just as if she was not about to see her precious dreams for the frocks disappear into moth holes. She sat there, my mother, while my avid grubby clumsy hands took off layers of crisp white paper – well, not so crisp now. I laid on the floor a sage green lace dress, with long sleeves and, in the front, covering a deep V, a wisp of the palest pink chiffon, or some scrap of flesh-coloured stuff. 'A dinner dress,' murmured my mother. 'I never

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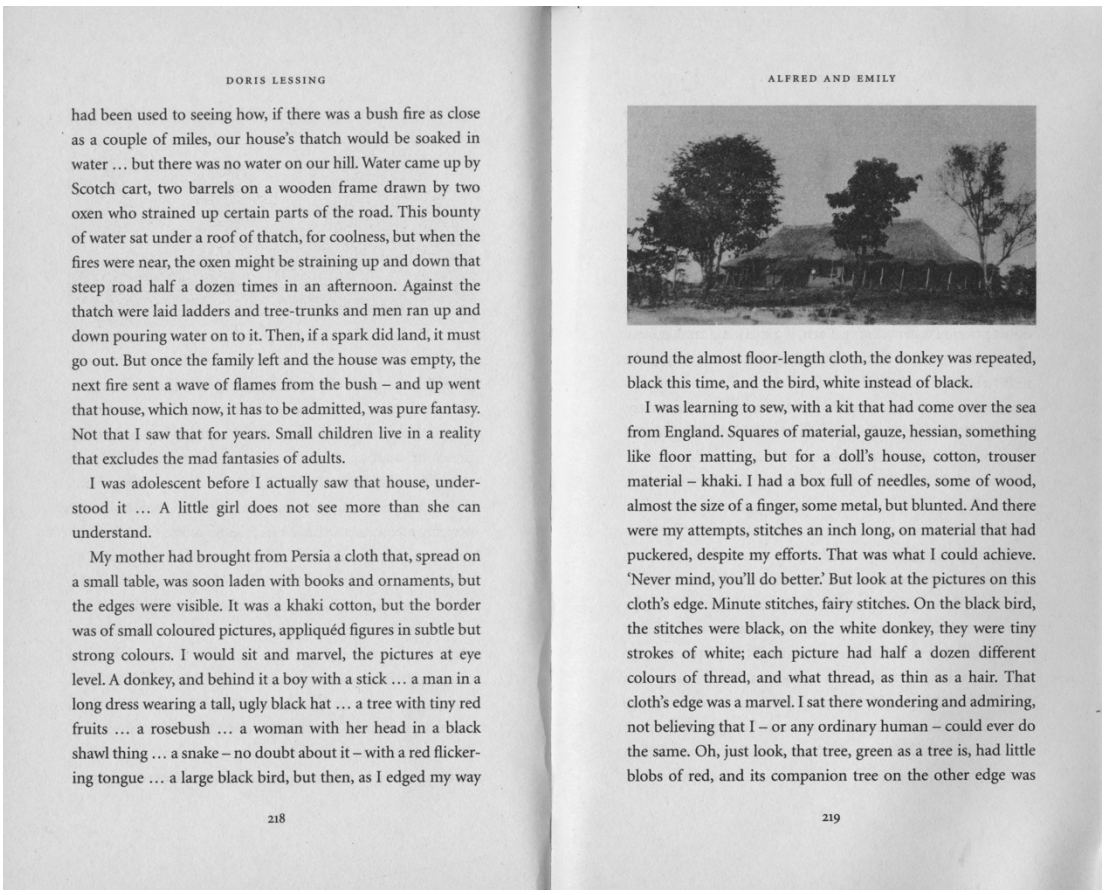
Figure 9 Photograph of farmhand leading cattle, Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 200.

Lessing writes that 'few in the world would recognize this friendly cow'. She narrates how she imagines her readers responding to her description of cows: '"A herd of cows"--and we see them up to their middles in sweet English grass and clover, contended.'[213] Her photograph helps correct whatever preconceived idea the reader might have of cows. The caption to this

[212] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 160.
[213] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, pp. 193-4.

photograph in *Under My Skin* reads almost like a history textbook: 'Ploughing a new-stumped field for the first time. A span of oxen for heavy work could be as many as sixteen, or eighteen.' The oxen photograph furthermore illustrates the everyday, Lessing describing the oxen in her autobiography as an example of how 'some memories are composites of days, perhaps hundreds of days'.[214]

The last photograph in *Alfred and Emily* shows Lessing's childhood house (Figure 10).



DORIS LESSING

had been used to seeing how, if there was a bush fire as close as a couple of miles, our house's thatch would be soaked in water … but there was no water on our hill. Water came up by Scotch cart, two barrels on a wooden frame drawn by two oxen who strained up certain parts of the road. This bounty of water sat under a roof of thatch, for coolness, but when the fires were near, the oxen might be straining up and down that steep road half a dozen times in an afternoon. Against the thatch were laid ladders and tree-trunks and men ran up and down pouring water on to it. Then, if a spark did land, it must go out. But once the family left and the house was empty, the next fire sent a wave of flames from the bush – and up went that house, which now, it has to be admitted, was pure fantasy. Not that I saw that for years. Small children live in a reality that excludes the mad fantasies of adults.

I was adolescent before I actually saw that house, understood it … A little girl does not see more than she can understand.

My mother had brought from Persia a cloth that, spread on a small table, was soon laden with books and ornaments, but the edges were visible. It was a khaki cotton, but the border was of small coloured pictures, appliquéd figures in subtle but strong colours. I would sit and marvel, the pictures at eye level. A donkey, and behind it a boy with a stick … a man in a long dress wearing a tall, ugly black hat … a tree with tiny red fruits … a rosebush … a woman with her head in a black shawl thing … a snake – no doubt about it – with a red flickering tongue … a large black bird, but then, as I edged my way

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round the almost floor-length cloth, the donkey was repeated, black this time, and the bird, white instead of black.

I was learning to sew, with a kit that had come over the sea from England. Squares of material, gauze, hessian, something like floor matting, but for a doll's house, cotton, trouser material – khaki. I had a box full of needles, some of wood, almost the size of a finger, some metal, but blunted. And there were my attempts, stitches an inch long, on material that had puckered, despite my efforts. That was what I could achieve. 'Never mind, you'll do better.' But look at the pictures on this cloth's edge. Minute stitches, fairy stitches. On the black bird, the stitches were black, on the white donkey, they were tiny strokes of white; each picture had half a dozen different colours of thread, and what thread, as thin as a hair. That cloth's edge was a marvel. I sat there wondering and admiring, not believing that I – or any ordinary human – could ever do the same. Oh, just look, that tree, green as a tree is, had little blobs of red, and its companion tree on the other edge was

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Figure 10 Photograph of Lessing's childhood home, Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 218.

Lessing also wanted this photograph to illustrate the earlier version of 'Impertinent Daughters' published in *Granta*. She was upset when it was printed with another photograph. Bill Burford, the editor, wrote to Lessing that she was right that her photograph was 'really extraordinary', but explains that the printers 'were unable to get it into the magazine in a way that was very satisfactory'. Lessing replied: 'I think the picture you used is a good one, but what has it got to

[214] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 116-8.

do with my mother? It is completely wrong for the piece. Please send back the photograph I sent.' [215] Lessing did not want just any photograph to illustrate her memoir, but this specific photograph of her childhood home. She remedies its absence with the final illustrated version of 'Impertinent Daughters' in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* and its reproduction in *Alfred and Emily* and on *Under My Skin*'s back cover.[216] The house, which was located on the threshold of the veldt, is a motif that runs throughout Lessing's oeuvre.[217] Not only does she write about it in works that display the photograph, often returning to it several times within the same work, she also devotes a chapter to its memory in *Going Home* from 1957. Here she muses on its hold on her, also in her dreams.[218] In *Under My Skin*, she describes it as her 'other skin'.[219] Photographs of the house in this autobiography show it in its different stages, the captions explaining the pole framework and the thatching of the roof. Lessing's many reproductions of often the same photographs reflect a need to convey images to her audience, a sentiment she also expresses in her Nobel Prize Lecture, given in 2007. Lessing recounts how her talk at a prestigious English school failed because her listeners had 'no images in their minds' to match what she was telling them: in this case, the story of an impoverished school in north-west Zimbabwe.[220] The photographs in *Alfred and Emily* help Lessing communicate with her readers, preventing their faces from becoming 'blank' like the ones at the English school. The photographs of her home provide proof for the reader who may have difficulty perceiving that Lessing grew up in a mud house.

The photographs of Lessing's family also provide information about a certain time, place, and people. It would be more unusual to see these photographs in a history book, but their placement next to the farm photographs highlight their historical significance, not unlike how

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[215] Bill Buford, letter to Doris Lessing, 28 November 1985, and Doris Lessing, letter to Bill Buford, 27 December 1985. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[216] The illustrated version of 'Impertinent Daughters' in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* also has a Part III, not included in *Granta*.
[217] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 53-4, 58, 82, 175, 297.
[218] Doris Lessing, *Going Home* (London: Panther, 1968), pp. 35-57.
[219] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 195.
[220] Doris Lessing, 'On Not Winning the Nobel Prize', *The Nobel Prize* (7 December 2007) <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2018/06/lessing-lecture_en-1.pdf> [accessed 8 January 2019] (p. 2 of 11)

Nabokov's butterfly photographs amplify the role of Nabokov's family photographs as data. The photographs of Lessing's parents show not only settlers in the colony of Southern Rhodesia, but young British people before the First World War, how they looked during the war in their uniforms as soldiers or nurses, as well as consequences of the war, such as the father's wooden leg. The testimony these photographs provide is especially pertinent as Lessing laments that a whole generation decided to forget the First World War.[221] With her photographs, Lessing illustrates, brings to light, what she recounts was once referred to as 'The Great Unmentionable'.[222] Like the African farm photographs, the photographs of Lessing's parents provide a slice of history. Like Nabokov's photographs, they show a family 'now extinct', the black-and-white quality of both Nabokov and Lessing's photographs underscoring their datedness. Like Nabokov, who wanted to correct Americans' notions of pre-revolutionary Russia, Lessing wants to educate her audience. The photographs support the authors' memories, but they also provide independent historical information about Pre-Revolutionary Russia, Russian exile, Britain before and during the First World War, and colonial Africa. Unlike their text, Nabokov's and Lessing's photographs share information also of an impersonal nature. The photographs may not actually prove Nabokov's and Lessing's version of events, but as factual records, they provide evidence about historical processes that promotes what Benjamin calls 'politically educated sight [politisch geschulten Blick]'.[223] As 'political testimony' or 'good historical scenes'--the 'studium' that they solicit from the reader--the photographs deliver on the political promise Benjamin saw in photography, the potential of photography to offer 'delicate empiricism [zarte Empirie]'.[224] This is despite the similarity of Nabokov's and Lessing's photographs to the photographs that Benjamin considers the worst kind. He gives photographs of children dressed up as sailors, which Nabokov is in two of his photographs, as examples of the 'the real victim of photography [das eigentliche Opfer der Photographie]': shameful,

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[221] Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 230.
[222] Lessing, 'My Father', p. 4.
[223] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 379; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 519.
[224] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 48; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26; Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 380; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 520.

artificial, cold, dead photographs in bad taste.[225] Nabokov's and Lessing's works show, however, that even photographs that simulate the aura of early photographs can function as historical information. They show a way of life in danger of being forgotten. Lessing heightens this sense of precarious survival by drawing attention to the delicateness of the photographs themselves. She gives 'Acknowledgements' at the end of the work to the photographer Francesco Guidicini for helping her with 'some very old and sometimes dilapidated photographs'.[226] By publishing photographs in their life-writing, Nabokov and Lessing give 'precious things' that face oblivion 'a place in the archive of our memory', which was the mnemonic potential that Baudelaire saw in photography and which seems particularly important when we consider the communal aspect of 'our' memory.

Exceeding the Personal with Photographs and Fiction

As a communist Lessing thought being photographed was 'ever so self-indulgent and blameworthy'.[227] She explains in her autobiography that she thought being photographed was 'rather petit bourgeois', but that she now regrets her dismissive attitude and the lack of photographs in which it resulted.[228] Her former aversion to photography is in accordance with a Marxist world-view that sees personal preoccupations as inferior and detrimental to the collective, class struggle. A similar commitment to communist ideology is at work in her hesitations toward writing about personal experience. According to Lessing, she first discovered that she could 'break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general' when she wrote *The Golden Notebook* in 1962. She explains in her 1971 preface:

> At last I understood that the way over, or through this dilemma, the unease at writing about 'petty personal problems' was to recognize that nothing is personal, in the sense that it is uniquely one's own. Writing about oneself, one is writing

[225] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 374; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 514.
[226] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 275. The dust jacket enhances this feature by reproducing four of the photographs on yellowed paper with artificial wrinkles, tears, and tape marks.
[227] Doris Lessing, letter to Terry, 7 December 1993. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[228] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 286; Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, facing p. 86.

> about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions--and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas--can't be yours alone.[229]

Lessing reiterates in her autobiography that 'subjective attitudes are objectivized and related to society' in *The Golden Notebook*.[230] Although Lessing later distanced herself from Communism, she continued to emphasise the collective relevance of personal experience, seeing the very process of writing through this lens:

> The whole process of writing is a setting at a distance. That is the value of it--to the writer, and to the people who read the results of this process, which takes the raw, the individual, the uncriticized, the unexamined, into the realm of the general.[231]

Lessing thus argues that a 'bad' book can only tell you about the author, not people in general, whereas a 'good' book can tell you about 'love, hate, death or so on' and 'a good deal about a certain time or place--about history. Facts. Mores. Customs.'[232]

As we have seen, the studium of Lessing's photographs offer information about history, facts, mores, and customs. They also offer information about family relationships that is general. Lessing's photographs, and especially her compilation of them, do not only illustrate her specific mother-daughter relationship, but a relationship, riddled with conflict, between a mother and daughter that is not singular, but on the contrary common. Already in her autobiography, Lessing states her interest in the general dimension of her relationship to her mother: 'There are aspects of my life I am always trying to understand better. One--what else?--my relations with my mother, but what interests me now is not the narrowly personal aspect.'[233] Photographs encourage the 'distance' that according to Lessing is achieved in the writing process, enabling her to see herself as someone else and thus transcend 'petty personal problems'. In photographs, Lessing's relationship to her mother is objectified, turned into a case study, inviting both analysis and recognition, both for Lessing and the reader. The transformation of subjects into objects also converts private and particular experiences into

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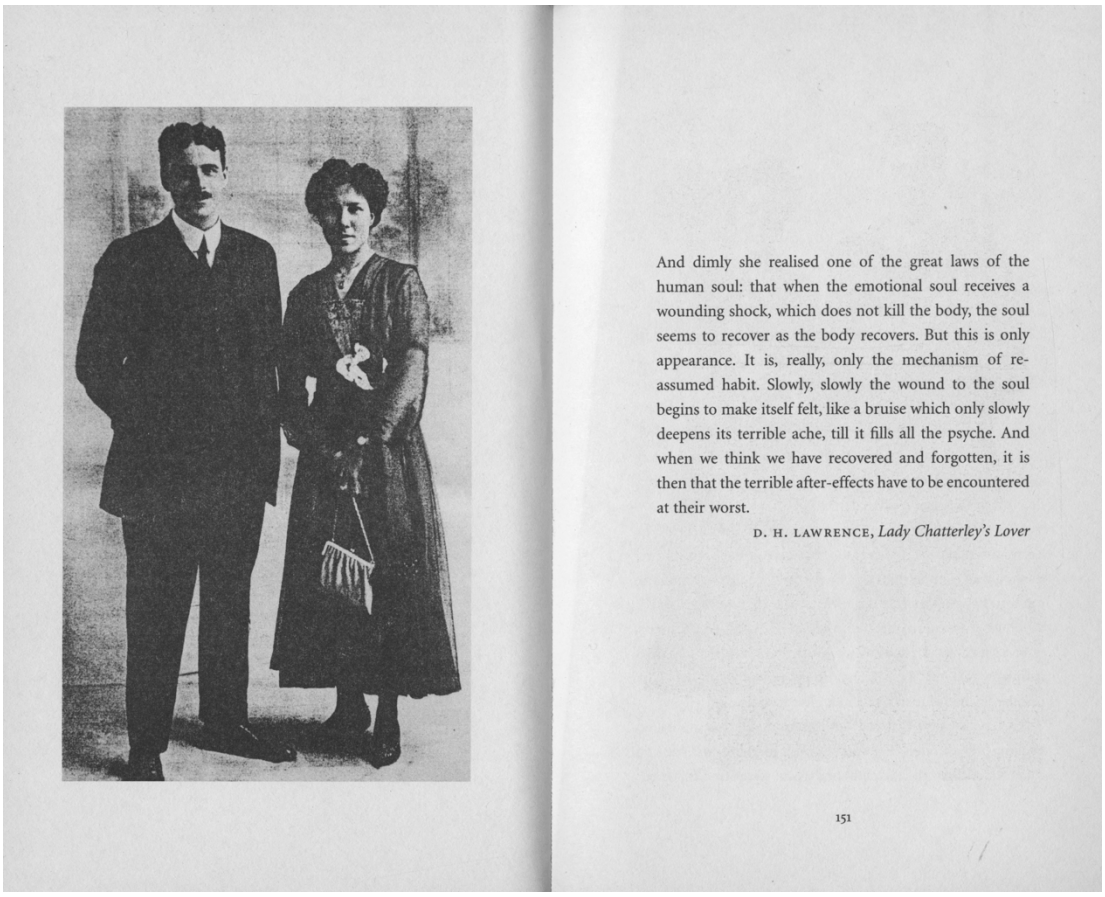
[229] Doris Lessing, 'Preface to *The Golden Notebook*', in *A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews*, by Doris Lessing (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), pp. 31-2.
[230] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 160; Lessing, *Walking in the Shade*, p. 313.
[231] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 397.
[232] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 88.
[233] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 14-5.

shared, general knowledge. The dynamics on display in Lessing's photographs apply to countless other mothers and daughters. The way Lessing and her mother act as prototypes in their photographs highlights the wider relevance of Lessing's personal feelings. The photographs may moreover speak to the reader's unconscious. The 'optical unconscious' that photographs let us glimpse may also include relational and familial matters (reflected in human interactions and expressions) that hide in the readers' dreams. Even the most private photographs may thus illuminate buried collective memories. The psychological theory of Jung also proposes shared, general parts of the unconscious. In fact, he identifies a 'collective a priori beneath the personal psyche [kollektiven a priori der persönlichen Psyche]'.[234] In determining what aspects of the unconscious are collective with the help of 'archetypes', Jung can indeed be accused of approaching the 'monotony of interpretation' that he attributes to Freud. Even if we refrain from defining what constitutes the collective unconscious, we can still stipulate, however, that photography as a medium unique in its ability to retain events can stimulate the reader's ocular sense in a way that calls forth things that are both repressed and shared with others.

The fiction that results from Lessing's emotional, mnemonic, imaginative engagement with the photographs also achieves the general: 'love, hate, death or so on'. *Alfred and Emily* creates a distance to Lessing's parents that highlights the negative effects of the First World War not only on them but a whole generation. Lessing appeals to the universal truth in fiction by pairing her parents' wedding photograph not with a caption, but a quotation from D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) (Figure 11):

[234] Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, p. 165; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 161.



And dimly she realised one of the great laws of the human soul: that when the emotional soul receives a wounding shock, which does not kill the body, the soul seems to recover as the body recovers. But this is only appearance. It is, really, only the mechanism of re-assumed habit. Slowly, slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise which only slowly deepens its terrible ache, till it fills all the psyche. And when we think we have recovered and forgotten, it is then that the terrible after-effects have to be encountered at their worst.

D. H. LAWRENCE, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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Figure 11 Photograph of Lessing's parents, Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 150.

> And dimly she realised one of the great laws of the human soul: that when the emotional soul receives a wounded shock, which does not kill the body, the soul seems to recover as the body recovers. But this is only appearance. It is, really, only the mechanism of reassumed habit. Slowly, slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise which only slowly deepens its terrible ache, till it fills all the psyche. And when we think we have recovered and forgotten, it is then that the terrible after-affects have to be encountered at their worst.[235]

In her introduction to Penguin's 2006 edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lessing claims that it is 'one of the most powerful anti-war novels ever written', and about the same quotation she includes in *Alfred and Emily*, she writes:

> I remember reading it and thinking--Yes, that's my father (and it was my mother too, but I was years off seeing that). And now we are beginning to recognize how many men and women survive wars apparently intact, but inside they are bruised and may never recover.[236]

[235] D. H. Lawrence quoted in Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 151.
[236] Doris Lessing, 'Introduction', in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, by D. H. Lawrence (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. xi-xxx, (pp. xxi-xxii).

For Lessing the way fiction can express common experiences also means she can co-opt others' fiction, such as Lawrence's, in order to draw out the general aspects of her photographs. In 'Impertinent Daughters', a description of photographs leads Lessing to reflect that at a later stage in her life she has been able to understand her parents more fully, being able to see things as they had seen them--almost as if she has acquired the distance of photography:

> It seems that it has taken me a lifetime to understand my parents, with astonishments all the way. There is a mysterious process, frightening because there is nothing whatsoever you can do about it, that takes you from fierce adolescence--as if parents and you stood at either side of a battlefield, hands full of weapons--to a place where you can stand where they did, in *imagination*, any time you want [my italics].[237]

We have seen how photographs contribute to this 'mysterious process': not only do they show exactly where, when, and how Lessing's parents stood, they also aid Lessing's imaginative teleportation. An increased ability to use her 'imagination' in order to imagine her parents' thoughts, feelings, and experiences also leads to greater empathy. Her wish that her parents would like the lives she invents for them, expressed at the end of *Alfred and Emily*'s foreword, highlights the connection of Lessing's fiction to empathy and reconciliation.[238] Like Nabokov, Lessing thus also commemorates her parents with their photographs. A figure similar to Nabokov's soapbox appears in Lessing's oeuvre: the trunk her family brought with them from England to Southern Rhodesia. Lessing is fascinated by the contrast between its delicate contents, including disintegrating photographs eaten by insects, and the harsh life that meets the family when they arrive in Africa. As a twelve-year-old she wrote a short story about it called 'The Treasure Trunk', 'making it a symbol for my parents' exile from good'.[239] We have seen how old photographs like the ones in the trunk help Lessing deliver her parents back to the 'good' in *Alfred and Emily*'s 'novella'.

Like Nabokov, Lessing associates her photographs with her mother. In preparing the illustrations for *Under My Skin*, Lessing wrote to her editor about the meager size of her photography collection:

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[237] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, p. 52.
[238] Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. viii.
[239] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 104-6, 130.

> There is a half-filled album, due to my poor mother's efforts to preserve people and places in the face of the indifference of her nearest and dearest. And some loose photographs. It is entirely a question of how much space can be allotted to them.[240]

As an afterthought she adds later in her letter: 'I wish I could let my poor mamma know that her perseverance over the years in getting us photographed actually turned out to have some point.' The photographs that Lessing reproduces in her life-writing can be seen as a sort of recompense to her mother. Lessing is no longer 'indifferent' about the photographs that were so dear to her mother (as Nabokov's were to his mother). The point is, however, that they 'actually turned out to have some point'; they serve a general purpose now; they inform the reader about Lessing's life. In offering an outside perspective, however, the photographs also pay tribute to Lessing's mother. Although Lessing's display of family photographs supports her version of her mother, especially in their juxtaposition in the second half of *Alfred and Emily*, they also permit a view untainted by personal discord. In *Under My Skin* Lessing contrasts her tactile and sensuous memories of her mother, which are all negative, with her knowledge that her mother provided things for her intelligently and competently. The illustrations' photographs show these things, such as fancy dress parties and picnics to historical sights. Later in her autobiography, Lessing wishes she could have thanked her mother.[241] By including photographs Lessing expresses her gratitude and shows that there are more dimensions of her relationship to her mother than those of memory. Lessing's strong reaction to the absence of any photograph of her maternal grandmother, Emily Flower, furthermore implies by inverse logic that her display of photographs reflects an appreciation for their subjects: 'There is not even a photograph of Emily. She is Nobody. She is nothing at all.'[242] Lessing draws attention to the missing photograph of her grandmother in almost all her life-writing, concluding in each instance that its absence indicates that she was not loved.[243] Lessing's troubled relationship to mother does not lead her to discard photographs of her, which seems to be what her mother did with photographs of Emily Flower. Lessing choses a different path: using photographs as sources for fiction, as

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[240] Doris Lessing, letter to Stuart Proffitt, 2 November 1993. HRC, MS 2460, uncatalogued.
[241] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 32-3, 73.
[242] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 1.
[243] Lessing, 'Impertinent Daughters', *Granta*, p. 53; Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 1, 27; Lessing, *Alfred and Emily*, p. 136.

loved mementos, and as unprejudiced data, she attempts to analyse, understand, and generalize their fraught relationship.

Nabokov's and Lessing's Constellations of Life, Art, and Politics

Virginia Woolf suggests in 'A Sketch of the Past' that including the present might offer a solution to writing about the past. She elaborates:

> It would be interesting to make the two people, I now, I then, come out in contrast. And further, this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time.[244]

Including the present self highlights the difference between the writing self and the written self and also takes into account how the written self is not a stable entity but dependent upon the perspective of the present. The acknowledgement that 'any story, however truthful it aims to be, is a reconstruction from the vantage-point of the *present*' leads Pontalis, in his autobiography, to treat memory as 'mostly fiction'.[245] By including photographs from the past in their life-writing, Nabokov and Lessing include a 'then' not wholly affected by their inherently-fictional writing of it. The selection and incorporation of photographs reflect the present perspective of the authors, but by themselves, the photographs provide a 'that-has-been [ça a été]' that cannot be denied.[246] The indexical aspect of the photographs gives credence to the versions of the past that Nabokov and Lessing develop in their narratives, but it also extends beyond them, offering slices of history separate from the author's stories. Lessing also recognizes that her perspective changes with age. She writes about the first volume of her autobiography: 'I am trying to write this book honestly. But were I to write it aged eighty-five, how different would it be?'[247] Lessing was seventy-four when she wrote *Under My Skin* and eighty-nine when she wrote *Alfred and Emily*. As we have seen, the 'now' of the eighty-nine year-old led to a more assertive use of fiction and a more integral use of photographs in her exposition of her 'then'.

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[244] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being*, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), pp. 64-137 (p. 75).
[245] Pontalis, *Love of Beginnings*, p. xv. Italics Pontalis.
[246] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, p. 126; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 80.
[247] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, pp. 12, 17, 185.

The addition of photographs may be symptomatic of autobiography's constant and doomed need to assert its own referentiality, the discourse of justification that Paul de Man argues negates itself.[248] But if photographs are seen as markers of referentiality unmatched by anything that writing can achieve, then they can also act as signposts that allow the text to engage more emphatically with fiction without compromising the claims it makes about the world, including those claims it can make only with fiction. The works of both authors demonstrate that in life-writing, fictional devices can have the value of countering narrow self-involvement. Lessing roams beyond the lives of her parents, making observations about their generation with fabrications that also reflect greater empathy. Like Lessing, Nabokov creates distance to personal grievances with an art that brings to light their universal aspect and relevance, extracting beauty even in personal catastrophe. His themes, motifs, stylistic metamorphoses, and descriptions of others' thoughts provide insights not only about his own life, but life in general. Nabokov has a different approach to memory than Proust and Bergson, but he shares with them a belief that the artist is in a unique position to make observations about life. As Boyd formulates it, although Nabokov was an aesthete, he believed not in art for art's sake, but 'art for *life*'s sake'.[249] Whereas art in *Speak, Memory* provides Nabokov's life with a beautiful form, art for Lessing seems to reside as much in the process of probing her life as in the result. Exemplifying 'the modern artist', who according to Jung, 'seeks to create art out of the unconscious', Lessing uses both photographs and fiction to stimulate creativity.[250] We also saw glimpses of this, however, with Nabokov. With his contemplation of photographs, Nabokov is also a dreamer, at least in Bergson's understanding of the word as the kind of person 'who lives in the past for the mere pleasure of living there'.[251]

By adding photographs, Nabokov and Lessing shore up the relevance of their artistically rendered personal lives for society as a whole. Although they are at opposite ends of the

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[248] Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-facement', *MLN*, 94 (1979), 919-30, (pp. 922, 929).
[249] Boyd, *Stalking Nabokov*, p. 270. Italics Boyd.
[250] ['Der moderne Künstler ist ja bestrebt, Kunst aus dem Unbewußten zu gestalten.'] Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, p. 199; Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 195.
[251] ['qui vit dans le passé pour le plaisir d'y vivre'] Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, p. 166; Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 198.

political spectrum, Lessing being a former Marxist and Nabokov being anti-Marxist, they make their works, whether intended or not, more political. Perhaps their experiences as transplanted nationals make them more attuned to the broader testimonial value of their life-writing. The photographs also make their works more political in a personal sense, as the photographs' 'power of authenticity' also bolsters the works' claim on the authors' lives. As we will see in the next chapter, life-writing also offers authors an opportunity to shape their legacies. Both Nabokov and Lessing were worried that biographies of them would be inaccurate.[252] By having published their autobiographies, they manage their public afterlives from their graves. Both authors furthermore make countless revelations in their life-writing about aspects of their lives that they have incorporated into their novels: they explain what they have modified, what is still true, what is the exact same. By adding photographs, Lessing and Nabokov ensure that elements in their fiction (both in their life-writing and in their novels) live on in posterity as autobiographical information.

[252] Lessing, *Under My Skin*, p. 14; Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, p. 156.

Chapter 2: The Public Image: Photography, Fiction, and Status in the Life-Writing of Gertrude Stein and Norman Mailer

When highbrow authors achieve popularity it usually entails 'scandals of the middlebrow', 'scandals revolving around charges of inauthenticity, impurity, or selling-out on the part of an author whose too complete or comfortable popularity is thought incommensurate with true literary genius.'[1] The view that 'literary genius' precludes popularity stems from a perception that sees cultural production in hierarchical terms. Pierre Bourdieu explains that a heteronomous and an autonomous economic principle simultaneously rule the field of literature. While the heteronomous principle measures success by values commensurable with the economy in general such as books sales, the autonomous principle is in fact anti-economic. Bestsellers may be popular with a wide public, but they are '*symbolically* excluded and discredited', denounced as middlebrow, bourgeois, and commercial. The autonomous principle presupposes that producers produce for the sake of art: highbrow literary production may achieve widespread recognition in the future, but it should be too advanced to do so in the present.[2] With her autobiographies and his biography of Marilyn Monroe, Gertrude Stein and Norman Mailer follow heteronomous and autonomous principles of cultural production simultaneously: they encourage a wide readership with popular elements whilst preserving 'literary genius'. The combination of photographs and fiction in life-writing provides these authors with several, separate, but intersecting platforms on which to negotiate the value of their public image.

As portraits predicated on creating likenesses, both photography and life-writing are often considered to disqualify as highbrow art. Bourdieu categorizes photography as 'a middlebrow art [un art moyen]', explaining that it has a popular aesthetic that subordinates form in favour of subject matter, 'an aesthetic which makes the signifier completely subordinate to

[1] James F. English and John Frow, 'Literary Authorship and Celebrity Culture', in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by James F. English (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 39-57 (p. 48).
[2] Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', trans. by Richard Nice, *Poetics* 12 (1983), 311-356 (p. 320).

the signified, and which can be better realised in photography than in the other arts'.[3] Photographs are instantly pleasing because they show their subjects in a seemingly transparent way. As Stein writes about photographs: 'one does quite naturally like things in small, it is easy one has it all at once, and it is just like that'.[4] This is the 'exact reproduction of nature [résultat identique à la nature]' that led Baudelaire to disqualify photography as an art and define it as an industry.[5] The profitability of photography's ability to reproduce its subject just like it is (to paraphrase Stein) has often led professional photographers to divide their production into two groups, classifying one as art and the other as commerce, with income from the later sustaining the former. Man Ray, for example, classifies his portraits of Stein as commercial photographs, one of which is reproduced in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). About his commercial portraits in general, Man Ray writes: 'The flattery and glory that came from portraiture that was often drudgery left me cold.'[6] Man Ray not only sees this kind of photography as tedious work (not art), he also objects to the vanity that commissions it. The same accusations of self-interest cling to life-writing. As Timothy W. Galow and Aaron Jaffe have shown, written portraits both of oneself and of others are often associated with self-promotion.[7] This is perhaps most evident with autobiography since subjects initiate and construct their own likenesses, but Michael Holroyd has described how biographers, especially biographers of celebrities, are often viewed as making too much money, and doing so in a 'dubious' way, the common conception being that biographers 'trade on other people's miseries, dine out on their tragedies, and make the trivial perpetually portentous.' Both photography and life-writing seem furthermore to bring out the worst in their consumers. Baudelaire relates the popularity of photography not only to 'self-love [l'amour de soi-même]',

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[3] ['une esthétique qui subordonne complétement le significant au signifié et que la photographie realise mieux que d'autres arts'] Pierre Bourdieu, *Un art moyen: essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1965), p. 123; Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. by Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1990), p. 86.
[4] Gertrude Stein, 'Pictures', in *Lectures in America*, by Gertrude Stein (New York: Random House, 1935), pp. 59-90 (p. 75).
[5] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Public Moderne et la photographie', *Études photographiques*, 6 (1999) <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/185> [accessed 2 June 2018] (para. 5 of 8)
[6] Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963), pp. 181-3.
[7] Timothy W. Galow, 'Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity', *Modernism/modernity*, 17 (2010), 313-329 (p. 323); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 178.

but also the love of obscenity [l'amour de l'obscénité]', describing how 'greedy eyes [yeaux avides]' are glued to 'the peepholes [les trous]' of the stereoscope.[8] And as Holroyd remarks about biographers, but which applies equally to autobiographers, the view exists that they 'exploit our weaknesses, our prurience, our snobbery'.[9] The likenesses offered by photography and life-writing not only seem to disqualify them as highbrow art but also associate them with individualism and, relatedly, with narcissism, idolatry, and nosiness.

Photography and life-writing have not only been accused of appealing to widespread baser instincts but also of creating illusions seductive but detrimental to society. The literary scholar Jürgen Schlaeger, for example, views biographies as 'fundamentally reactionary, conservative, perpetually accommodating new models of man, new theories of the inner self, into a personality-oriented cultural mainstream, thus always helping to defuse their subversive potential'.[10] The demotion of life-writing as 'mainstream' not only reflects hierarchical notions of cultural production, but also societal concerns. Schlaeger sees individualism as reactionary compared to postmodernism's pluralism and questioning of selfhood, but a comparison of his view with Siegfried Kracauer's illustrates that biography's individualism makes the genre equally reactionary from a Marxist viewpoint. Writing in 1930, Kracauer argues that the novel has been replaced by the biography in pleasing large audiences after the First World War because novelists can no longer believe in individualism. Individualism sells, however, because it obscures the absence of individual power and instead provides the bourgeoisie with a sense of escape from actual circumstances.[11] Although the individualism of life-writing stems from the likenesses it creates, it can nonetheless be argued to propagate an illusion, an illusion that maintains the ignorance of the masses. Paradoxically, life-writing can be accused of being too tied to reality, thus disqualifying it as an art form, and of not being tied enough to reality,

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[8] Baudelaire, 'Le Public Moderne et la photographie' (para. 5 of 8)
[9] Michael Holroyd, *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), p. 4.
[10] Jürgen Schlaeger, 'Cult as Culture', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. by John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 58-68 (p. 63).
[11] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Die Biographie als neubürgerliche Kunstform', in *Das Ornament der Masse*, by Siegfried Kracauer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 75-80; Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie', in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 101-5.

obscuring it. The ability to create likenesses also leads photography, like life-writing, to be accused of creating illusions, particularly the illusions of public personae. In his seminal study of fame, Leo Braudy traces the branding power of images to their quantity and reality effect:

> Famous people glow, it's often said, and it's a glow that comes from the number of times we have seen the images of their faces, now superimposed on the living flesh before us--not a radiation of divinity but the feverish effect of repeated impacts of a face upon our eyes. The ease with which we allow ourselves to be absorbed by such images, the desires to be that way ourselves, confirms that the essential lure of the famous is that they are somehow more real than we and that our insubstantial physical reality needs that immortal substance for support.[12]

Braudy does not criticize the organization of society, but his analysis of images is strikingly similar to Kracauer's Marxian analysis of biography: the impression of realism in images seduces because it obscures the lack of real relations in life. While Kracauer suggests biographies produce the illusion of individual power, Braudy suggests images create the illusion of individual substance. Jean Baudrillard takes a step further in disassociating images (not only photographic ones) from reality. He claims the image does not reflect or pervert a basic reality or even mask the absence of a basic reality, but that it bears no relation to any reality whatever: 'it is its own pure simulacrum [elle est son propre simulacra pur]'.[13] It is precisely this lack of relationship to reality, however, that makes images attractive. Seduction, according to Baudrillard, stands in opposition to meaning and instead involves 'the charms and traps of appearances [le charme et le piège des apparences]'.[14] Like the popularity of life-writing, which can be explained on grounds both of its adherence to reality and its obscuring of it, photography's seductive power is tied to its ability to both replicate and undermine notions of reality.

Stein and Mailer make use of the popular aspects of photography and life-writing, both those that build on likeness and those that indulge illusions, but they do so in ways that mitigate

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[12] Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6.
[13] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), p. 17; Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 6. François Brunet pinpoints the paradox that Baudrillard late in life 'combined his well-known critique of "the disappearance of reality" with photographic and autobiographical publications'. François Brunet, *Photography and Literature* (London: Reaktion, 2009), p. 140.
[14] Jean Baudrillard, *De la séduction* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1979), p. 77; Jean Baudrillard, 'On Seduction', in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), pp.149-67 (p. 149).

criticisms of the medium and the genre. They make their works commercially appealing while maintaining a claim on art; they focus on the individual while complicating notions of individualism; and they exhibit narcissism and induce voyeurism but make those instincts seem legitimate. We will see how the indexical aspect of photography, gesturing to selves that exist before, outside, and independently of the works, is especially conducive for securing popularity and prestige simultaneously. The 'that-has-been [ça a été]' of the photographs only achieves this double effect, however, in concert with the novelistic devices on display in the works.[15] Stein writes *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as if she were her partner, Alice B. Toklas, and Mailer identifies *Marilyn* (1973) as 'a *species* of novel ready to play by the rules of biography'.[16] The novelistic devices add to the attractiveness of the writing, but they also give a highbrow ballast to the works, a ballast that contributes to these writers' reputations as star authors. The devices furthermore speak to the fiction associated with celebrity. Daniel J. Boorstin's distinction between heroes as people who are famous for their deeds and celebrities as people who are famous for being famous captures how the media-generated aspect of public personae can make them seem inauthentic, manufactured, illusionary: 'The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media.'[17] We will see a reflection in the authors' fictional techniques, especially in their third-person narration, of the fiction associated with both the creation and experience of celebrity. Fiction thus takes on a double role as source of and remedy to issues of celebrity. James F. English and John Frow have called for more attention to be paid to 'when writers themselves strive, not only through media appearances but in their very practice as writers, to manipulate the form and function of celebrity and to short-circuit some of its usual effects'.[18] Stein and Mailer demonstrate how the combination of inserted photographs and fictional devices in life-writing offers authors an opportunity to engage effectively with their image.

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[15] Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 126; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 80.
[16] Norman Mailer, *Marilyn* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1973), p. 20. Italics Mailer.
[17] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961) pp. 57-61.
[18] English and Frow, 'Literary Authorship and Celebrity Culture', p. 44.

The photographs in *Marilyn* do not even show Mailer, but they help him shape his public persona nonetheless. Unlike the illustrations in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which show private photographs of the author and her milieu, *Marilyn* displays professional photographs of its subject, Monroe. In fact, *Marilyn* started as an exhibition of photographs organized by the photographer Lawrence Schiller, who initiated the *Marilyn* book project and asked Mailer to write the foreword. In *Marilyn* Mailer describes how his share of the project 'managed to expand from twenty-five thousand words to ninety'.[19] The project may have started as an appendix to an exhibition, but Mailer asserts that with his introduction to the project, *Marilyn* developed into a full-fledged biography, and his own position transformed from preface-writer to author.[20] Photography is still, however, a defining feature of the work. The title page reads 'Marilyn/ a biography by/ Norman Mailer/ pictures by/ the world's foremost/ photographers' and the following page lists the twenty-four names of the photographers as well as the book's producer, designer, and publisher.[21] It is a large-format book (23.5 x 26.5 cm.) with over a hundred photographs of Monroe, some in colour. For the most part, the photographs take up a whole page or two whole pages. Schiller retrospectively credited it for setting 'the standard for photographic books'.[22]

The illustrations are less prominent in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, but more so than in most contemporary autobiographies such as Mabel Dodge Luhan's, which includes only a frontispiece in both volumes.[23] Stein illustrates her autobiography with sixteen photographs in the American edition and seventeen in the British. These black-and-white photographs are dispersed on single plates throughout the work. A 'List of Illustrations' helpfully directs the reader to the pages where the photographs are found. In contrast, an index

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[19] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 9.
[20] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 257.
[21] The photographers are: Eve Arnold, Richard Avedon, George Barris, Cecil Beaton, John Bryson, Conrell Capa, Bruce Davidson, André de Dienes, Elliott Erwitt, Milton H. Greene, Ernst Haas, Philippe Halsman, Bob Henriques, Tom Kelley, Douglas Kirkland, Lee Lockwood, Inge Morath, Arnold Newman, Lawrence Schiller, Sam Shaw, Bert Stern, John Vachon, Bob Willoughby, and William Read Woodfield. The producer is Lawrence Schiller and the designer Allen Hurlburt.
[22] Lawrence Schiller, 'In This Corner…Norman Mailer', in *Marilyn*, by Norman Mailer and Bert Stern (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2012), pp. 16-19 (p. 18).
[23] Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Intimate Memories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933); Mabel Dodge Luhan, *European Experiences* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935).

to *Marilyn*'s photographs only appears at the end of the work with a column for photographer, location, and date. Unlike *Marilyn*'s photographs, the photographs in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* are all amateur, except for the frontispiece photograph of Stein and Toklas by Man Ray (which is the only photograph attributed to a photographer) and the childhood studio portraits of Stein. Besides these photographs, the illustrations include a photograph of a manuscript page of the autobiography, snapshots of Stein, Toklas, and their friends, photographs of atelier walls, and photographic reproductions of paintings. The American edition also has a photograph of Stein at John Hopkins Medical School and a reproduction of a painting by Francis Rose, and the British edition has photographs of the artist Marie Laurencin, Stein with her family, and Stein with the writer Mildred Aldrich that the American edition does not. Otherwise the illustrations are the same in the two editions, placed in corresponding chapters, and with only small variances in their exact locations within those chapters.[24]

The illustrations in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* were not a collaborative project as they were in the production of *Marilyn*. Stein placed all the illustrations carefully, and her agent, William Aspenwall Bradley, sent the corrected proofs 'with all the illustrations in place' to Alfred Harcourt and John Lane, the autobiography's American and British publishers.[25] The use of photographs seems to have gripped both authors, however, Stein and Mailer inserting similar photographs in a similar way into later works that might be considered sequels. Stein illustrated a second autobiography, *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), with eight photographs, and Mailer wrote an imaginary memoir by Monroe, *Of Women and Their Elegance* (1980), that he illustrated with photographs by Milton Greene, one of the photographers featured in *Marilyn*. I will include these photographs in my study for the insight they provide into the authors' approach to photography, for how they relate to the photographs in the previous works, and because these later works continue the authors' engagement with life-writing. First, however, I will examine how *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* responds

[24] Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (London: Bodley Head, 1933); Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933). I will henceforth cite from the American edition.
[25] William Aspenwall Bradley, letter to Gertrude Stein, 4 May 1933. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers. New Haven, Yale Collection of American Literature (YCAL), MS 76, box 99, folder 1900.

to the perception of Stein that existed at the time of the work's publication. As I move from Stein to Mailer later in the chapter I will compare how the authors combine middlebrow and highbrow elements in their works. We will see differences in the authors' approaches to beauty, fiction, and celebrity--in many ways reflecting the two different periods in which they write--but we will nonetheless see an enduring association of the photograph's index with authenticity.

Stein's Pictorial Persona as a Collector of Art

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas secured Stein's legacy as an influential modernist author, but it did so in part by emphasising her role as patron of the arts. The visual arts were integral to Stein's renown from the beginning of her career. The modernist journal *Camera Work* was in 1912 the first periodical to publish her work, her written portraits of Matisse and Picasso appearing alongside reproductions of the painters' works. In his editorial, Alfred Stieglitz gave the analogous relationship between the work of Stein and the painters as the reason for publishing her.[26] A year later, an even wider public became aware of Stein because of the landmark Armory exhibition, which introduced modern art to America. A special number of the periodical *Arts and Decorations* was dedicated to the show and contained Stein's portrait of Mabel Dodge Luhan and an article by Luhan explaining Stein's 'post-impressionistic' style.[27] *The New York Times* introduced Stein after the show with 'Now They're Doing It in Words!'[28] Until the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, however, Stein's writing style was primarily derided, the press giving it tags such as 'literary chopsuey', 'hocus-pocus', and 'cuckoo writing'.[29] Magazines included more mocking imitations of Stein's writing than

[26] Alfred Stieglitz, 'Editorial', *Camera Work: Photographic Quarterly: Special Number: Matisse, Picasso, and Stein*, 39s (1912), 3-4.
[27] Mabel Dodge Luhan, 'Speculations, or Post-Impressionists in Prose', *Arts and Decoration*, March 1913, pp. 172-4. Later, Stein's style was classified as 'cubist' rather than 'post-impressionist'. See 'News of Books', *New York Times*, 5 April 1914, p. 179; 'Words, Wonderful Words!', *Outlook*, 6 June 1923, p. 117; '"Cubist" Prose', *Irish Times*, 17 December 1926, p. 3.
[28] 'Topics of the Times', *New York Times*, 10 March 1913, p. 8.
[29] 'Literature and Art', *Current Opinion*, January 1915, p. 7; N. P. Dawson, 'The American Age of Ego', *Forum*, February 1922, p. 95; Charles R. Walker, 'The Literary Advance Guard', *Independent*, 15 October 1927, p. 388.

samples of it.[30] In contrast, the newspapers wrote positively about her as a critic, friend, and muse of the artists working in Paris.[31] Stein's personal connection to the art world also meant that her visual image appeared in the papers. Photographs of Jo Davidson's bust of Stein (1923) were popular, as were photographs of Stein sitting beneath Pablo Picasso's portrait of her (1906). These would appear in articles, but also in spreads of photographs, where Stein's image would appear alongside photographs of sport heroes, royals, and other newsworthy figures.[32] The public was thus aware of Stein before the publication of her autobiography, primarily because of her connection to the art world, but this connection was viewed as positive in relation to her person and negative in relation to her writing.

The illustrations in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which is not written in Stein's 'post-impressionist' style, emphasise Stein's personal connection to the art world and thus build upon the positive image that existed of her in the press. The first photograph after the frontispiece shows her standing in front of the door to her famous atelier (Figure 12).

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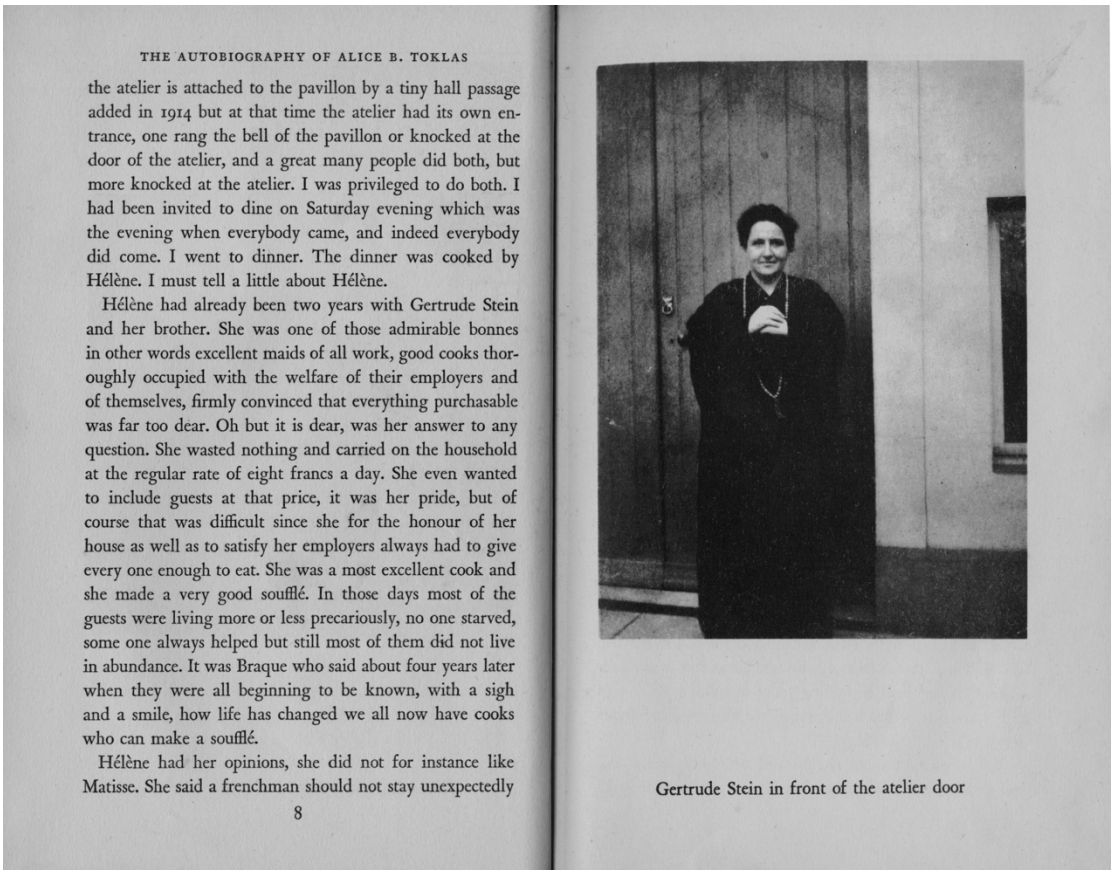
[30] 'Spring's First Zephyr: As it might be described by Gertrude Stein', *Puck*, 15 May 1915, p. 16; 'Portrait of a Dog: After Gertrude Stein', *Life*, 14 February 1918, p. 264; 'Cubist Poem: (After Gertrude Stein)', *Life*, 2 January 1919, p. 23; Allan S. Becker, 'If Gertrude Stein Wrote a Soap Ad.', *Life*, 30 April 1925, p. 6; Al Graham, 'The Slogan Writer Collects a Gertrude Stein Complex', *Life*, 10 November 1927, p. 12; E. B. Crosswhite, 'The Devotee of Gertrude Stein Seeks a Divorce', *Life*, 27 March 1931, p. 10.
[31] Henry McBride, 'Modern Art', *Dial*, December 1921, p. 718; 'Art at Home and Abroad', *New York Times*, 8 February 1914, p. SM15; 'The World of Art', *New York Times*, 20 January 1924, p. SM12; 'In the Realm of Paint', *New York Times*, 8 March 1931, p. 118; 'In New York Galleries', *New York Times*, 17 April 1932, p. X11; 'Abstract Art', *Scotsman*, 20 April 1933, p. 11; 'The Work of Joan Miro', *Scotsman*, 18 July 1933, p. 8.
[32] 'Have The Steins Deserted The "Genius" Who They "Discovered"', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 August 1914, p. SM7; 'Photo Standalone--No Title', *New York Times*, 2 March 1924, p. RPB4; 'Photo Standalone--No Title', *New York Times*, 24 July 1927, p. RP3.



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

the atelier is attached to the pavillon by a tiny hall passage added in 1914 but at that time the atelier had its own entrance, one rang the bell of the pavillon or knocked at the door of the atelier, and a great many people did both, but more knocked at the atelier. I was privileged to do both. I had been invited to dine on Saturday evening which was the evening when everybody came, and indeed everybody did come. I went to dinner. The dinner was cooked by Hélène. I must tell a little about Hélène.

Hélène had already been two years with Gertrude Stein and her brother. She was one of those admirable bonnes in other words excellent maids of all work, good cooks thoroughly occupied with the welfare of their employers and of themselves, firmly convinced that everything purchasable was far too dear. Oh but it is dear, was her answer to any question. She wasted nothing and carried on the household at the regular rate of eight francs a day. She even wanted to include guests at that price, it was her pride, but of course that was difficult since she for the honour of her house as well as to satisfy her employers always had to give every one enough to eat. She was a most excellent cook and she made a very good soufflé. In those days most of the guests were living more or less precariously, no one starved, some one always helped but still most of them did not live in abundance. It was Braque who said about four years later when they were all beginning to be known, with a sigh and a smile, how life has changed we all now have cooks who can make a soufflé.

Hélène had her opinions, she did not for instance like Matisse. She said a frenchman should not stay unexpectedly

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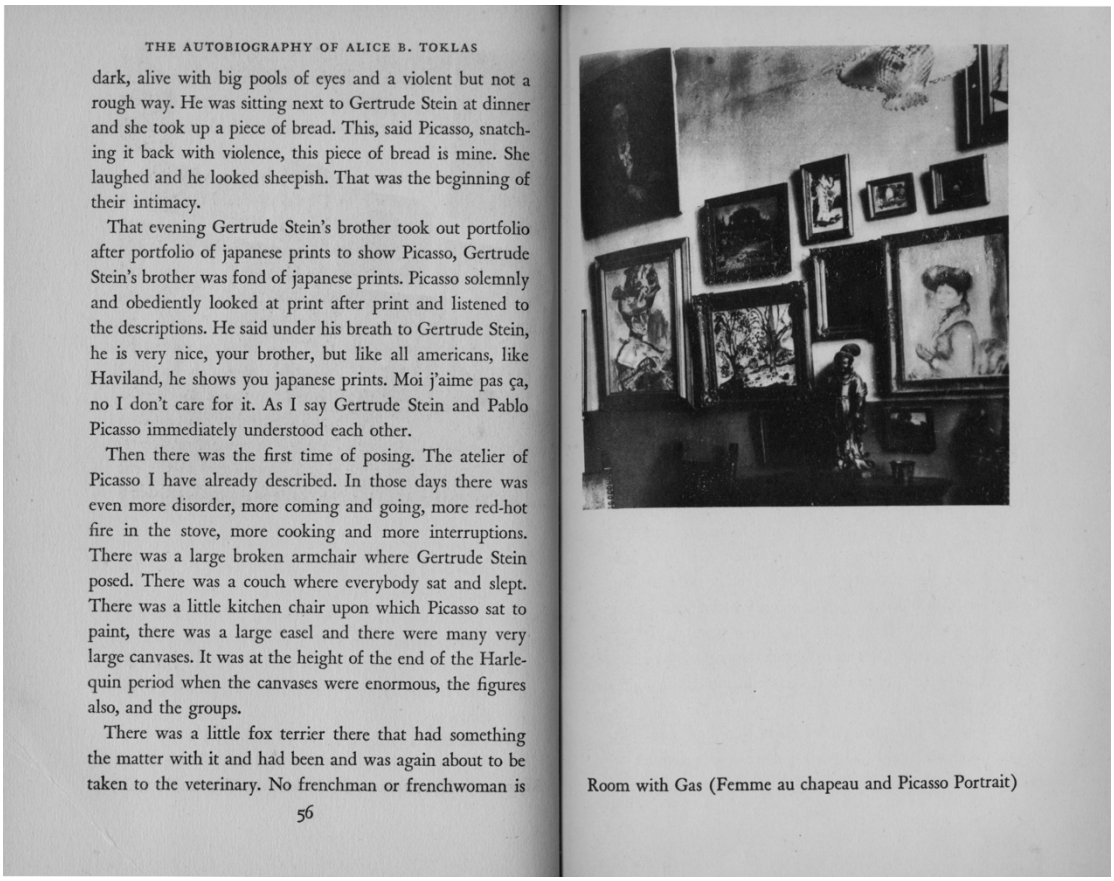
Gertrude Stein in front of the atelier door

Figure 12 'Gertrude Stein in front of the atelier door', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), facing p. 8.

One had to knock on the door and present one's 'introduction' in order to see Stein's collection of paintings. The photograph positions Stein as a gatekeeper, but the autobiography functions as the reader's 'introduction', for the autobiography also includes three photographs of the atelier walls, thus giving privileged access to what the Toklas narrator calls 'the heart of an art movement of which the outside world at that time knew nothing'.[33] The emphasis of the atelier photographs, however, is on the collection of the paintings, rather than the paintings themselves. It is impossible to identify the ten paintings in the photograph captioned *Room with Oil Lamp*, and the ones that are identifiable in the two other photographs are much reduced in scale, shown at odd angles, and in poor light. Picasso's Stein portrait, for example, is nearly

[33] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 34.

indiscernible, placed high up on the wall in the dark left-hand corner of *Room with Gas: Femme au Chapeau and Picasso* (Figure 13).



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

dark, alive with big pools of eyes and a violent but not a rough way. He was sitting next to Gertrude Stein at dinner and she took up a piece of bread. This, said Picasso, snatching it back with violence, this piece of bread is mine. She laughed and he looked sheepish. That was the beginning of their intimacy.

That evening Gertrude Stein's brother took out portfolio after portfolio of japanese prints to show Picasso, Gertrude Stein's brother was fond of japanese prints. Picasso solemnly and obediently looked at print after print and listened to the descriptions. He said under his breath to Gertrude Stein, he is very nice, your brother, but like all americans, like Haviland, he shows you japanese prints. Moi j'aime pas ça, no I don't care for it. As I say Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso immediately understood each other.

Then there was the first time of posing. The atelier of Picasso I have already described. In those days there was even more disorder, more coming and going, more red-hot fire in the stove, more cooking and more interruptions. There was a large broken armchair where Gertrude Stein posed. There was a couch where everybody sat and slept. There was a little kitchen chair upon which Picasso sat to paint, there was a large easel and there were many very large canvases. It was at the height of the end of the Harlequin period when the canvases were enormous, the figures also, and the groups.

There was a little fox terrier there that had something the matter with it and had been and was again about to be taken to the veterinary. No frenchman or frenchwoman is

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Room with Gas (Femme au chapeau and Picasso Portrait)

Figure 13 'Room with Gas (Femme au chapeau and Picasso Portrait)', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), facing p. 56.

The true subject matter of the atelier photographs is the context in which the paintings appear, and thus indirectly Stein, who has brought them together.

Stein does give four paintings individual plates, thus affording them a prominence denied to the paintings in the atelier photographs, but they nonetheless maintain an emphasis on Stein. The first of these, *Homage to Gertrude: Ceiling painting by Picasso*, pays tribute to Stein with its title and its exuberant, celebratory subject matter (nude female angels playing instruments and bearing fruit). Its location also underscores the closeness of Stein and Picasso: 'For years she had this tacked to the ceiling over her bed.'[34] From the atelier, the reader is thus brought into Stein's bedroom and positioned as a voyeur, finding never-before-seen avant-garde art in the

[34] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 109.

most intimate of spaces. A painting of a ship by Juan Gris also seems to honour Stein as it is called *A Transatlantic*, which she as an American living in Paris was. A copy of the illustration in Stein's archive reveals, however, that Gris painted it as a set design for a 1924 production of one of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.[35] The image may not have been intended to have a connection to Stein, but it is appropriated as such. The last two paintings given full plates depict Alice B. Toklas and the country home that she shared with Stein in Bilignin. [36] They thus unequivocally celebrate Stein, Toklas, and their life together. These paintings by Francis Rose, the artist Stein was championing at the time, also demonstrate Stein's power to place an artist before the public's eye, the autobiography functioning in this regard like her atelier.

All the paintings in the illustrations have a connection to Stein, but that does not mean Stein and Toklas end by becoming works of art, which is how Paul K. Alkon analyses the 'visual rhetoric' of the autobiography. His explanation takes its departure from Gris's *A Transatlantic* and Rose's *Alice B. Toklas*, and what Alkon understands as a movement from photographs to paintings in the course of the text:

> Photographs of reality give way to photographs of works of art, but as this happens the distinction between art and reality collapses, because whatever can be photographed must be real. The illustrations provide visual proof that works of art are not only realities but perhaps--their placement suggests this--final realities.[37]

Contrary to Alkon's summary of the illustrations, however, there is no progression from photographs to paintings: the last two illustrations are photographs of Stein and of her manuscript. Even if there was such a progression, the difference between photographs and photographic reproductions of paintings cannot be contrived as a simple opposition between reality and art. Although the autobiography is a portrait of both Toklas and Stein and the narrative values art and painting highly, the visual rhetoric of the photographs of paintings is to assert Stein's palpable power over rather than dissolution into art.

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[35] Photographic reproduction of a painting by Juan Gris from 1924. On the verso is written 'Projet de Dècor, Ballet de Diaghilev'. YCAL, MS 76, box 156, folder 3913.
[36] The portrait of Alice B. Toklas is only included in the American edition.
[37] Paul K. Alkon, 'Visual Rhetoric in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas', *Critical Inquiry*, 1 (1975), 849-81 (pp. 855, 880).

Adding to the effectiveness of this rhetoric, Stein's inclusion of paintings in her illustrations makes productive use of the inevitable consequences of photographically reproducing artwork. Walter Benjamin argues in 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' that the photographic reproduction of artworks facilitates widespread knowledge of art, but that the reproduction of the artworks destroys their original aura: their cult value is replaced by their exhibition value, their significance no longer embedded in their unique presence in time and space but dispersed in infinite copies appearing anywhere and at anytime.[38] Gris's painting, taken from its original context of Diaghilev's ballet, epitomises the severing effect of mechanical reproduction. The displacement of Gris's painting, however, does not detract from the attractiveness of the illustration. As Stein observes about photographs, 'one does quite naturally like things in small'.[39] Furthermore, excitement about the Paris art world and the novelty of Gris's painting only heighten its exhibition value. Stein herself to some extent fills the vacuum of meaning and aura that according to Benjamin occurs with reproduction, the illustrations and the narrative together cultivating a cult aura around Stein, her atelier, and her coterie. She uses art to position herself culturally. In 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', Benjamin argues that the reproduction of artworks entails mastering them: 'mechanical reproduction is a technique of diminution that helps people to achieve control over works of art.'[40] By rendering art works in miniature, Stein not only makes her autobiography more attractive and alluring, she also masters the paintings and appropriates their meanings.

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[38] Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit: Zweite Fassung', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), VII (1989), pp. 350-384 (pp. 357-61). Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), III: 1935-1938, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (2006), pp. 101-33 (pp. 106-8).

[39] Stein, 'Pictures', p. 75.

[40] ['die mechanischen Reproduktionsmethoden [sind] eine Verkleinerungstechnik und verhelfen dem Menschen zu jenem Grad von Herrschaft über die Werke'] Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), II (1977), pp. 368-85 (p. 382); Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), II: *1927-1934*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith (1999), pp. 507-30 (p. 523).

With her inserted photographs, Stein masters not only the paintings of her friends, but also the friends themselves such as Pablo Picasso and Marie Laurencin. As gatekeeper, Stein is also in a position to deny, or, as in the case with her autobiography, grant access to her coterie of celebrated artists. The second illustration, the one after *Gertrude Stein in front of the atelier door*, shows an intimate snapshot of Picasso and his lover Fernande Olivier at Montmartre. The photograph seems to catch them off-guard: their bodies are slouching, their stances are awkward, and their attention is distracted, each occupied with a poodle. With Picasso and Olivier facing away from each other, the photograph matches the turbulent relationship described in the narrative, where they are characterised as two 'absorbed centres' at opposite poles of a crowd. [41] The photograph gives a privileged glimpse into the private life of a very public person, and its placement in Stein's autobiography suggests Stein's intimate knowledge of Picasso. The Toklas narrator complains that she cannot fully convey the closeness of Stein and Picasso: 'I wish I could convey something of the simple affection and confidence with which he always pronounced her name and with which she always said, Pablo.'[42] The photograph of Picasso and Olivier, captioned with their first names Pablo and Fernande, contributes to the sense of intimacy that the text attempts to convey. It is far from certain, however, that Stein took this photograph or was even present when it was taken. The English translation of Olivier's private journal reproduces this photograph and attributes the copyright to Picasso's archive in Paris.[43] It is possible Stein received the photograph from Picasso, Olivier, or even someone else. We can thus see how the potential of photographs for possibly endless copies simultaneously disperses ownership and facilitates appropriation.

The photographs of art and artists gratify an appetite for novelty and gossip, an aspect of the autobiography that delighted contemporary readers. Many compared reading the autobiography to a feast. Sherwood Anderson wrote to Stein that her autobiography had 'a fat

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[41] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 23.
[42] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 18.
[43] Fernande Olivier, *Loving Picasso: The Private Journal of Fernande Olivier*, trans. by Christine Baker and Michael Raeburn (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), p. 8.

juicy taste', and suggested that Stein also take 'one big taste--square meal--of America'.[44] In their reviews, Basil de Selincourt claimed that a 'book as shrewd and meaty as this one' recommended itself; Theodore Hall described it as 'an altogether delightful book, rich as a plum-pudding with good-humored, amusing and sensible tidbits'; and Edward M. Kingsbury claimed the reader would find his 'meat' in the anecdotes.[45] Like the anecdotes, the photographs are treats for the reader, offering exclusive insights into the lives of modern-day legends or artworks that have never been seen before. That photographs of both people and paintings were points of interest for the reader is reflected in the review by Geoffrey Grigson, who writes that the autobiography 'contains photographs of Picasso, Marie Laurencin, Miss Stein herself and of a good Picasso ceiling painting, "Homage to Gertrude"'.[46] With their lack of explanatory captions, the photographs furthermore act as bait, feeding a hunger for revelation, the reader searching for descriptions that will match the illustrations. The loose attachment of the photographs to the text speaks to the prurient thrill that the narrative technique of foreshadowing also incites with phrases such as: 'At that time I knew nothing about Marie Laurencin and Guillaume Apollinaire but there is a lot to tell about them later.'[47] With her titillating presentation of anecdotes and photographs Stein actively engages the middlebrow aspects of both life-writing and photography, appealing to the readers' curiosity about the private affairs of celebrated figures. Stein builds upon the public platform that the art world had given her and adopts to her advantage the mass media's practice of reproducing images from that world by adding photographs of paintings and painters.

Stein's Personal Presence: Toklas and Photographs as Narrators

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[44] Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein, *Sherwood Anderson/Gertrude Stein: Correspondence and Personal Essays*, ed. by Ray Lewis White (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972) p. 76 (September 1933).
[45] Basil de Selincourt, 'The Real Gertrude Stein', *Observer*, 15 October 1933, p. 4; Theodore Hall, 'Miss Stein Looks Homeward', *Washington Post*, 8 October 1933, p. SM10; Edward M. Kingsbury, 'Gertrude Stein Articulates at Last', *New York Times*, 3 September 1933, p. BR2.
[46] Geoffrey Grigson, 'The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas', *Bookman*, December 1933, p. 459.
[47] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 21.

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas appeals to middlebrow or even lowbrow sensibilities with its gossip (Tristan Tzara, who briefly appears in the narrative, called Stein's anecdotes 'sordid'), but by writing her autobiography as if it were Alice B. Toklas's, Stein also qualifies her work for highbrow recognition.[48] Casting Toklas as the narrator until the very end, the autobiography cleverly reveals its own subterfuge in its last paragraph:

> About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you. I am going to write as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it.[49]

The invention of a Toklas narrator places *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in uncertain limbo between autobiography and fiction. Stein herself seems to align her autobiography with fiction by comparing it to *Robinson Crusoe*, a novel, and herself to Defoe, one of the fathers of the novel form. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was advertised as 'Gertrude Stein's life story, written by herself' and was overwhelmingly received as an autobiography, but contemporary reviews also cautiously suggested the fictional aspect of the work.[50] Kingsbury remarked that the subject of the title 'in a sense' was 'pleasant fiction', and Edmund Wilson proposed that the autobiography had 'something of the character and charm of a novel'.[51] Whichever genre one attributes to Stein's work, its indubitable engagement with fiction subverts conventional autobiography and distances it from the genre that the text itself derides as popular and commercial. On the last page, before she reveals Stein is the author, the Toklas narrator charges other people with pressuring Stein to write an autobiography:

> For some time now many people, and publishers, have been asking Gertrude Stein to write her autobiography and she had always replied, not possibly. She began to tease me and say that I should write my autobiography. Just think, she would say, what a lot of money you would make.[52]

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[48] Tristan Tzara, 'Tristan Tzara', in *Testimony against Gertrude Stein*, by Georges Braque, Eugene Jolas, Maria Jolas, Henri Matisse, André Salmon, and Tristan Tzara (The Hague: Servire Press, 1935), pp. 12-3 (p. 12).
[49] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 310.
[50] Advertisement by Harcourt, Brace, and Company, *Forum and Century*, October 1933, p. v.
[51] Kingsbury, 'Gertrude Stein Articulates at Last', p. BR2; Edmund Wilson, '27 rue de Fleurus', *New Republic*, 11 October 1933, pp. 246-7.
[52] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 310.

The irony of rejecting autobiography in an autobiography is humorous, disarming, and in this autobiography's hall of mirrors, multi-layered: according to the Toklas narrator, Stein says she could not possibly write an autobiography, yet this is to a large extent Stein's autobiography. When the Stein character teases the Toklas narrator with the lucrativeness of autobiography, she is also teasing Stein the author. Stein not only ridicules the autobiographical genre, but the irony and intricacy of the way she does so also distinguishes her work from mainstream autobiographies.

The inclusion of illustrations follows autobiographical convention, but the photographs add not only middlebrow elements such as intimate photographs of famous artists, they also contribute to the work's innovative relationship between author and narrator. Before the autobiography has even begun, the frontispiece playfully stages its author-narrator artistry (Figure 14).

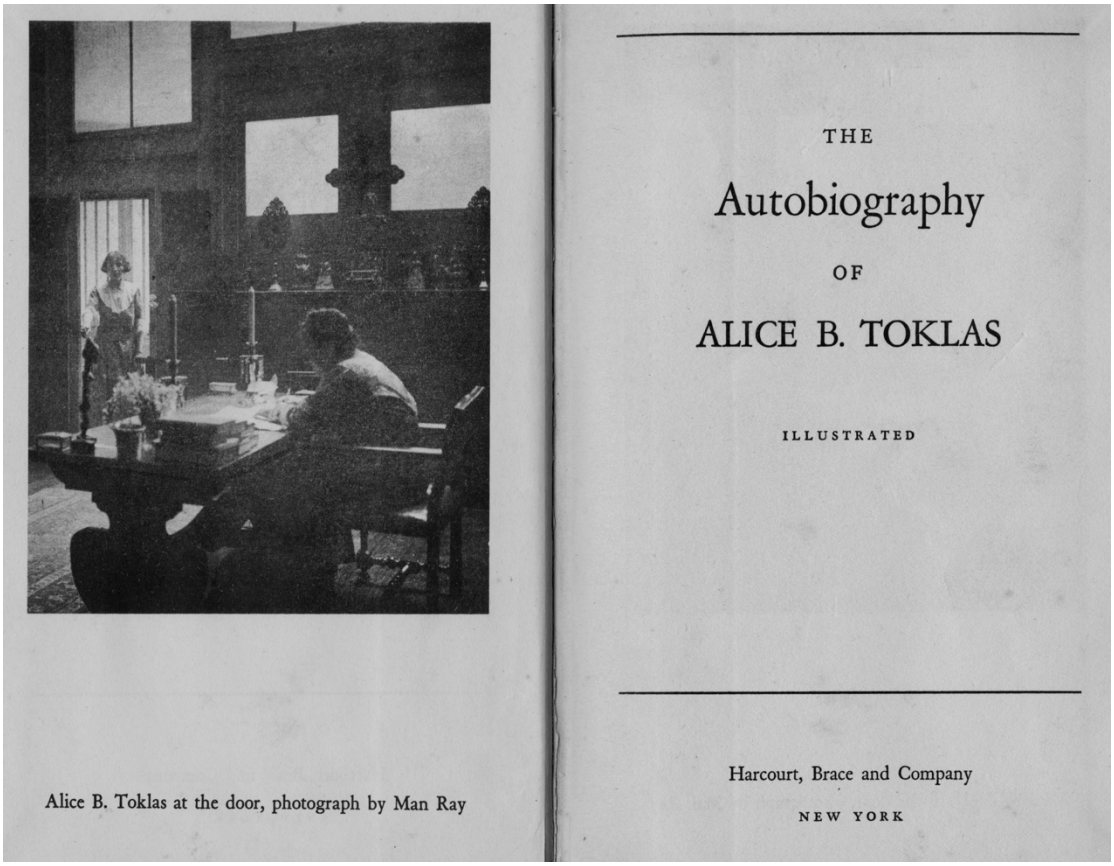

Figure 14 'Alice B. Toklas at the door, photograph by Man Ray', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), frontispiece.

Corinne Andersen has argued that the frontispiece, which shows Stein writing at a desk and Toklas standing in a doorway, 'undermines the illusion of singularity suggested by the photograph's caption ("Alice B. Toklas at the door")', and that it thereby suggests that 'all autobiographies are "false copies"'.[53] It is true that the frontispiece 'bifurcates the viewer's attention', but the manner in which it does so reflects the distribution of roles between Stein and Toklas in the construction of the text rather than the epistemological futility of autobiography. Although Toklas can be seen in the photograph, the primary subject, the main protagonist, is Stein. She sits in the foreground, fills up comparatively more space than Toklas, and her presence is permanent in the room, whereas Toklas is either in the process of leaving or entering. Not only does Stein dominate with her large and permanent presence, she also holds the instrument of the autobiography in her hand, the pen, which hints at her identity as the autobiography's author. The light emanating from the doorway and windows illuminates the piece of paper on which Stein is writing, producing a striking correspondence between the bright white square of the paper and the bright white square of light that surrounds Toklas. Toklas in the doorway thus looks like a transposition of Stein's paper: Toklas occupies Stein's paper: Stein is writing Toklas. The photograph thus suggests that the autobiography is a clever, not false copy of Stein and Toklas's life. Furthermore, the altar-like cross and candelabras, the shrine-like collection of figurines, and the halo of light surrounding Toklas suggests by way of religious iconography that the autobiography is a tribute to Toklas and that she is its muse, its guardian angel.

The final photograph is integral to the work's assertion that Stein is its author. Entitled *First page of the manuscript of this book*, it consists of the first forty-two words of the autobiography written in cursive on a squared piece of notepaper.[54] It recalls the first photograph, where Stein is seen in the act of writing, but as this photograph faces the page where Stein is revealed to be the autobiography's author, it more emphatically highlights the

[53] Corinne Andersen, 'I Am Not Who "I" Pretend to Be: *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and its Photographic Frontispiece', *The Comparatist*, 29 (2005), 26-37 (pp. 28, 34).
[54] Stein's archive suggests this really was the first page of her manuscript, albeit not the first draft. YCAL MSS 76, box 4, folders 80-1.

physical relationship between the text and Stein's hand, the corporeal relationship between the words and their creator. 'Chapter I' is crossed out and replaced with 'Part I', contributing to the air of spontaneity and immediacy that the handwritten quality emanates. Although the lack of identity between author and narrator leads Philippe Lejeune to categorise *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* not as autobiography but as fiction, the last photograph strikingly and literally supports his claim that, although autobiographical pacts may take many forms, they all manifest an intention to honour the signature.[55] The title page may not sport Stein's name, but the autobiography's last illustration offers a signature by showing Stein's writing in her own hand. Together, the first and last photographs give the text they enclose a circular narrative, the autobiography beginning and ending pictorially with references to Stein's authorship. Because the photographs do not have the same author and narrator as the text, they can elaborate and comment upon the fictional construction at a distance, creating a highbrow pictorial metanarrative that hints at the autobiography's authorship.

As photography has no voice it can elaborate on the author-narrator construction of the text without compromising the Toklas narrator, but it can also offer a view or narrative of Stein's life that is at variance with Toklas's. Irony pervades every layer of Toklas's narrative: it is impossible to determine whether statements should be attributed to Toklas the character or Stein the author. This ambiguity is amplified stylistically, for although the writing seems different from Stein's other works, primarily by being more conventional, it retains elements of it, most conspicuously its lack of commas, quotation marks, and capital letters. Adding to the work's irony, the text includes a story about Stein's sparse use of commas, thus actively ensuring that the style cannot be read as entirely Toklas's.[56] The interpolation of a Toklas narrator complicates the autobiographical genre's traditional association with reference, subjectivity, and self-centredness, and achieves an impersonality that resonates particularly well with modernist aesthetics. Stein's photographs, however, seem to deliver the personal presence

[55] Philippe Lejeune, *Je est un autre: L'autobiographie de la littérature aux médias* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), p. 54; Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 26; Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin and trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 14, 47.
[56] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 162.

that her text does not. In his review of the autobiography, for example, de Selincourt treats the photograph of Stein as a child in Vienna as if it delivers this hitherto 'concealed' author:

> If you could see the picture of her as a child in Vienna […] with her solemn penetrating eyes, her heavy head, fat legs, flat hands, if you could see the velvet suit she wears, and the decorations by which she is surrounded, you could not but feel her as I do, marked out for solitude and suffering. Already in that little stocky body there is spirit and power; we can see already that the power is in the eyes.[57]

Like the handwriting in the autobiography's last illustration, the photograph comes across as a direct trace of Stein, facilitating a feeling of direct access and intuitive understanding.

The snapshot aesthetic of all the photographs except the childhood studio portraits strengthens the illustrations' sense of immediacy, contributing to Stein's accessibility and countering the impersonality of the text's third-person narration. With their off-centre angles, inferior lighting, awkward framing, and unfocused subject matter, the photographs emphasise photography as a recording device rather than an artistic medium. The American publisher, Alfred Harcourt, wrote to the British publisher, John Lane, about the photographs Stein sent him for use in the autobiography:

> While not of quite the best sort for reproduction, [they] will do well enough for that purpose and are most excellent illustrative material covering people, works of art, and scenes mentioned in the manuscript.[58]

The photograph of Stein with Aldrich makes most abundantly clear that style was not a priority. A vacant sky takes up almost half of the photograph, and the two women are not positioned in the middle of the photograph, but in the lower-right hand corner, a random bench taking up most of the space on the left. Aldrich is holding a cat, and they both seem distracted as if they are not paying attention to the camera. The photograph seems a model example of the psychoanalytical potential that Benjamin saw in photography: an ability to capture details or gestures that the naked eye does not notice either because they escape attention or because they have received too much attention and are too familiar.[59] Taken in what seem semi-spontaneous moments, many of the autobiography's photographs appear to capture motions and emotions

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[57] de Selincourt, 'The Real Gertrude Stein', p. 4.
[58] [Alfred Harcourt], letter to [John] Lane, 17 February 1993. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, YCAL MSS 76, box 99, folder 1900.
[59] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 371; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 510.

that are honest, haphazard, and habitual. The reader thus bypasses the Toklas narrator and beholds Stein not merely unmediated, but seemingly exposed. Unlike the text, where Stein's presence can be detected mainly in its irony, this Stein appears not behind convoluted, ambiguous, or hyperbolic statements, but in the open, ostensibly sincere, candid, unmasked.

The way photographs are described in the narrative encourages a reading of the inserted photographs as facts. It is the ability of photographs to act as reliable information rather than their capacity as a creative medium that leads them to inspire artists and writers in Paris. Picasso tries to arrange his hair like Lincoln after he sees the president in a photograph, and Hemingway first learns about bullfighting from Toklas because she shows him photographs of bull fights. The documentary potential of photography also prompts Toklas to lament that no one took photographs of Picasso's portrait of Stein while he was making it.[60] The text also suggests that snapshots have a special authenticity. In an anecdote about Man Ray, the Toklas narrator praises him as an artist, but also alludes to the limits of his art:

> One day [Gertrude Stein] told him that she liked his photographs of her better than any that had ever been taken except one snap shot I had taken of her recently. This seemed to bother Man Ray. In a little while he asked her to come and pose and she did. He said, move all you like, your eyes, your head, it is to be a pose but it is to have in it all the qualities of a snap shot. The poses were very long, she, as he requested, moved, and the result, the last photographs he made of her, are extraordinarily interesting.[61]

The story opposes snapshots with poses, and although Man Ray's attempts at simulating Toklas's photograph are deemed 'extraordinarily interesting', they do not seem to alter Stein's preference. The frontispiece is credited to Man Ray, but unlike the studio portraits described in the text, this photograph shows Stein and Toklas in their home and it does not have Ray's pared-down, experimental avant-garde aesthetic, but rather an uncontrived prosaic beauty that with its lack of style seems to deliver a fly-on-the-wall-like insight into Stein's comfortable everyday life with Toklas. Prioritizing subject matter above form, the autobiography's photographs not only epitomise the 'popular aesthetic' that Bourdieu associates with

[60] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, pp. 18-9, 57, 267.
[61] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, pp. 242-3.

photograph, they also seem to bring Stein closer to the reader, gratifying a hunger for personality and presence.

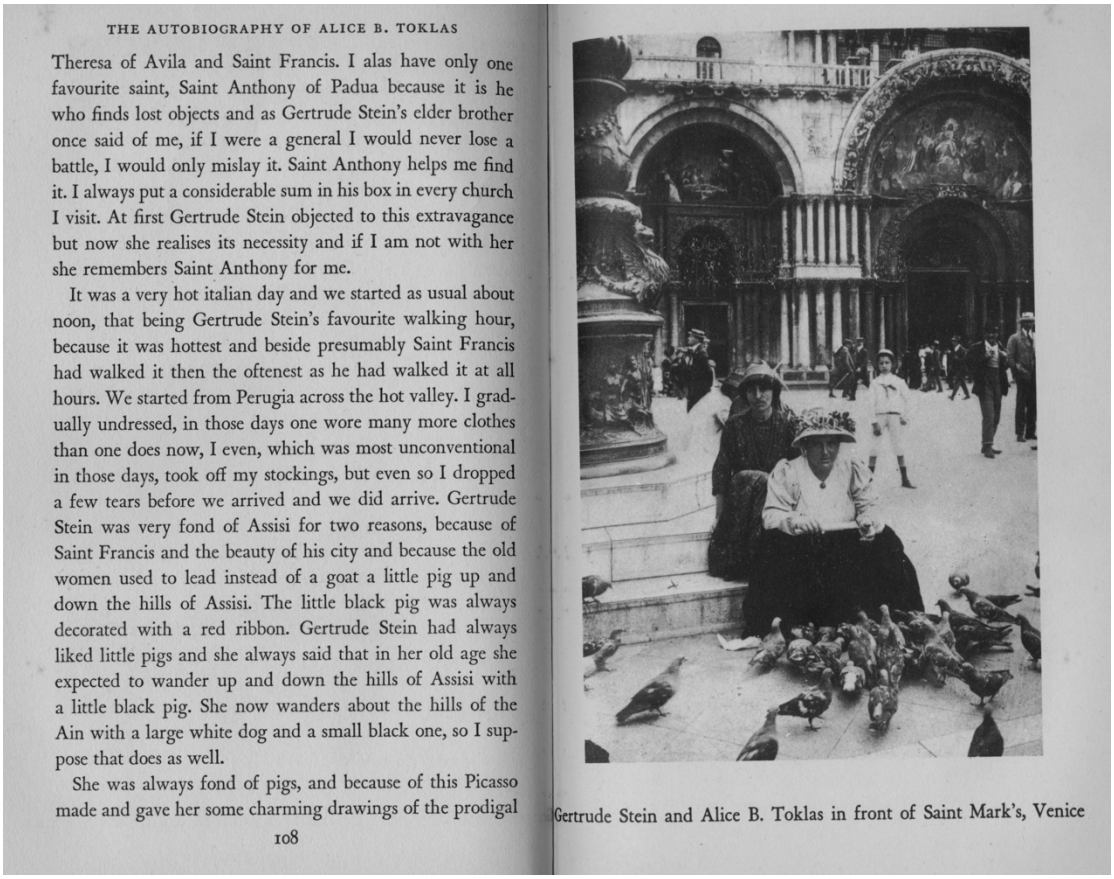
The photographs furthermore show a Stein who seems warmer than the one described in text. As the perspective of the text is Toklas's, she cannot narrate Stein's inner experiences, and Stein gives few to her Toklas narrator. The text has no internal dialogue, self-reflection, or confessions; no feelings motivate or interrupt Toklas's description of Stein's life; all of which makes the text seem only more impersonal. The text accentuates its own lack of intimacy by having Toklas use Stein's full name, although Toklas recounts that 'everybody called Gertrude Stein Gertrude, or at most Mademoiselle Gertrude'. Toklas's use of Stein's full name hints humorously at the constructedness of the perspective, but accentuates the formal, contrived, emotionless aspects of the narration. The Toklas narrator, for example, only comes close to revealing the conjugal aspect of her relationship to Stein with her joke that she could have written a book called *The Wives of Geniuses I Have Sat With*.[62] Although the photographs, like Toklas's narration, provide a perspective that is external, they express a tenderness that the text does not. While the narrative focuses on social gatherings in the atelier, for example, the frontispiece shows the casual rhythm and intimate tenderness with which Toklas served Stein and supported her work in the everyday ritual of their home life. By being silent, the photographs of Stein and Toklas can reveal the intimacy of a union that would have been too controversial to describe in the text. In the companion book to their *Seeing Gertrude Stein* exhibition, Wanda M. Corn and Tirza True Latimer observe that Stein and Toklas 'often performed their partnership in front of a camera, saying pictorially what they could never discuss in public.' Corn and Latimer argue that the omission of illustrations in later editions of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was 'particularly misguided', 'for they provided a family album and recorded, in ways the text does not, a shared life'. They argue that the photograph of them posing as volunteer workers in front of Marshal Joffre's birthplace, which is also included in the illustrations, was especially important in making them more accustomed to, and less

[62] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, pp. 17, 74.

apprehensive about, posing together in the same photograph.[63] This photograph can be seen as a pilot for the intimate photographic identity that they according to Corn and Latimer later would cultivate:

> In public the two women could not speak of 'marriage' and of being 'husband' and 'wife' as they did in private. But they could let pictures do this work, showing them side by side in their signature *homme-femme* dress.[64]

The autobiography's illustrations do not show Stein and Toklas wearing their *homme-femme* dress (Stein in male and Toklas in female attire), but the snapshot of Toklas and Stein in front of Saint Mark's Cathedral in Venice show them as a unit (Figure 15).



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

Theresa of Avila and Saint Francis. I alas have only one favourite saint, Saint Anthony of Padua because it is he who finds lost objects and as Gertrude Stein's elder brother once said of me, if I were a general I would never lose a battle, I would only mislay it. Saint Anthony helps me find it. I always put a considerable sum in his box in every church I visit. At first Gertrude Stein objected to this extravagance but now she realises its necessity and if I am not with her she remembers Saint Anthony for me.

It was a very hot italian day and we started as usual about noon, that being Gertrude Stein's favourite walking hour, because it was hottest and beside presumably Saint Francis had walked it then the oftenest as he had walked it at all hours. We started from Perugia across the hot valley. I gradually undressed, in those days one wore many more clothes than one does now, I even, which was most unconventional in those days, took off my stockings, but even so I dropped a few tears before we arrived and we did arrive. Gertrude Stein was very fond of Assisi for two reasons, because of Saint Francis and the beauty of his city and because the old women used to lead instead of a goat a little pig up and down the hills of Assisi. The little black pig was always decorated with a red ribbon. Gertrude Stein had always liked little pigs and she always said that in her old age she expected to wander up and down the hills of Assisi with a little black pig. She now wanders about the hills of the Ain with a large white dog and a small black one, so I suppose that does as well.

She was always fond of pigs, and because of this Picasso made and gave her some charming drawings of the prodigal

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Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in front of Saint Mark's, Venice

Figure 15 'Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in front of Saint Mark's, Venice', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), facing p. 108.

Looking like a couple on holiday, they sit close together on two steps, Toklas behind Stein, facing the camera, the bottom of the cathedral discernable in the background. Toklas sent this photograph as a postcard, now collected in Stein's archive, to Mabel Dodge Luhan, writing on

[63] Wanda M. Corn and Tirza True Latimer, *Seeing Stein: Five Stories* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 6, 65, 212-13.
[64] Corn and Latimer, *Seeing Stein*, p. 213.

the back that Luhan could see she and Stein were 'enjoying themselves'.[65] In his analysis of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the Stein scholar Richard Bridgman mentions this photograph as symbolising their 'permanent alliance'.[66] A similar photograph in Stein's archive suggests that at least two photographs were taken on this occasion, but in this photograph Stein and Toklas stand separately and are preoccupied with feeding the pigeons.[67] It is significant that Stein chose the photograph that shows them posing as a couple to illustrate her autobiography. The photograph appears at the beginning of chapter five, which covers the period from when Toklas moved in with Stein to the beginning of the First World War. The description of how Toklas came to move in with Stein exemplifies how this honeymoon-like photograph offsets the subdued emotional content of the narration, for Toklas only curtly and obliquely states that the friend she came to Paris with moved back to California, and that she thus 'joined Gertrude Stein in rue de Fleurus.'[68] The photographs of Stein and Toklas together suggest that something more than convenience prompted Toklas to move in with Stein.

Although the photographs show Stein and Toklas as a couple, they do not necessarily contradict contemporary euphemistic descriptions of Toklas as Stein's 'handmaiden', 'faithful friend', or 'inseparable companion'.[69] The autobiography never reveals that Stein and Toklas were in a committed, lesbian relationship. The photographs are revealing, but they do not expressly out Stein and Toklas.[70] Free of controversy, the intimacy on display in the photographs could thus be enjoyed by a wide audience. The intimate demeanour furthermore extends to the photographs where Stein poses with friends. Stein's feelings for Aldrich, for example, are not voiced in the narrative, but the photograph more than compensates: Aldrich and Stein almost seem to merge into one body with two heads because they stand so close. The

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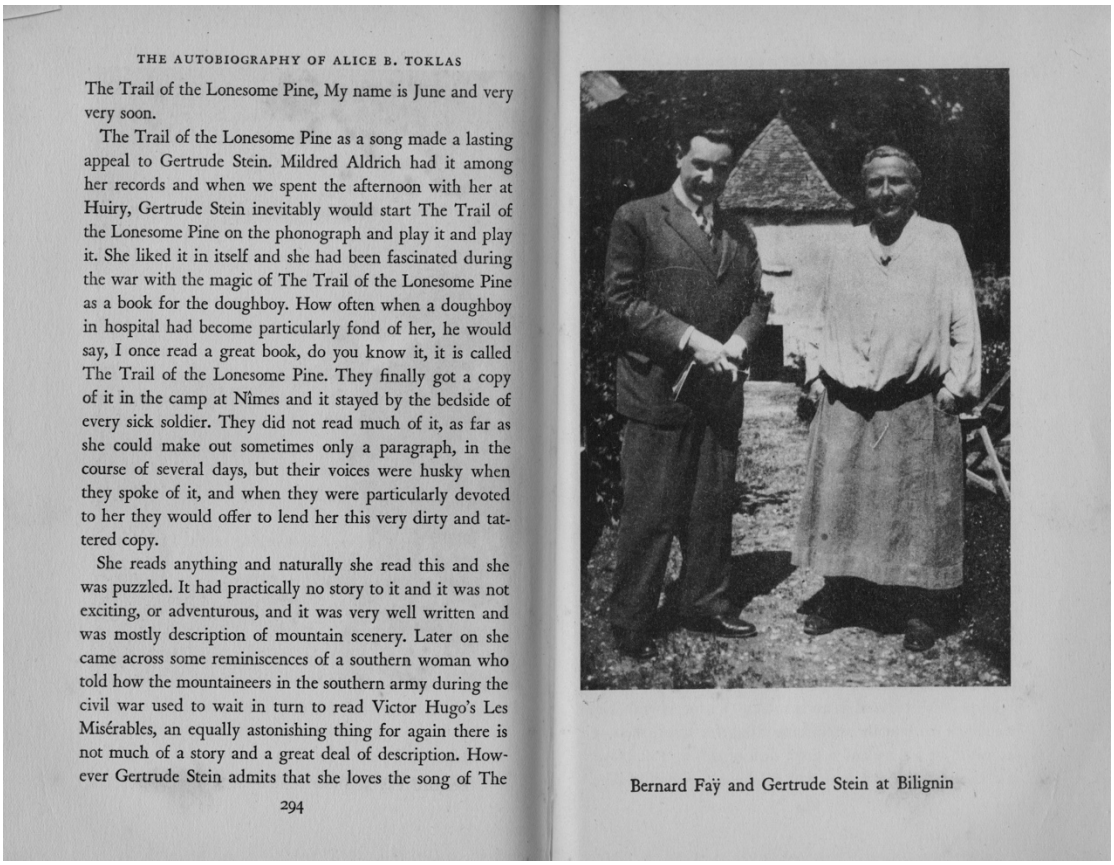
[65] YCAL, MS 76, box 147, folder 3433.
[66] Richard Bridgman, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 227.
[67] YCAL, MS 76, box 147, folder 3433.
[68] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 105.
[69] Luhan, *European Experiences*, p. 325; Bravig Imbs, *Confessions of Another Young Man* (New York: Henkle-Yewdale, 1936), p. 11; Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 161.
[70] The lesbian nature of Stein and Toklas's relationship only became public knowledge in the sixties with the memoirs of Ernest Hemingway and Virgil Thomson. It became a focus for scholarly studies of Stein's work in the seventies. Linda Simon, for example, included an appendix in her biography of Toklas that identifies more than a hundred references to Toklas in Stein's oeuvre, many of them personal disclosures, love songs, and expressions of devotion and (sometimes erotic) tenderness. Linda Simon, *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* (London: Peter Owen, 1977), pp. 255-86.

photograph of Stein with the literary critic Bernard Faÿ shows Stein's attachment to a man who only fleetingly appears in the narrative (Figure 16).[71]



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, My name is June and very very soon.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine as a song made a lasting appeal to Gertrude Stein. Mildred Aldrich had it among her records and when we spent the afternoon with her at Huiry, Gertrude Stein inevitably would start The Trail of the Lonesome Pine on the phonograph and play it and play it. She liked it in itself and she had been fascinated during the war with the magic of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine as a book for the doughboy. How often when a doughboy in hospital had become particularly fond of her, he would say, I once read a great book, do you know it, it is called The Trail of the Lonesome Pine. They finally got a copy of it in the camp at Nîmes and it stayed by the bedside of every sick soldier. They did not read much of it, as far as she could make out sometimes only a paragraph, in the course of several days, but their voices were husky when they spoke of it, and when they were particularly devoted to her they would offer to lend her this very dirty and tattered copy.

She reads anything and naturally she read this and she was puzzled. It had practically no story to it and it was not exciting, or adventurous, and it was very well written and was mostly description of mountain scenery. Later on she came across some reminiscences of a southern woman who told how the mountaineers in the southern army during the civil war used to wait in turn to read Victor Hugo's Les Misérables, an equally astonishing thing for again there is not much of a story and a great deal of description. However Gertrude Stein admits that she loves the song of The

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Bernard Faÿ and Gertrude Stein at Bilignin

Figure 16 'Bernard Faÿ and Gertrude Stein at Bilignin', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), facing p. 294.

The emotions on display in the photographs make Stein seem more personable than the Stein protagonist narrated by the Toklas character. Appearing in domestic settings, often outside, with an open, carefree, and inviting countenance, Stein furthermore seems forthcoming and endearing. Unlike the photographs of her by famous photographers collected in her archive, which all show her in a serious and dramatic way, Stein's photographs emphasise the real and the particular rather than the unreal and ideal: they stress the indexical aspect of photography rather than the iconic.[72] Stein's face differs from the photographers' portraits of her in the same

[71] This photograph also appeared in Faÿ's review of the *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Bernard Faÿ, 'A Rose is a Rose', *Saturday Review of Literature*, 2 September 1933, pp. 77-8.
[72] Photographers' portraits of Gertrude Stein. YCAL, MS 76, box 152, folders 3656-3681, box 170, folder 4336, box 171, folders 4337-4344.

way that it differs from Greta Garbo's face, which Barthes describes as Platonic and non-real.[73] Sharing the same photographs she would with a friend, Stein furthermore cultivates a sense of direct contact and personal intimacy with her reader. Although the autobiography is directed to an anonymous mass of people, it assumes properties of a personal letter. Stein's letterhead emblem is even stamped on its cover: 'ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE' twisted into a circle.

Showing a relatable, approachable, low-key Stein, the photographs counteract not only the portrait that the Toklas-narrator paints but also the image that existed of Stein in the public. They invalidate the notion of 'a long dark room with a languid woman lying on a couch, smoking cigarettes, sipping absinthes perhaps and looking out upon the world with tired, disdainful eyes', which was how America saw Stein according to Sherwood Anderson. [74] By making Stein more accessible, the photographs inserted into *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* help correct the imbalance that the Toklas narrator identifies in Stein's recognition:

> It has always been rather ridiculous that she who is good friends with all the world and can know them and they can know her, has always been the admired of the precious. But she [Stein] always says some day they, anybody, will find out that she is of interest to them, she and her writing.[75]

As photography can distribute widely what seems to be a piece of Stein, delivering it instantaneously once viewed, photographs are particularly suitable for conveying Stein's relevance, especially as not only her works, but both 'she and her writing' according to Toklas are of interest to 'all the world'. The photographs help endear Stein to those who are not 'precious', the majority of the public. With her illustrations Stein appeals to the pleasures that she in a 1936 lecture on 'Masterpieces' associates with identity and resemblance: 'The pleasures that are soothing all have to do with identity and the pleasures that are exciting all have to do

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[73] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), pp. 56-7.
[74] Sherwood Anderson, 'The Work of Gertrude Stein', in *Geography and Plays*, by Gertrude Stein (Boston: Four Seas Company, 1922), p. 6.
[75] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 86.

with identity'.[76] While she does not consider resemblance the true objective of art, she claims in her lecture on 'Pictures' from 1935 that resemblance is a 'pleasant human weakness':

> A resemblance is always a pleasurable sensation and so a resemblance is almost always there […] Anybody and so almost everybody pleasantly likes anything that resembles anything or any one.[77]

The photographs in Stein's autobiography make the work more commercially attractive, and being easy to comprehend and pleasing to behold, they make Stein as a person more appetising to a broad audience. The publishers anticipated that the photographs would attract a large audience and were excited about their commercial prospect. Harcourt, Brace, and Company, for example, thought the photographs would make *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* a 'handsome book', and thus advertised it as 'illustrated', the dust jacket itself proclaiming '*Illustrated from photographs*'.[78] With their resemblance the photographs constitute nuggets of commercial charm in a work that also strives for highbrow recognition. The photographs gratify a middlebrow fascination with personality while at the same time contributing to the work's highbrow quality by cleverly alluding to its fiction. In using Toklas and photography as narrators, Stein thus achieves both highbrow literary innovation and pleasing middlebrow accessibility.

Stein's Signature Style

While the easy and gratifying accessibility of the photographs counterbalances the distance from Stein created by the Toklas narrator, avant-garde aspects of the photographs counter the narrative's middlebrow style. Writing an autobiography in the third person represents a highbrow experiment in form, but part of the formal ingenuity consists in the text not having Stein's signature style--a style marked by the 'continuous present', in which Stein, according to herself, uses extensive repetitions with small differences.[79] Stein's new style in the autobiography led *The New York Times* to offer the view that she had made a sacrifice, the

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[76] Gertrude Stein, 'What are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them', in *What Are Masterpieces*, by Gertrude Stein (Los Angeles: The Conference Press, 1940), pp. 81- 95 (p. 91).
[77] Stein, 'Pictures', p. 79.
[78] [unsigned], letter to Allen Lane, 17 February 1933. YCAL, MS 76, box 99, folder 1900.
[79] Gertrude Stein, 'Composition as Explanation', *Dial*, October 1926, p. 15.

'News of Books' section explaining: 'In this book she has sacrificed some of what she considers the naturalness of her style to make reading easier. It is a sacrifice because she has worked very hard for her style.'[80] Unlike Stein's avant-garde writing, the conventional style of the Toklas narrator can come across as undistinguished. One reviewer claimed that the autobiography 'might have been written by a bright, honest child of 12'.[81] For the most part, however, the reviews praised the style of the autobiography and saw it as the triumphant culmination of her previous work. Hall wrote that Stein had 'stepped into brilliant daylight' writing 'for the first time in her life, to be popularly understood'.[82] Also using metaphors of light (as well as botany), W. A. Martin claimed that 'out of the dark seed' of such books as *Geography and Plays* and *The Making of Americans* had 'blossomed' a 'masterpiece', which was 'crystal clear in style'.[83] Stein's subsequent writing makes it clear, however, that the style of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was an exception, which suggests that the popular style should be seen as a component of the Toklas narrative device rather than a redirection towards the middlebrow in Stein's development as an author.

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas itself champions Stein's avant-garde style although it does not exemplify it, the Toklas narrator commending Stein's previous works as innovative and influential. She lauds *Three Lives* as the beginning of Stein's 'revolutionary work', describes *The Making of Americans* as a 'monumental work, which was the beginning, really the beginning of modern writing'; and claims that 'everyone knows' that *Tender Buttons* 'had an enormous influence on all young writers'. The Toklas narrator also guides readers to Stein's less well-known work, for example those published in small journals. Her endorsement of Stein as a pioneer of literature is presented as seconding Stein's own recognition of the same: 'She realises that in English literature in her time she is the only one. She has always known it and now she says it.' Being its author, Stein is in fact also saying it with this sentence. As many critics have observed, the device of a Toklas narrator allows Stein to practice unabashed

[80] 'News of Books', *New York Times*, p. 179.
[81] Ray Lewis White, *Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984), p. 43.
[82] Hall, 'Miss Stein Looks Homeward', p. SM10.
[83] W. A. Martin, 'Review', *Buffalo News*, 9 September 1933, p. 65.

narcissism and self-aggrandisement in a disarming way, the pinnacle of this perhaps being Toklas's claim that Stein is a 'genius'. Throughout the work Toklas supports her claim with anecdotes about the effect Stein's work has on people. For example, Toklas recounts that a man was so moved by Stein's lecture 'Composition as Explanation', delivered in Oxford in 1926, that he confided in her that it 'had been his greatest experience since he had read Kant's Critique of Pure Reason'. The autobiography does not, however, have the language of 'Composition as Explanation', a lecture that illustrates its point that modern literature is difficult by being itself challengingly written. The reader cannot by reading the autobiography's own text ascertain whether Stein's development of the English language indeed reflects genius.[84]

While Stein's style is fairly ordinary in the text, it is extraordinary in the illustrations. As a medium, the photographs share the text's easy, middlebrow style with their conventional snapshot aesthetic, contributing to Stein's accessibility, but her physical appearance is demonstratively and strikingly distinctive. Seemingly devoid of an artist's vision, the photographs let Stein's personal style eclipse both their own and the text's. Like those who met Stein in person, the reader can be impressed by her 'monumental' appearance. [85] The photographs show Stein's 'massive' body and her clothes, which Man Ray observed 'emphasised her bulk'. [86] For example, the St. Mark's photograph (Figure 15), where she sits down in a floor-length skirt with her legs spread wide apart, the dark trapezoid shape of her skirt becoming the focal point of the photograph, illustrates Harold Acton's observation that Stein's 'squat Aztec figure' grew 'more monumental as soon as she sat down'.[87] Stein furthermore compositionally dwarfs Toklas's tiny frame both in this photograph and in the frontispiece with her build, dress, and bearing. By boldly channelling her vastness and by physically dominating her photographs Stein lets the reader see how she used the size of her body to reflect her personality. As Mabel Dodge Luhan observed: 'She intellectualized her fat, and her body

[84] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, pp. 5, 94, 139-41, 144, 192, 251, 254, 264.
[85] Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 169.
[86] Man Ray, *Self Portrait,* pp. 179-80.
[87] Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 161.

seemed to be the large machine that her large nature required to carry it.'[88] With her photographs Stein parades her weightiness, both in terms of mass and presence. Her face is similarly impressive. She most effectively displays her striking features in her photograph with Faÿ as this was taken after her buzz cut (Figure 16). The lack of hair lets the head stand out that according to Toklas's own memoir was 'beautifully modelled and unique' and 'often compared to a Roman emperor's'.[89] The profound impact of Stein's formidable head, as well as her commanding body and stance, is reflected in de Selincourt's review, where the Faÿ photograph is used as evidence of how 'the real Gertrude Stein' is like a mountain:

> Now that at last we have her, the notion that she is a mere poseuse disappears. Unless you can say a mountain poses; and indeed it does, it is all pose, and where it is, it unrepentantly intends to stay. That is the impression you have of Miss Stein in the last photograph of her. Her head is granite, her hands are in her pockets, she stands smiling in a blaze of sun, with legs like pillars and feet that grip the ground.[90]

De Selincourt paradoxically uses a photograph, in which Stein poses, to dispel the notion that she is a poseur, testifying to the potency of both Stein's powerful appearance and the sense of transparency, encouraged by a lack of style, that her photographs emit.

Stein not only accentuated her monumental features with her clothes and hairstyle, she also developed a signature style that was daringly unconventional. The photograph of Stein in front of the atelier door demonstrates how her clothes could be considered 'strange', which was how Hemingway described them (Figure 12).[91] Stein wears a high-neck, full-length, long-sleeved dark robe, and a long string of prayer beads hangs around her neck. The photograph displays her striking similarity to a monk, a comparison made in the autobiography and in testimonials by others.[92] Smiling, she folds her hands piously, thus playfully gesturing to her monkish look and the knowing, light-hearted self-consciousness with which she fashioned it. Moving from clothes to hairstyle, the degree to which Stein's crew cut was considered unusual

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[88] Luhan, *European Experiences*, p. 324.
[89] Alice Toklas, *What is Remembered* (London: Michael Joseph, 1963), p. 26.
[90] de Selincourt, 'The Real Gertrude Stein', p. 4.
[91] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), pp. 18, 27.
[92] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, pp.142, 304; Sisley Huddleston, *Paris Salons, Cafés, Studios: Being Social, Artistic and Literary Memories* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1928) p. 315; Imbs, *Confessions of Another Young Man*, p. 122.

is gleaned from the artist Pavel Tchelitchew's startled reaction to her cut hair, as told by the writer Bravig Imbs:

> Pavel almost went out of his mind for an afternoon on account of that incident. He had a very easy classification of women: either they looked like his mother, his dear aunt or his sister. Gertrude had always looked like the dear aunt, and now with her topknot shorn away she did not look like anyone but herself--and Pavel did not know where to place her.[93]

Tchelitchew's discomfort stems from Stein's refusal to fit gendered moulds and her unparalleled, overpowering singularity: 'she did not look like anyone but herself'. If Stein looks like a mountain, then it is a mountain like none other. Tchelitchew's distress, almost losing his mind over Stein's hairstyle (albeit only for an afternoon), shows just how much Stein's appearance could pose a challenge, even for an avant-garde painter.

Interesting correspondences emerge if Stein's eccentric appearance is seen in relation to her aesthetics. In 'Composition as Explanation' she laments that only the conventional is recognized as beautiful: 'If every one were not so indolent they would realise that beauty is beauty even when it is irritating and stimulating not only when it is accepted and classic.'[94] The initial irritation of innovative beauty is a theme in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. When Stein and her brother first see paintings by Paul Gauguin they think they are 'rather awful but they finally liked them'.[95] When Toklas thinks Picasso's paintings are 'rather awful', Stein explains:

> When you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, and so everybody can like it when the others make it.[96]

Like modern art and literature, Stein's looks are not accepted and classic, but rather stimulating and to some irritating, qualities that Stein in the autobiography associates with originality. Interestingly, Toklas recalls in the narrative how she identified Stein as a genius as soon as she saw her (before reading or even listening to her): 'on sight within me something rang'.[97]

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[93] Imbs, *Confessions of Another Young Man*, pp. 122-3.
[94] Stein, 'Composition as Explanation', p. 15.
[95] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 38.
[96] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 28.
[97] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 5.

Stein herself applies aesthetic politics to other people's appearance in a manner reminiscent of her approach to art and literature. For example, the Toklas narrator speaks condescendingly of Olivier's idolisation of the actress Evelyn Thaw:

> Fernande herself had one ideal. It was Evelyn Thaw the heroine of the moment. And Fernande adored her in the way a later generation adored Mary Pickford, she was so blonde, so pale, so nothing and Fernande would give a heavy sigh of admiration.[98]

By comparing Thaw to Mary Pickford, the Marilyn Monroe of Stein's day, the Toklas narrator minimises her to a type, a popular type, and further denigrates this type as inconsequential by describing Thaw as 'nothing'. Later in the narrative, the Toklas narrator describes Thaw as 'small and negative' and Eva Gouel, who replaced Olivier as Picasso's lover, as a 'French Evelyn Thaw, small and perfect'.[99] Stein equates blond, pale, and perfect with small, nothing, and negative. If we borrow her logic and invert her lexicon, Stein herself is dark, tanned, particular, big, something, and positive.

As a marker of avant-garde aesthetics, Stein's physical appearance advertises her as a modernist innovator. Recent Stein criticism has detailed Stein's struggles to be published, her self-promotion, and the role of the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in advertising her oeuvre and personality.[100] Helga Lénárt-Cheng, for example, makes a convincing argument for the autobiography as an advertisement for Stein's oeuvre, but rather than seeing photographs as part of this advertisement, Lénárt-Cheng argues that Stein's appearance was one of the reasons why Stein needed the autobiography in the first place:

> It is enough to look at a picture of Gertrude Stein from that period to understand the reservations of the audience--a rich, eccentric, lesbian American Jew living in Paris who wore monk-style clothes and hairstyles--no wonder she gave to many of her contemporaries the impression of an unapproachable, rigid Sphinx.[101]

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[98] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 33.
[99] Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, p. 136.
[100] Helga Lénárt-Cheng, 'Autobiography as Advertisement: Why Do Gertrude Stein's Sentences Get Under Our Skin?', *New Literary History*, 34 (2003), 117-31; Bryce Conrad, 'Gertrude Stein in the American Marketplace', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 19 (1995), 215-33; Kirk Curnutt, 'Inside and Outside: Gertrude Stein on Identity, Celebrity, and Authenticity', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 23 (1999-2000), 291-308; Galow, 'Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity', 313-29.
[101] Lénárt-Cheng, 'Autobiography as Advertisement: Why Do Gertrude Stein's Sentences Get Under Our Skin?', p. 119.

Lénárt-Cheng does not take the illustrations into consideration. She argues that Stein made the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to compensate for her appearance, but it is more convincing that Stein used her appearance as part of an advanced self-advertisement. For not only do the photographs show an arrestingly unique Stein, thereby providing a sense of signature, originality, and avant-garde authenticity, but as I have shown, Stein also comes across as relatable due to the unassuming style of the photographs, their intimate subject matter, and Stein's unguarded attitude. Stein looks colossal, but not otherworldly or distant, which mirrors the observation that Faÿ makes about Stein in his review of the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*: 'so few people can be fully normal and boldly normal'.[102] Paradoxically, a major contributing factor to Stein's full and bold normality is the pictorial representation of her sexuality: the photographs not only divulge a lesbian relationship that despite being illicit is depicted as emphatically mundane, Stein's gender-bending dress and hair also have an avant-garde cachet. In terms of Stein's sexuality, the significance of the photographs is not only that they reveal more about her relationship to Toklas than the text, but also that sartorial aspects related to her transgression of heterosexual norms advertise Stein as extraordinary.

It seems contradictory, but by securing an avant-garde pictorial identity, Stein adds to her allure for a wider public, especially as her unique, highbrow appearance is not alienating. Braudy's definition of fame emphasises a strikingly similar duality to Faÿ's 'fully normal and boldly normal': 'In part it celebrates uniqueness, and in part it requires that uniqueness to be exemplary and reproducible.' [103] By selecting photographs that show her as both extraordinary and ordinary--as a consumable avant-gardist--Stein traverses oppositions between high- and middlebrow art, signature and brand, culture and commodity. Stein herself was aware that her difficulty was integral to her celebrity. She recounts how she told Harcourt that it was not because of the autobiography that she attracted an audience:

> Alfred Harcourt was very surprised when I said to him in first meeting him in New York remember this extraordinary welcome that I am having does not come from the books of mine that they do understand like the Autobiography but the books of

[102] Faÿ, 'A Rose is a Rose', pp. 77-8.
[103] Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, p. 5.

> mine that they did not understand, and he called his partner and said listen to what she says, and perhaps she is right.[104]

Whether or not they were read, Stein's avant-garde works made her interesting. Like her works, her unusual appearance was also fascinating, but also disarming. Stein's thoughts in her lecture 'Pictures' on the 'difference' of the faces in Matisse's and Picasso's paintings illuminate how the presence of Stein's face in the photographs cannot but endear the reader to Stein despite its being different from average faces:

> As I say when you have looked at many many faces and have become familiar with them, you may find something new in a new face you may be surprised by a different kind of a face you may be even shocked by a different kind of a face you may like or not like a new kind of face but you cannot refuse a new face. You must accept a face as a face.[105]

Stein does not present herself as a work of art, but she draws upon modernist aesthetics in her photographic self-presentation, and like the faces in the Cubist paintings, Stein's face in the photographs cannot be refused. The reader is invited to look and accept her as she is: unusual, original, and singular.

By adding photographs to her autobiography, Stein gains influence on her own public image. Appropriating the image that existed of her, primarily by virtue of her association with the visual arts, she repurposes it and ultimately alters it with snapshots of herself. She sets the standard for later mass media representations of her, which would also show her as a personable avant-gardist. We see her, for example, on the cover of *Time*, in the wake of her autobiography's success, looking unconventional with her cropped hair and granite head, but relaxed and relatable, outdoors at her country home in Bilignin (Figure 17).

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[104] Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), p. xiii.
[105] Stein, 'Pictures', p. 80.

Figure 17 Gertrude Stein's *Time* cover, 11 September 1933 (Photograph by George Platt Lynes).

Inside the magazine, the photograph of Stein and Toklas in front of Saint Mark's illustrates the article, attesting to the direct influence of the photographs Stein chose for her autobiography on the mass media's portrayal of her.[106]

The illustrations not only help fashion Stein's image, their insertion into the autobiography also contributes to the notion that Stein is interesting above and beyond her words--a person suitable for a *Time* cover. By disrupting the narrative's progression and self-enclosed autonomy with indexical representations of Stein, the illustrations gesture outside the text, and specifically to Stein as an individual. The horizontal move from text to image also

[106] 'Stein's Way', *Time*, 11 September 1933, pp. 57-60 (p. 57).

implies a move from work to personality, giving the reader a sense of her non-fictional existence, and stimulating the desire to breach the barrier of representation and grasp her in the flesh. The illustrations speak to the passion for bringing things closer that Benjamin associated with photography: 'Every day the need to possess the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative.'[107] With an outside perspective seemingly more objective than the self-praise of the third-person narration, the photographs help ensure that the Stein put into the hands of the reader is someone with an evidently important, intriguing, and influential personality. Stuart Burrows argues in his work on the influence of photography on literature that photography has caused an experience of indistinguishability and homogenization that he sees reflected in works such as Stein's *The Making of Americans*. He uses a quotation from Stein's article about this work to illustrate his point: 'every one looks like some one else'.[108] Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* demonstrates that the dynamic between literature and photography can be different when photographs are actually inserted into works. The images show Stein's distinctiveness and pave the way for her experience of celebrity in America: 'In America everybody is but some are more than others. I was more than others'.[109]

Maintaining Authenticity after Popular Success

'All the world' finally discovered that Stein and her writing were relevant to them with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, but Stein subsequently derogated the source of her success. In her 1935 lecture, 'Portraits and Repetition', Stein explains that her autobiography is like the newspapers in that she 'told what happened as it had happened', but since 'everybody at any moment can know what it is that happens while it happens, what happens is interesting but it is not really exciting.' [110] Using both autobiography and photography as examples, she elaborates

[107] ['Tagtäglich macht sich unabweisbarer das Bedürfnis geltend, des Gegenstands aus nächster Nähe im Bild, vielmehr im Abbild habhaft zu warden.'] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 379; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 519.
[108] Stuart Burrows, *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839-1945* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2008), p. 199.
[109] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. 168.
[110] Gertrude Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', in *Lectures in America*, by Gertrude Stein (New York: Random House, 1935), pp. 165-206 (p. 205).

on why what happens is interesting but not really exciting in her lecture from 1936, 'What Are Masterpieces?':

> The tradition has always been that you may more or less describe the things that happen you imagine them of course but you more or less describe the things that happen but nowadays everybody all day long knows what is happening and so what is happening is not really interesting, one knows it by radios cinemas newspapers biographies autobiographies until what is happening does not really thrill any one, it excites them a little but it does not really thrill them. The painter can no longer say that what he does is as the world looks to him because he cannot look at the world any more, it has been photographed too much and he has to say that he does something else.[111]

Modern masterpieces are those that do not deal with what is happening and what that looks like; they are those that do not attempt a likeness predicated on conventional notions of realism. Resemblance may 'excite a little', it may be popular, but it is not 'thrilling', not important. In 'Photography', a short avant-garde piece from 1920 never published in her lifetime, Stein compares photography to twins, stressing the ability of photography to duplicate, arguing that photographs 'reproduce well', but she interjects 'I enlarge better'.[112] Stein thus asserts that she produces something more fundamental than the popular mimetic resemblance of photography. Stein contrasts her important literary output to photography but compares her method of writing to a related medium, cinema. In 'Portraits and Repetition', she explains: 'I was doing what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing.' According to Stein, remembering while writing obscures the essence of the person whose portrait one is writing, an essence which she describes as the 'intensity of movement' that is inside someone. Cinema thus provides a model for capturing the existence of a person because it thwarts memory: 'By a continuously moving picture of any one there is no memory of any other thing and there is that thing existing, it is in a way if you like one portrait of anything not a number of them.'[113] In an article for the *Choate Literary Magazine* in 1935, Stein explains that she makes use of 'insistence', repeating something about someone with small changes, and she contrasts this literary approach to the limits of a single photograph: 'when I kept on saying something was something or somebody

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[111] Stein, 'What Are Masterpieces and Why Are There So Few of Them', p. 87.
[112] Gertrude Stein, 'Photography', in *A Stein Reader*, ed. by Ulla E. Dydo (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 343-46.
[113] Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', pp. 176-7, 183.

was somebody, I changed it just a little bit until I got a whole portrait […] What I was after was this immediacy. A single photograph doesn't give it.'[114] It is not the ability of photography to 'reproduce well' to which Stein compares her writing, but the dynamic of showing photographs in succession.

In explaining her 'important' work, Stein denigrates autobiography and photography, but she would use both again in *Everybody's Autobiography*, published five years after her first autobiography. With its title, however, the work belittles its own genre. Stein explains in the foreword: 'Anyway autobiography is easy like it or not autobiography is easy for any one and so this is to be Everybody's Autobiography.'[115] As she does in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein distances herself from autobiography, despite writing one, by attributing it to others. Unlike *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, however, the narrator is Stein, not 'everybody'. Although *Everybody's Autobiography* is more accessible than most of Stein's work, her explanation of its title shows how she employs her method of insistence. Stein does not compromise her writing style as she does in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which dovetails with the autobiography's primary concern: the integrity of Stein as a modernist author. The focus of this second autobiography is Stein's reaction to the success of the first. She describes her troubles with celebrity, and she carefully conveys her thoughts and motivations concerning the literary marketplace. As Kirk Curnutt observes in relation to these reflections: 'Stein casts herself as a naïve initiate to the world of celebrity, one who is not only inattentive but is indifferent toward public relations. In effect, she controls her public image by appearing not to control it.'[116] Stein's posturing reflects Bourdieu's point that writers and artists have 'an interest in disinterestedness'.[117] Both in its style and content, *Everybody's Autobiography* thus seeks to preserve Stein's authenticity in the face of the popularity that she received with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

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[114] Gertrude Stein, 'How Writing Is Written', in *How Writing Is Written: The Previously Uncollected Writing of Gertrude Stein*, ed. by Robert Bartlett Haas, 2 vols (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973-4), II (1974), pp.151-60 (p. 157).
[115] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. xi.
[116] Curnutt, 'Inside and Outside: Gertrude Stein on Identity, Celebrity, and Authenticity', p. 303.
[117] Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', p. 321.

As photographs are middlebrow, their inclusion in *Everybody's Autobiography* seems to counteract Stein's attempt to secure her authenticity as a modernist author, but they help Stein claim authenticity for the personality that she nonetheless puts forward. Stein uses illustrations in her second autobiography not to position herself as someone of interest to 'all the world', but to manage her already achieved celebrity image. Signaling Stein's new status as a celebrity, the illustrations in *Everybody's Autobiography* are attributed to a single photographer, the professional photographer Carl van Vechten. Van Vechten was also Stein's close friend, however, and figures as such in the narrative. Despite having a better quality than the illustrations in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the photographs thus still give the impression of providing a privileged, intimate perspective on Stein's life. The portraits of Stein and Toklas at their summer home in Bilignin not only continue the focus of the illustrations in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* on the women's private life, they also show a quiet, rural life unaffected and unaltered by the previous autobiography's success. They propagate a sense of authenticity associated with a concept of naturalness that has artificiality as its opposite.

As with her narrative, Stein also self-consciously reflects on her celebrity with her illustrations. The frontispiece seems to be a studio photograph: there are no indexical pointers that indicate the time and place for this photograph. Stein's strong profile dominates the image and her expression is serious, resolute, and immobile. Stein comes across as an idol, a literary lion. The illustration's title in the 'List of Illustrations' ensures, however, that the photograph is seen as providing a personal perspective on Stein's celebrity experience. It reads: 'Gertrude Stein, wearing the dress in which she delivered her lectures in America.' The specific context ruptures the unreal otherworldliness of the photograph and casts Stein's lecture tour as a personally exceptional event requiring practical decisions and mundane preparations. By showing the human side of celebrity, the frontispiece builds upon the dust jacket's photograph of Stein and Toklas standing in the door of an airplane (Figure 18).

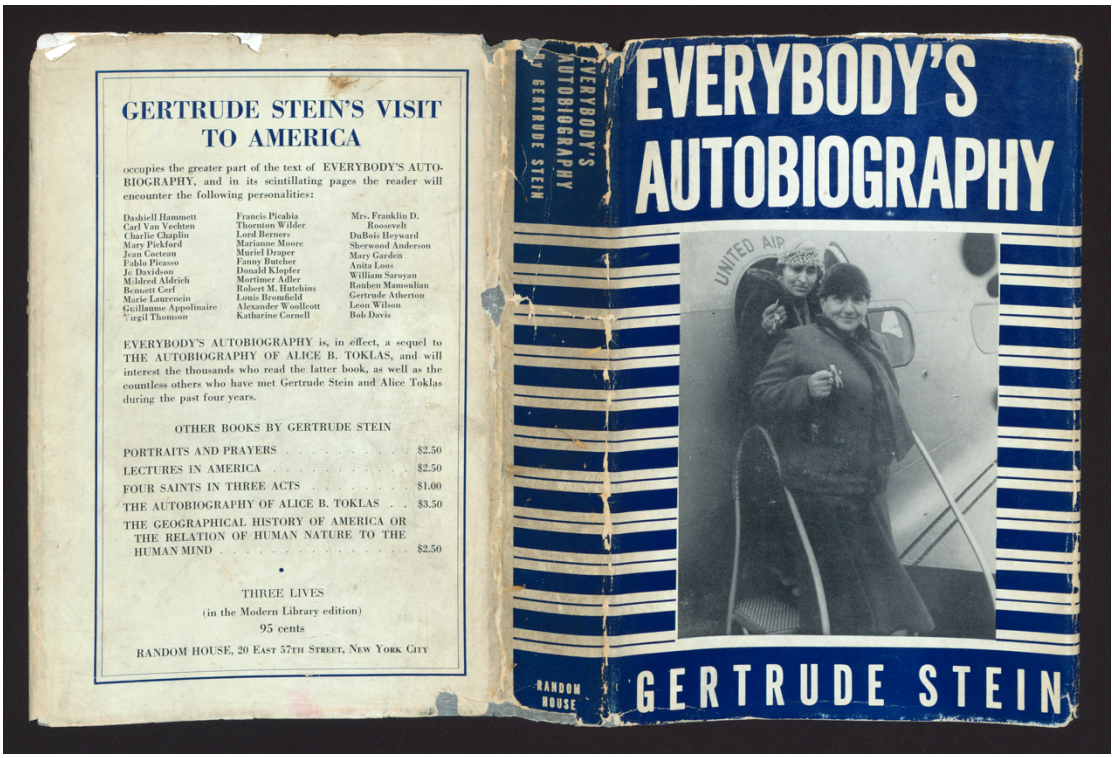

Figure 18 Dust Jacket, Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937).

This photograph shows them literally living what would later be called a jet-set life, flying crisscross America on Stein's lecture tour, and is anticipatory of the press photographs pervasive in the fifties and sixties of film stars and pop stars descending and ascending airplanes. Stein and Toklas, however, do not exude glamour. Bundled up in thick layers of clothing, they are seemingly dressed with comfort, warmth, and practicality in mind. Both women hold up small figurines for the camera in a somewhat childish manner.[118] Stein and Toklas look more like tourists excited by flying than sophisticated celebrities, which concurs with the narrative, where Stein writes about her fear of flying for the first time and how it surprised and amused her.[119] Stein's bemused attitude towards the experience of celebrity is most abundantly clear in an illustration that with great effect does not show her but a large group of men and a few women huddled together entitled, 'Gertrude Stein is the centre of this

[118] A note Van Vechten added to one of his letters from Stein reveals that these are 'beaded representations of men and women made over rabbits feet by Hopi Indians' that he gave Stein and Toklas 'for their first flight'. Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten, *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten*, ed. by Edward Burns, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), I (1986), pp. 345-7 (26 November 1934).
[119] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, pp. 189-92.

discussion at William and Mary'. Stein's renown, causing the students of this college to form a circle around her, is itself this illustration's subject matter. All the photographs of Stein as a celebrity in *Everybody's Autobiography* includes within themselves such ironical self-awareness of the celebrity experience.

While Stein acknowledges in the narrative that photographs can be used to construct and maintain a public persona, she asserts her own good-natured and natural relationship to photography with the implication that photographs of her cannot be considered insincere, premeditated, or fabricated components of an image-making machinery. Stein recounts how Pickford (the film star she associates with being blond, pale, and nothing in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*) suggests that they get their photograph taken together, but that Pickford suddenly regrets her suggestion:

> It was her idea and then when I was enthusiastic she melted away. They all said that what she thought was if I were enthusiastic it meant that I thought that it would do me more good that it would do her and so she melted away or others said perhaps after all it would not be good for her audiences that we should be photographed together, anyway I was very much interested to know just what they knew about what is good publicity and what is not.[120]

Stein presents herself as an ingénue regarding the politics of being 'photographed together': unlike Pickford, she does not have an ulterior motive and she credits others with the knowledge of photography's potential for publicity. Her own interest is presented as if it were a scientist's or an anthropologist's, Stein studying with cool detached interest the mechanisms of photography and celebrity. Stein makes sure her photographs are not read as staged by describing in detail one of her interactions with a photographer:

> All right I said what do you want me to do. Why he said there is your airplane bag suppose you unpack it, oh I said Miss Toklas always does that oh no I could not do that, well he said there is the telephone suppose you telephone well I said yes but I never do Miss Toklas always does that, well he said what can you do, well I said I can put my hat on and take my hat off and I can put my coat on and I can take it off and I like water I can drink a glass of water all right he said do that so I did that and he photographed while I did that.

The act of drinking seldom makes a flattering photograph, but the important thing for Stein is that it should not be false. These anecdotes about being photographed ensure that the

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[120] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. 8.

illustrations in *Everybody's Autobiography* are read as being as honest and revealing as the photographs in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Whereas the photographs counteract the distance and reticence of the fictional narrator in the first autobiography, the fiction that the photographs address in the second autobiography is a false personality.

Given that the theatre of publicity is a pervasive theme in this second autobiography, a parallel between publicity and theatre presents itself with the illustrations of actors in their costumes for *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the opera Stein wrote in collaboration with the composer Virgil Thomson in 1927-8 and which premiered in America in 1934. These photographs show Edward Matthews posing as Saint Ignatius and Beatrice Robinson-Wayne as Saint Theresa. Stein's descriptions of these actors in the narrative, however, preclude a parallel between theatre and publicity and instead reinforce the impression that the photographs in the autobiography give of being genuine, unfiltered representations of people and lives lived. Stein writes about Robinson-Wayne that she calls herself Saint Theresa on the telephone and that 'she was Saint Theresa for herself and for us', and about black actors in general she writes:

> Any Negro actors act anything so naturally that it is natural that it should be done very well and why not since they might be any one as they are never any other one that is with Negroes a natural thing, with many of them with most of them, publicity does not hurt them because they can be what anything makes them and it does not make anything else of them because they are the thing they are then. So it is not acting it is being for them. [121]

It follows from Stein's racial stereotyping that the photographs of Robinson-Wayne and Mathews really are photographs of Stein's characters Saint Theresa and Saint Ignatius.[122] The actors and the photographs of them become an extension of Stein herself and her work, a connection supported by their appearance alongside photographs of Stein and her life. Furthermore, the natural quality Stein claims for the actors not only means they really are their characters, but that they are immune to publicity. This naturalness resonates with the stories of how Stein acts in front of a camera. Both 'negroes' and Stein are presented as being immune to publicity and photographs of them can thus be considered reliable portrayals of who they are.

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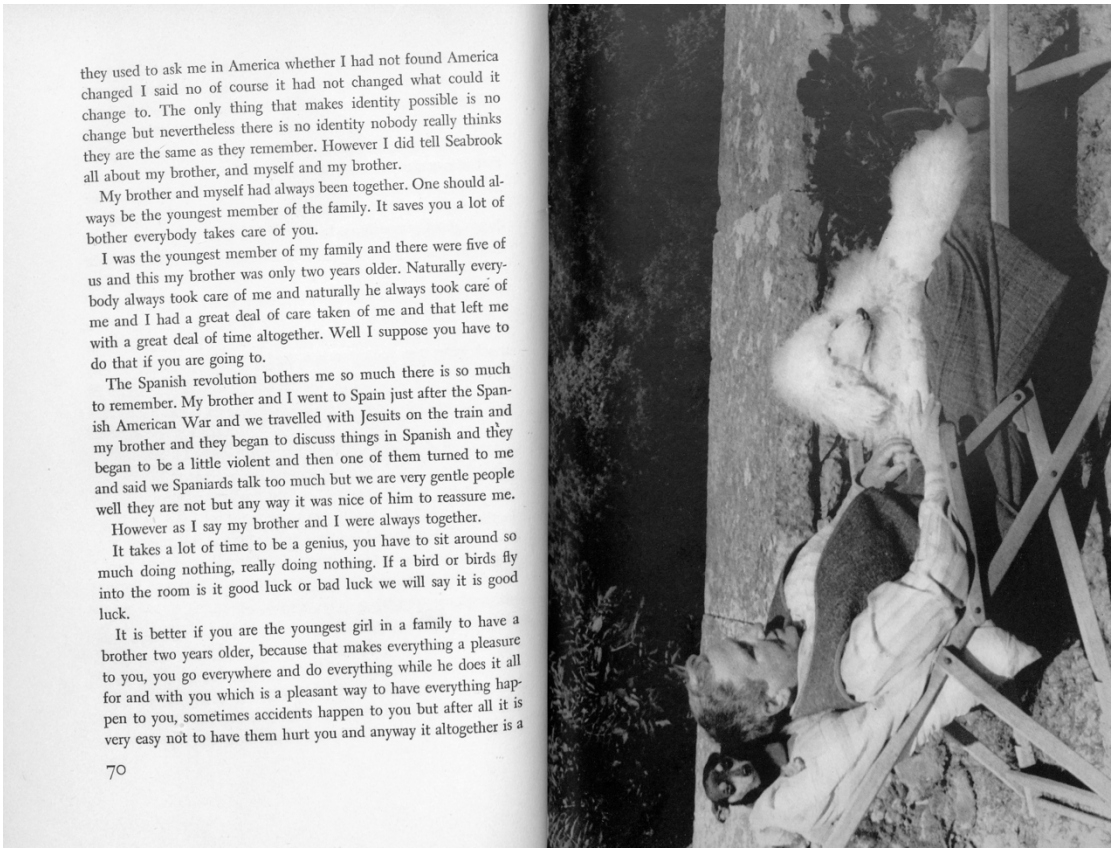
[121] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. 195.
[122] For the role of photography in relation to the production of Stein's play see *4 Saints in 3 Acts: A Snapshot of the American Avant-Garde in the 1930s*, ed. by Patricia Allmer and John Sears (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

The actors are their characters in the photographs just as Stein not only resembles herself in her photographs, she really is herself in her photographs. This demonstrates an important difference between resemblance and reference. The authenticity that Stein claims for her photographic illustrations is not premised on their likeness, their mimetic portrayal of what happened or existed, for they really are those things.

One illustration in *Everybody's Autobiography* encapsulates the image and legacy to which all the photographs in Stein's autobiographies contribute. This is the photograph of Stein at her country home (Figure 19).



they used to ask me in America whether I had not found America changed I said no of course it had not changed what could it change to. The only thing that makes identity possible is no change but nevertheless there is no identity nobody really thinks they are the same as they remember. However I did tell Seabrook all about my brother, and myself and my brother.

My brother and myself had always been together. One should always be the youngest member of the family. It saves you a lot of bother everybody takes care of you.

I was the youngest member of my family and there were five of us and this my brother was only two years older. Naturally everybody always took care of me and naturally he always took care of me and I had a great deal of care taken of me and that left me with a great deal of time altogether. Well I suppose you have to do that if you are going to.

The Spanish revolution bothers me so much there is so much to remember. My brother and I went to Spain just after the Spanish American War and we travelled with Jesuits on the train and my brother and they began to discuss things in Spanish and they began to be a little violent and then one of them turned to me and said we Spaniards talk too much but we are very gentle people well they are not but any way it was nice of him to reassure me.

However as I say my brother and I were always together.

It takes a lot of time to be a genius, you have to sit around so much doing nothing, really doing nothing. If a bird or birds fly into the room is it good luck or bad luck we will say it is good luck.

It is better if you are the youngest girl in a family to have a brother two years older, because that makes everything a pleasure to you, you go everywhere and do everything while he does it all for and with you which is a pleasant way to have everything happen to you, sometimes accidents happen to you but after all it is very easy not to have them hurt you and anyway it altogether is a

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Figure 19 'Gertrude Stein with Basket and Pépé on the terrace at Bilignin', Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), facing p. 70.

With its snapshot aesthetic and domestic setting, it resembles the photographs in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Stein is seen in profile, lying down on an outdoor chaise lounge. One dog rests on her lap, another on the pillow behind her head. Stein is relaxed, out in the open, enjoying the countryside and the company of her dogs. The caption on the verso of the page is humorous and endearing, and read together with the rest of the autobiography's

narrative, sincere: 'It takes a lot of time to be genius, you have to sit around so much doing nothing, really doing nothing.' Stein argues elsewhere in *Everybody's Autobiography* that doing nothing is a constitutive component of being a genius--as well as being a saint--and that geniuses must have within them 'a reality that has nothing to do with the passage of time'.[123] The photographs in the autobiographies position Stein as a genius who is interesting because of, but also independently of her work. They do not derive authenticity from Stein's 'important' work, at least not directly, but situate authenticity with Stein herself.

In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein admits that the Americans' interest in her rather than her work bothers her, but she also places her personality a par with her work. She recounts how she and Picasso used to imagine a burglary:

> Picasso and I used to dream of the pleasure if a burglar came to steal something he would steal his painting or my writing in place of silver and money. They might now they certainly would not have then and after all if a work of art has existed then somehow every one can feel that it has been and so that makes the few geniuses there are a continuous line even if what they did is not there any more. Of course one always does want one's own to be left perhaps not so much now as in the beginning and so perhaps after all they are right the Americans in being more interested in you than in the work you have done although they would not be interested in you if you had not done the work you had done.[124]

The manuscript photograph in the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* draws attention to the material existence of Stein's works. The photograph not only expresses the corporeal relationship of Stein to the text, it also emphasises the text's separate, material existence as an object, an object that could be stolen. In her hypothetical burglary scenario, however, Stein postulates that not her work, but her personality has lasting value. She sees herself as being in 'a continuous line' of geniuses and thus gives the Americans a valid reason for being more interested in her than her work. The photographs of Stein concretize her in a similar way as the photograph of her manuscript, but they emphasise the material existence of the person rather than the work. They help establish Stein as a personality whose significance is not restricted to a single moment in time but surpasses time. In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein writes about her discovery that there is no future life or eternity in the Old Testament and adds: 'I read a

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[123] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, pp. 70, 154.
[124] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, pp. 37, 90.

poem of George Eliot when I was very young I can not often remember poetry but I can remember that. May I join the choir invisible of those immortal dead who live again.'[125] Stein is undying not only in her text and photographs but in the personality that the text and photographs helped create.

With Stein, the distinction between the avant-garde and the popular fits uncomfortably and rests uneasily. The distinction Stein herself makes between her autobiography and her 'important' work is continued in Stein criticism, often attached to an enduring deprecation of the popular. Ulla E. Dydo makes a direct connection between the presence of 'very personal illustrations' and the reading of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 'as a history of real people, real events, the art collection, the artists, the studio, the salon, and the writer', and argues that the autobiography in consequence 'displayed [Stein] and Toklas as personalities rather than making her work known and read, as she had hoped'.[126] However, Stein's burglary story shows that she was not entirely averse to her personality eclipsing her work. Her attempt at turning the autobiography into a Hollywood film furthermore attests to her openness towards middlebrow representations of herself. Indeed, Van Vechten informed Stein that she was pushing too eagerly compared to the standard practice of Hollywood:

> Motion picture people are peculiar. You can't approach *them*. They must approach *you*. I think the time to take this up is when you are lecturing in Hollywood… Of course you both would have to appear in the picture. Even Greta Garbo and Lillian Gish couldn't be you and Alice.[127]

As Jaffe's study and other recent studies of modernism have shown, reservations about celebrity did not deter modernist authors from seeking it.[128] In his work on literary celebrity, Loren Glass sees a contradiction in modernist authors 'between their stated theories of self-effacement and their actual practice and literary-historical destiny of self-aggrandizement and even shameless

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[125] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. 116.
[126] Ulla E. Dydo, *Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 595.
[127] Stein and Van Vechten, *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten*, II, p. 670 (19 March 1940).
[128] Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*; Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000).

self-promotion.'[129] As we have seen, Stein partly resolves this contradiction by viewing herself as a genius. The promotion of her personality is thus legitimate as long as representations of her are sincere. With their indexical aspect, photographic illustrations are thus especially adept at acquainting the public with the genius. Van Vechten's insistence that Stein and Toklas play themselves in a film of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* similarly reflects an association of reference with authenticity.

Stein herself was interested in the effect of celebrities. Although she dismisses newspapers when she compares her autobiography to them, she makes an exception of when newspapers cover 'terribly exciting' personalities. In one of the articles she wrote for *The Washington Post* during her American lecture tour she writes that John Dillinger (the gangster) and Charles Lindbergh (the aviator) are exciting:

> Not because the story their story is exciting it is exciting their story, but what is really exciting is that they are exciting and that is the reason that what happens to them yesterday is still what happens to them today because they are existing every day and exciting every day and every day they are existing they are exciting and so any day any newspaper tells anything about them it makes it like today and so be exciting.[130]

According to Stein, what is happening is not exciting, but Dillinger and Lindbergh are. They are so exciting that the newspapers achieve portraits that like Stein's written portraits are exciting, not so much because of their writing method, but because of the excitement that the celebrities emanate. Stein compares *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to the less exciting aspect of newspapers (mimesis, resemblance, what happens), but her autobiographies help form a personality that like Dillinger's and Lindbergh's was exciting, not least with their illustrations. Stein explains that her written portraits are exciting because they do not have a narrative story.[131] Although she does not make the connection, Stein's images in a way offer aspects of what she aims for with her written portraits: lack of narrative and emanation of existence and

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[129] Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), p. 5.
[130] Gertrude Stein, 'Yesterday's News Today's News, Gertrude Stein Discovers Here', *Washington Post*, 24 March 1935, p. 3.
[131] Stein, 'How Writing Is Written', p. 155.

personality.[132] The many copies of Stein's autobiographies, in libraries and elsewhere, where I have found photographs of Stein to be missing, seem to suggest they indeed have excited her readers. It also illustrates how photographs, as convenient scaled-down imprints of the people they portray, can be coveted, snatched, and circulated in ways text cannot.

Images of Monroe: Another Kind of Middlebrow Photography

The contribution of *Marilyn*'s photographs to Mailer's star status is perhaps most evident with his only *Time* cover where a photograph of him is cropped and superimposed on a photograph of Monroe (figure 20).

[132] Perhaps Stein does make the connection. In her poem, 'Postal Cards', written around the time when she and Toklas had photographs of them in front of Joffre's birthplace made into postal cards, she writes: 'Were you it./ Were you a postal card/ Were you on a postal card/ I do not care about imitating narratives.' YCAL MSS 76, box 7, folder 133.

Figure 20 Norman Mailer's *Time* cover, 16 July 1973 (Photograph of Mailer by Larry Schiller and photograph of Monroe by Bert Stern).

Marilyn gave Mailer a *Time* cover just as *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* gave one to Stein. Mailer, however, had been a bigger celebrity for a longer period of time. With his bestselling novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Mailer became famous at the early age of 25, and he continued to be a celebrity with his next twelve novels and even larger non-fictional output, including significant contributions to New Journalism such as *The Armies of the Night* (1968). In addition, he participated in television debates with other public intellectuals such as Truman Capote and Gore Vidal, ran for mayor in New York City, and created front-page scandals such as when he stabbed one of his six wives with a pen knife at a party. In fact, it was

as a famous and notorious author that Mailer came to write *Marilyn* in the first place. Schiller recounts how he told Harold Roth, who published *Marilyn*, that he wanted 'a writer whose own life experiences might somehow mirror [Monroe's]'. When Roth recommended Mailer, Schiller replied that if they got Mailer, then they would get the cover of *Time*. Mailer was attractive for Schiller, because as a celebrity, he could relate to Monroe, and because his infamous reputation as 'Public Enemy No. 1 to the feminist generation of the day' would create controversy and thus publicity for the book.[133] For Mailer's part, *Marilyn* not only let him elaborate his views on sex, which he had expressed to disastrous effect in his previous work, *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971), but it also gave him his biggest seller since *The Naked and the Dead*.

We can see Mailer as an already established celebrity mediating and moderating his image in *Marilyn*, as we did with Stein in *Everybody's Autobiography*. In a move analogous to Stein's use of photographs of black actors, Mailer uses photographs of Monroe as an extension of himself. The way photographs make subjects into objects also means that others can be appropriated and used as mirrors of oneself, perhaps especially if the subjects are of a minority race or gender and thus already subjected to unequal power dynamics.[134] The literary critic John Leonard recalls in an oral biography of Mailer that he had wished Mailer had written about 'his fear of death' and 'his ambiguous relationship to celebrity' in a book about Hemingway rather than Monroe.[135] As a subject, however, Hemingway is less of a celebrity than Monroe, and he is not as ingrained in its vehicles such as tabloids, television, and film. As a subject, Monroe gives Mailer the opportunity to wrestle with the mass-mediated side of celebrity. Mailer's own experiences with his mass-mediated image frustrated him. Although Mailer achieved a *Time* cover with *Marilyn*, he was not happy with how it looked. According to Schiller, who took the photograph of Mailer without telling him why, Mailer was ready to 'kill' him when he saw the cover.[136] Making his grievance public, Mailer complained in an advertisement he wrote for

[133] Schiller, 'In this Corner… Norman Mailer', p. 16.
[134] In a further twist on the parallel between Stein's and Mailer's appropriations of minorities, Mailer had used blacks as a reflection of himself in *The White Negro* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1957).
[135] Peter Manso, *Mailer: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), p. 559.
[136] Manso, *Mailer: His Life and Times*, p. 548.

Marilyn that the photograph made him look like a coyote.[137] Mailer was in general disappointed with his screen presence. In his copy of Maurice Zolotow's biography of Monroe, *Marilyn Monroe* (1960), which he used in his research for *Marilyn*, Mailer marked as 'key!' a passage that compares Monroe's outsize personality on screen with her personality off-screen.[138] Conversely, Mailer laments in an open letter published in *Rolling Stone* the same week as *Marily*n that he once in a television debate came across as inferior to Capote, although they both (according to Mailer) had thought Mailer superior. Mailer muses:

> I had had my first lesson in the mysterious transpositions of reality which come by way of television. If [Marshall] McLuhan hadn't offered the medium as the message, I would have been groping for the concept all these years.[139]

Tapping into the decade's burgeoning media awareness, Mailer uses Monroe's photographs to reflect on his own celebrity experience whilst benefitting from her successful media presence. Combining photography, life-writing, and techniques of the novel, he attempts to capture Monroe as a celebrity whilst simultaneously controlling and promoting his own public persona.

Like Stein's photographs, the photographs of Monroe have a popular aesthetic, subordinating issues of media and form to matters of subject, content, and function. In contrast to Stein's photographs, however, which meet the modernist emphasis on form implicit in Bourdieu's definition of popular aesthetics by emphasising Stein's own avant-garde appearance, the photographs in *Marilyn* make no such attempt. They are the kind of aesthetically pleasing and 'creative [schöpferisch]' photographs that Benjamin argued were a surrender to fashion.[140] They have bright colours, a clear focus, and the compositions are symmetrical and clean. Nothing distracts or detracts from Monroe, the formal aspects of the photographs only serving to make her correspond to stereotypes about good looks and sex appeal. More than half of the images show her nude or semi-nude and she poses seductively for the camera, often parting her lips. Not only do the photographs not challenge aesthetic norms, Monroe does not surprise or

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[137] Advertisement by Grosset and Dunlap, *New York Times*, 9 December 1973, pp. 469-71.
[138] Norman Mailer's marked copy of Zolotow's *Marilyn Monroe* (New Work: Harcourt, 1960), p. 299. Norman Mailer Papers. Austin, Harry Ransom Center (HRC), MS 2643, box 155, folder 1.
[139] Norman Mailer, 'The Capote Perplex: An Open Letter from Norman Mailer', *Rolling Stone*, 19 July 1973, p. 8.
[140] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 383; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 526.

irritate the eye. She has the accepted good looks Stein associates with popularity and unoriginality, the same kind of accessible beauty as Pickford, the film star Stein described as 'so blonde, so pale, so nothing'. There is nothing but what is conventionally desirable in the photographs of Monroe. They could illustrate the quotation from 'the plain-speaking' Hippias the Sophist that Bourdieu uses to explain popular aesthetics: 'I shall tell him what beauty is and I'm not likely to be refuted by him! The fact is, Socrates, to be frank, a beautiful woman, that's what beauty is.'[141] Bourdieu also describes middlebrow art as oriented towards 'the search for effect [la recherche de l'effet]' as opposed to 'the cult of form-for-its-own sake [le culte de la forme pour forme]'.[142] *Marilyn*'s photographs seem to have one overriding purpose: to please the viewer with the body of a beautiful woman.

Mailer's notes in his archive regarding *Marilyn*'s photographs--jotted down on notecards, odd sheets of papers, and in manuscript margins--suggest that he wanted to charm the reader with Monroe's appearance. Mailer did not always win the disputes between himself and Schiller about how *Marilyn* should be illustrated, but his observation 'Up to 13 – fine' in his notes on the photographs suggests *Marilyn* begins the way Mailer wanted it to: with glossy photographs such as Bert Stern's reclining nude from 1962 (Figure 21).[143]

[141] ['Ce qu'est le beau, je vais le lui répondre et je ne risqué pas d'être jamais refute par lui! En fait, s'il faut parler franc, une belle femme, sache-le bien, Socrate, voilà ce qui est beau.'] Bourdieu, *Un art moyen*, p. 115; Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, p. 79.
[142] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le marché des biens symboliques', *L'année sociologique*, 22 (1971), 42-126 (p. 86); Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Market of Symbolic Goods', trans. by R. Swyer, *Poetics* 14 (1985), 13-44 (p. 30).
[143] HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 3.

Figure 21 Photograph by Bert Stein, Norman Mailer, *Marilyn* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1973), pp. 12-3.

This full-figure shot of a naked Monroe lying on her stomach in bed, reproduced in black and white on a two-page spread, is presumably the 'Stern reclining nude' that Mailer specifies on a notecard that he would like at the beginning of the work.[144] In general, the notes indicate that the attractiveness of the photographs (and of Monroe) was a paramount concern for Mailer. He comments on Monroe's figure, argues in relation to a specific section that they 'want her at her most gorgeous', and he judges the photographs with adjectives such as 'awful', 'ugly', and 'splendid'. [145] The photographs seem to have succeeded in pleasing the viewers, the illustrations leading some reviewers to describe *Marilyn* in appreciative terms associated with consumption such as 'yummy'.[146] *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was also received as a culinary feast, but this was primarily because of the inside view that the work offered of a cultural elite, not Stein's appearance.

Marilyn's photographs do not secure authenticity with an avant-garde aesthetic, as those in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* do; nor do they suggest they are authentic by not being staged. Like the photographs of Stein, the photographs of Monroe cater to the desire to possess

[144] HRC, MS 2643, box 962.
[145] HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 3.
[146] Clive James, 'Mailer's "Marilyn"', *Commentary*, 56:4 (October 1973), p. 44; Advertisement by Grosset and Dunlap, *New York Times*, pp. 469-71.

things through their reproductions, a desire that permeates 'the masses [den Massen]' according to Benjamin. But whereas Stein attempts to provide the 'uniqueness and duration [Einmaligkeit und Dauer]' that Benjamin associates with the original object (in this case Stein herself), the images of Monroe celebrate and cultivate the 'transience and reproducibility [Flüchtigkeit und Wiederholbarkeit]' that Benjamin associates with reproduced images.[147] Unlike the informal and diverse photographs in Stein's works, which document the private woman and various aspects of her life, the professional photographs in *Marilyn* resemble each other in showcasing Monroe the pin-up girl and film star. Except for the three last photographs by Sam Shaw, which show Monroe talking on the phone in the home that she shared with Arthur Miller and a few of the photographs of her with her husbands, no attempt is made to show Monroe in an everyday, uncontrived, private setting. The photographs of Monroe are nearly all the same. She may be gambolling on a beach, reclining in a pasture, or posing with props such as chairs, drinks, or bed sheets, but they are scenarios obviously invented for the sake of the photo shoot. With their lack of contextual content or human interaction, except for that Monroe has via the camera, the photographs acquire a dreamy, ethereal quality. The content of the photographs is simply and exclusively Monroe's image: her appearance, expression, poses, make-up, clothes, and accessories. Especially the dozen extreme close-ups of her face are devoid of pointers or indexical indicators. The few photographs that do display Monroe in a context primarily show her in action as an actor: stills from her films, photographs of her on set, rehearsing, or engaging with other actors.

The photographs of Monroe are like the iconic photographs of Stein by professional photographers not included in her autobiographies in that they create an ideal version of their subject and a sense of unreality: they are like Barthes's Platonic and non-real Garbo. Unlike the austere photographs of Stein, however, *Marilyn*'s photographs exude extravagance and exuberance. The photographs in *Marilyn* are glossy in both senses of the word: they have a surface lustre or brightness from being printed on smooth, luxurious paper and they are

[147] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 379; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 519.

attractive in an artificially opulent, sophisticated, and smoothly captivating manner. They delight and seduce precisely because of their artificiality and thus invoke a postmodern aesthetic that sees seduction, like Baudrillard explains, in 'the brilliant surface of nonsense [la brillante surface du non-sens]' and 'enchanted simulations [simulation enchantée]'.[148] According to Baudrillard, all is in a sense simulation as we live in an age of simulation, but with the way they flaunt their own artificiality, *Marilyn*'s photographs seem to resonate especially well with his description of simulations and in particular their seduction. Staying at the surface of pure appearance, the images bask in 'the blind but brilliant ambiance of simulacra [l'ambiance aveugle et brillante des simulacres]'.[149] Demonstrating the popularity of this ambiance, many reviews both displayed and complimented *Marilyn*'s photographs, drawing attention to their glossiness with adjectives such as 'sensational', 'gorgeous' and 'glamorous'.[150] The superficiality of Monroe's photographs is especially remarkable in relation to their portrayal of sex. In contrast to Stein's photographs, which hint at her undisclosed sexual orientation whilst invoking an avant-garde aesthetic, the images in *Marilyn* peddle sex as a mythical, nonconcrete, popular commodity.

Mailer's Photographic Fiction

Mailer sketches the relationship between *Marilyn*'s text and images in a 'Note on the photographs' at the beginning of the work:

> We have two chronologies here, one in photography, another in words. If successful, they will come together in the shape of an elusive search for that most mercurial charm--the identity of a lovely if seldom simple woman.[151]

Promising no more than an 'elusive search' for Monroe's identity, Mailer suggests his words will collaborate with the photographs in creating a shape not a timeline. Indeed, *Marilyn*'s

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[148] Baudrillard, *De la séduction*, pp. 79, 86: Baudrillard, 'On Seduction', pp. 150, 154.
[149] Jean Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), p. 116; Jean Baudrillard, 'The Order of Simulcra', in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 50-86 (p. 75).
[150] Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, 'Aquarius on Gemini--II', *New York Times*, 17 Juley 1973, p. 37; Pauline Kael, 'Marilyn: A rip-off with genius', *New York Times*, 22 July 1973, p. 233; Andrew Sarris, 'Marilyn', *Washington Post*, 12 August 1973, p. BW1; Jill Tweedie, 'American Rose', *Guardian*, 8 November 1973, p. 16; Advertisement by Grosset and Dunlap, *New York Times*, pp. 469-71.
[151] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 9.

narrative is less characterised by linearity than Mailer's other non-fiction-novel hybrids such as *The Armies of the Night* (1968). In these works, the narrative resembles a thought process in which contradictions are slowly worked through and reversals are arduously but masterfully made. In contrast to this oscillating, forward-moving narrative approach, *Marilyn* is characterised by a steady flow of similar observations and suppositions revolving around Marilyn's appearance and attractiveness. Although the narrative has a plot corresponding to the main arc of Monroe's life, the prose makes the narrative seem like a long poem about Monroe. The lyrical dimension of Mailer's text is made especially apparent in a calendar produced for 1974, where the first two sentences of *Marilyn* are rendered in verse:

So we think of Marilyn
who was every man's love affair
with America,
Marilyn Monroe who was blonde and
beautiful and had a sweet
little rinky-dink of a voice and
all the cleanliness of all the
clean American backyards.
She was our angel,
the sweet angel of sex,
and the sugar of sex came up from
her like a resonance of sound
in the clearest grain of a violin.[152]

Marilyn is full of hyperbolic, mythologizing sentences like these. The lyricism of the words resonates with the superficial beauty and stasis of the still images and distances the narrative from the prosaic quality usually expected of biography, making Mailer's biography seem more like a lyrical portrait.

Mailer takes a step further into the realm of poetic license by claiming to approximate the novel with his biography. Making explicit what his fiction will entail, Mailer declares in the beginning of the narrative that he with 'the sanction of a novelist' will 'look into the unspoken impulses of some of his real characters'.[153] Mailer sees his fiction as consisting in inventing Monroe's subconscious, but his fabrications do not stray far from the insubstantial surface emanations of the photographs. One of his first effusive descriptions of Monroe (with a very

[152] *The 1974 Marilyn Monroe Calendar with Commentary by Norman Mailer* (Los Angeles: Alskog, 1973).
[153] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 20.

long introductory clause) illustrates how he celebrates an image of her that like the photographs has a lavish superficiality and a giddy meaninglessness:

> Since she was also a movie star of the most stubborn secretiveness and flamboyant candor, most conflicting arrogance and on-rushing inferiority; great populist of philosophers--she loved the working man--and most tyrannical of mates, a queen of a castrator who was ready to weep for a dying minnow; a lover of books who did not read, and a proud, inviolate artist who could haunch over to publicity when the heat was upon her faster than a whore could lust over a hot buck; a female spurt of wit and sensitive energy who could hang like a sloth for days in a muddy-mooded coma; a child-girl, yet an actress to loose a riot by dropping her glove at a premiere; a fountain of charm and a dreary bore; an ambulating cyclone of beauty when dressed to show, a dank hunched-up drab at her worst--with a bad smell!--a giant and an emotional pygmy; a lover of life and a cowardly hyena of death who drenched herself in chemical stupors; a sexual oven whose fire may rarely have been lit--she would go to bed with her brassiere on--she was certainly more and less than the silver witch of us all.[154]

In this cavalcade of opposing epithets Mailer offers the reader a version of Monroe that very well could qualify her as a figurehead for 'the era of simulation', which according to Baudrillard involves

> a liquidation of all referentials--worse: […] their artificial resurrection in the systems of signs, a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalences, to all binary oppositions, to all combinatory algebra. It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes.[155]

Monroe as Mailer describes her lends herself 'to all systems of equivalences, to all binary oppositions, to all combinatory algebra': she is secretive and candid, arrogant and insecure, philosophical and proletarian, emasculating and compassionate, literary and illiterate, an artist and a publicity-whore, spirited and shiftless, adolescent and mature, charming and boring, beautiful and repulsive, an emotional giant and pygmy, a force of life and of death, sexual and non-sexual. Mailer concludes that she is 'more and less than the silver witch of us all', but the

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[154] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 16-7.

[155] ['une liquidation de tous les référentiels – pire: par leur resurrection artificielle dans les systems de signes, matériau plus ductile que le sens, en ce qu'il s'offre à tous les systems d'équivalences, à toutes les oppositions binaires, à toute l'algèbre combinatoire. Il ne s'agit plus d'imitation, ni de redoublement, ni même de parodie. Il s'agit d'une substitution au reel des signes du reel, c'est-à-dire d'une operation de dissuasion de tout processus reel par son double opératoire, machine signalétique métastable, programmatique, impeccable, qui offer tous les signes du reel et en court-circuite toutes les péripéties.'] Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, p. 11; Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, p. 2.

'silver witch' seems inconsequential. With all of Mailer's opposing epithets Monroe comes across as 'more and less than' anything 'of us all'. She is unique and everybody at the same time, or in Mailer's words, 'the whole and double of every human alive'.[156]

Mailer's equivocal description of Monroe stays like the glossy photographs at the surface of pure appearance, and with its excitement, whimsy, and dexterity, it glows like the photographs with the brilliance of nonsense. In fact, Mailer specified in his manuscript that he wanted to illustrate this description of Monroe with one of Milton Greene's black-and-white photographs.[157] These ethereal photographs show a nude Monroe (except for fishnet stockings and a hat) on a black surface and background that blend together so seamlessly that it looks like Monroe exists in no space.[158] Figure 22 shows how the heightened contrast and the blurred contours in these photographs make Monroe stand out from the darkness in bright but soft relief.

Figure 22 Photograph by Milton Greene, Norman Mailer, *Marilyn* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1973), pp. 250-1.

[156] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 97.
[157] Typed final draft, p. 9. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 4.
[158] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 250-5.

Mailer's description of Monroe appears on pages without photographs, Greene's black-and-white photographs reproduced only much later in the work, but his wish to illustrate his sparkling, meaningless description of Monroe with these enchanting, self-consciously posed photographs shows that he saw a connection between the two and that he wanted them to dazzle in unison.

The *Marilyn* calendar illustrates how strongly the work's text and images agree with each other despite not being directly tied together in the biography. The first two of Mailer's sentences rendered in verse are printed on the bare back of Monroe in one of Stern's nudes of her from 1962 (Figure 23).

Figure 23 Sleeve cover, Alskog's 1974 *Marilyn Monroe* calendar.

Each month has a photograph and a 'commentary' by Mailer, pictorial and textual component both taken from *Marilyn*. The same nude also doubles as the photograph for January with the textual accompaniment of 'She was a cornucopia. She excited dreams of honey for the horn.' Other nudes by Stern from the same photo session illustrate 'She was our angel, the sweet angel of sex' (November), and 'Whole parts of her psyche had been wounded, bruised, crushed, lacerated, amputated, thickened and killed' (September). This latter example shows how Mailer's invention of Monroe's subconscious meets no resistance from her photographs, even when Mailer's sad description is coupled with a half-smile from Monroe (Figure 24).

Figure 24 'September', Alskog's 1974 *Marilyn Monroe* calendar.

Reflecting Mailer's interest in Monroe's appearance, sex life, and media presence, earlier photographs by de Dienes accompany 'She is young, she is lovely, she is capable of getting into love affairs and getting out of them' (February) and 'Her face came on the screen like a sweet peach bursting before one's eyes' (April). The page for July supports Mailer's suppositions that Monroe's 'constraint vanished as soon as her clothes were removed' with a photograph credited to Lawrence Schiller and William Read Woodfield that shows her bathing naked in a pool for *Something's Got to Give*, the film that was left unfinished after her death.

The format of the calendar brings out the ahistorical, nonspecific aspect of *Marilyn*'s text and images. The photographs and quotations are retrieved from random places in Monroe's life and Mailer's text (the calendar only provides the photographers' names and no page numbers), but the text and images are nonetheless combined with ease, suggesting the inconsequentiality of their original contexts. Mailer's archive contains a list of twenty-six of his riffs on Monroe's image, which in list form nicely illustrate their sameness and interchangeability. Examples not used in the calendar include: MARILYN WAS DELIVERANCE, A VERY STRADIVARIOUS OF SEX, SO GORGEOUS, FORGIVING, HUMOROUS, COMPLIANT AND TENDER', 'SHE WAS A GENERAL OF SEX BEFORE SHE KNEW ANYTHING OF SEXUAL WAR', and 'THE INSIDE OF HER HEART MUST HAVE LOOKED LIKE A CLUB-FIGHTERS FACE'.[159] Despite narrating Monroe's 'unspoken impulses', Mailer's bombastic, vague statements indulge, like the photographs, in clichés. Mailer's description of his narrative as 'fiction' can even come across as dated if one accepts the 'liquidations of all referentials' that the photographs with their artificiality seem to suggest and which seems to inspire Mailer's text. While Stein secures the authenticity of her photographs in *Everybody's Autobiography* by contrasting her approach to photography with Pickford's, Mailer eagerly partakes in the seductive artificiality of Monroe's photographs, ascribing a similar sense of artistry to his own writing by describing it as 'magical'.[160]

[159] HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 3.
[160] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 20.

Unlike Stein, who in *Everybody's Autobiography* counteracts the fiction of a publicity-produced persona by, among other things, encouraging a sense of her photographs' authenticity, Mailer sees the fiction of a public persona as not only providing an opportunity for more fiction, but also necessitating it. He asks rhetorically, 'why not assume Marilyn Monroe opens the entire problem of biography?', and proceeds to account for why his biographical subject requires a 'novel biography'. Mailer questions the ability of facts to comprehend any person; but he argues that Monroe specifically prevents facts from being established. Not only is Monroe an actor, thus always potentially playing a role, but she is also immersed in 'factoids', a word Mailer coins and defines as 'facts which have no existence before appearing in a magazine or newspaper, creations which are not so much lies as a product to manipulate emotion in the Silent Majority'. Monroe's entrenchment in a publicity apparatus that includes such photographs as the ones collected in *Marilyn* thus drives Mailer to situate his work on the borderline between the biography and the novel. Monroe 'opens the entire problem of biography' not only because she is an actor, but because she is a star actor. Mailer speculates that 'there is no instrument more ready to capture the elusive quality of her nature than a novel' and resolves to offer 'a literary hypothesis of a *possible* Marilyn Monroe who might actually have lived'.[161] When accused of plagiarising the two biographies on which he had based much of his work (as he acknowledges in *Marilyn*), Mailer had source sheets prepared that showed how those biographies in turn were based on previously published material, the kind of 'factoids' that he refers to in *Marilyn*.[162] Mailer thus not only uses Monroe's celebrity status to justify his biography-novel hybrid, he was also prepared to use the existence of 'factoids' to problematize accusations of plagiarism in a legal battle that eventually was settled outside of court. Mailer informs the reader that his narrative and the photographs will come together in a search for 'the identity of a lovely if seldom simple woman', but it is primarily the 'mercurial charm' of the Monroe celebrity icon that fills out the shape of that search.

[161] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 18, 20. Italics Mailer.
[162] HRC, MS 2643, box 154, folder 2.

A little less than a decade later, Mailer would take even greater advantage of the fictive potential of Monroe's photographs in *Of Women and Their Elegance*. In this work, illustrated with over a hundred photographs by Milton Greene, about a third of them featuring Monroe, Mailer writes as Monroe in the first person, meditating on the concept of elegance. Writing as himself in an 'Author's Note', Mailer blames Greene's photographs for the liberties he has taken:

> I have to stand by my dubious method, therefore, my concoction. It has many a skew but it will insist on one virtue. The author is trying to understand his subject. If Marilyn Monroe has been treated with more intimacy than is my right, well, blame Milton's photographs. They are so resonant. They tell us so much about women in general and Marilyn in particular that I am encouraged to take these chances with my imagination. After all, the pictures speak of those little mysteries women traverse on the road to beauty, and that as we know is the beginning of all legend. Three cheers for Marilyn, then. Three for Helen of Troy.[163]

Mailer implies he can use Greene's photographs to validate his 'concoction' because they say something general about women, beauty, and legend. This is why he can substitute Monroe with Helen of Troy in the last line. References to *Marilyn*'s pages in his *Of Women and Their Elegance* manuscript reveal Mailer was still influenced by the earlier work's photographs. This is also clear in a draft of the 'Author's Note': 'this author does not often return to the scene of his earlier crimes, and would not have done it here, but for these photos.' [164] The 'crime' is *Marilyn*, which not only contains Mailer's biography of Monroe but also some of Greene's photographs. In a handwritten note in his archive, Mailer reminds himself to write 'A Note to the reader on why there are no comments on the later photographs let the admiration manifest itself by the act of writing this book rather than by composing poems to each of Mr Greene's photographs'. As in *Marilyn*, the fiction in *Of Women and Their Elegance* has a lyrical relationship to the photographs. Mailer's thoughts in this second work reveal that his fiction in part stems from an emotional response to the photographs, and that he sees his use of fiction as legitimate because it is poetic.

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[163] Norman Mailer, *Of Women and Their Elegance* (London, Sydney, Auckland and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), p. 285.
[164] HRC, MS 2643, box 251, folder 6.

Highbrow Masculine Text, Middlebrow Feminine Image

While *Marilyn*'s reviews primarily reflect the widespread attraction of the middlebrow photographs, a few also demonstrate how a highbrow perspective might view the salacious illustrations as demoting Mailer's work to the 'coffee table' or 'cocktail-table'.[165] Pauline Kael of *The New York Times* took a stand against the book's tastiness: 'It's a rich and creamy book, an offensive physical object, perhaps even a little sordid.'[166] *Marilyn* differs from *Everybody's Autobiography* in using fiction to celebrate celebrity's fictional aspects, but its fiction, like that of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, is paramount for securing authorial signature. Mailer asks hypothetically about his endeavour to capture Monroe: 'Could the solution be nothing less vainglorious than a novel of Marilyn Monroe? Written in the form of biography?' The keyword here is 'vainglorious': Mailer does himself honour as much as Monroe. Writing in the third-person, he takes pride in his novelistic appropriation of Monroe: 'It satisfied his fundamental idea that acquisition of knowledge for a literary man was best achieved in those imaginative acts of appropriation picked up by the disciplined exercise of one's skill.'[167] Like Stein, who compares herself to Defoe, Mailer claims a grand literary heritage for his work by comparing Monroe (and himself) to Virginia Woolf:

> It may be fair to quote another woman whose life ended in suicide: 'A biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many as one thousand.' The words are by Virginia Woolf.[168]

With this misquotation from *Orlando*, a work studied in depth in the next chapter, Mailer makes a triadic parallel between Woolf, Monroe, and himself: like Woolf, Monroe commits suicide, and like Woolf, Mailer writes a novel biography.[169] Like *Orlando*'s biographer-narrator, Mailer speaks of himself in the third person and is just as reflective about the biographical act, but by comparing himself to Woolf, Mailer more assertively claims the highbrow prestige of these narrative approaches. One of the reviews broadened Mailer's pedigree for *Marilyn* to include

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[165] Kael, 'Marilyn: A rip-off with genius', p. 233; Sarris, 'Marilyn', p. BW1.
[166] Kael, 'Marilyn: A rip-off with genius', p. 233.
[167] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 20.
[168] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 17-8.
[169] Woolf writes: 'A biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand.' Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), p. 279.

Thomas Carlyle, André Maurois, and Lytton Strachey. Mailer capitalised on this by including the quotation in the three-page advertisement he wrote for *Marilyn* in *The New York Times*. This advertisement also uses the biography's fiction to defend it against the critique it had received for its lack of research. It claims Mailer's 'right to do an introspective biography': 'Good biography may emerge out of an author's intuition that he possesses some special insight into the life of a famous man or woman, whether he has met them or not.' Mailer's author's intuition rather than a researcher's hard work validates his biography of Monroe, and is itself bolstered by reference to the contribution of his oeuvre to New Journalism: '[it is] the same intuition with which he has forged his incomparable literary career'.[170] Mailer is not quiet about his use of fiction, but aggressively asserts its validity and merit by inserting himself into a literary tradition of blending biography and fiction and simultaneously proclaiming his central position within a new genre of creative non-fiction. The lyrical aspect of his writing furthermore associates it with poetry, the model of literature traditionally considered the most highbrow.[171]

As in Stein's autobiographies, *Marilyn*'s text seems highbrow especially in comparison to the photographs. Grosset and Dunlap sold *Marilyn*'s text as being highbrow precisely by contrasting it to the photographs:

> MARILYN, by Norman Mailer. (Grosset & Dunlap, $19.95.) More than 100 photographs by two dozen photographers of the sexy waif-goddess Marilyn Monroe, nigh overwhelmed by a Maileresque 'novel biography'; a tour de force, a metaphysical cocktail-table book.[172]

The advertisement has two selling points: while Monroe's sex appeal gives value to the middlebrow photographs, the highbrow text is given more prestige with the suffix 'esque', elevating Mailer into a style, and the quotation marks around 'novel biography' suggests its genre is a novelty. The power of the writing is even declared to nearly overwhelm the photographs. Mailer's use of Monroe's image and photographs to create a seductive portrait may be powerful, but the presentation of his text as highbrow and her photographs as middlebrow is problematic. *Marilyn*'s text and images seem to replicate the dualism that Laura

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[170] Advertisement by Grosset and Dunlap, *New York Times*, pp. 469-71.
[171] Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', pp. 328-32.
[172] HRC, MS 2643, box 152, folder 4.

Mulvey pinpoints in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', an article written the same year as *Marilyn*, between an active, male diegesis and a passive, female image. Like the kind of films in which Monroe starred, and which Mulvey uses to illustrate her theory, the man, Mailer, directs the development of events, while the woman, Monroe, only exists to be looked at, to be a spectacle. As Mulvey explains, 'the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of advancing the story, making things happen.'[173] Monroe's photographs offer no resistance to Mailer's narrative but yield passively to his fantasies about her. The association of Mailer's text with highbrow art and Monroe's photographs with middlebrow qualities exacerbates the inequality in power that Mulvey observes in this kind of dynamic. It reflects a stratification of esteem that privileges the active over the passive--a valuation that also indirectly underpins Mulvey's theory.

The highbrow/middlebrow, male/female text-image dichotomy also characterises Stein's works, where domestic photographs complement Stein's 'genius' writing, but unlike *Marilyn*, Stein's photographs do not incorporate a male gaze. The photographs of Monroe, on the other hand, propagate a 'traditional exhibitionist role' for women, in which women 'are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'.[174] As a medium, photography is especially suited to reinforcing this traditional exhibitionist role for women. *Marilyn*'s photographs epitomise the objectifying and sexualizing dimensions of photography that McLuhan posits in his comparison of the medium to a brothel without walls:

> The photograph extends and multiplies the human image to the proportions of mass-produced merchandise. The movie stars and matinee idols are put in the public domain by photography. They become dreams that money can buy. They can be bought and hugged and thumbed more easily than public prostitutes.[175]

Proving a good example for Mulvey's and McLuhan's theories, *Marilyn*'s photographs showcase Monroe as an erotic object, putting her sexual wares on display. In fact, in the second

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[173] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, by Laura Mulvey (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 14-26 (p. 20).
[174] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 19. Italics Mulvey.
[175] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 189.

photograph of her, taken by Greene in 1954, she sits in tight-fitting trousers with legs spread apart, revealing the outline of her genitalia. Susan Sontag captures the assault implied by the kind of photographs reproduced in *Marilyn* with her description of the voyeuristic relationship created by photography:

> The camera doesn't rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate--all activities that, unlike the sexual push and shove, can be conducted from a distance, and with some detachment.[176]

In light of the removed penetration that photography enables, it is striking that Monroe hides her face with her hand in the last photograph shown in *Marilyn*, as if offering resistance to the gaze.

Mirroring the photographs, Mailer gladly perpetuates a sexualized representation of Monroe. In the playscript to Mailer's *Strawhead* (1986), a play based on *Of Women and Their Elegance* that also includes Greene's photographs projected onto screens, the actress playing Monroe defends Monroe against the playwright's sexist and fictional portrayal of her.[177] Mailer does not incorporate such metanarrative critique in *Marilyn*. On the contrary, as we have seen, Mailer treats Monroe's appearance as serving male desire with assertions such as 'She was a cornucopia. She excited dreams of honey for the horn'. Manuscripts reveal that Mailer's approach to the photographs was very much informed by the male gaze. He wanted a montage of four photographs to illustrate the 'whorish' impression that Monroe first gave Natasha Lytess, her acting coach, and in the manuscript for *Of Women and Their Elegance*, he writes that he wants 'THE WHORIEST PICTURE OF MARILYN WE CAN FIND'.[178] Mailer uses photographs to celebrate Monroe's appearance and to inspire fantasies about her sex life, but he also attempts to analyse the mechanisms of Monroe's sex appeal. His manuscript indicates that he wanted a montage of four photographs to illustrate the following: 'Her sex appeal is always a reflection of her surroundings. She is a mirror of the pleasures of those who stare at her.'[179] He also wanted a montage of four photographs to illustrate that she 'may have had a tendency to

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[176] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 13.
[177] Bound playscript, circa 1985, p. 43a. HRC, MS 2643, box 260, folder 3.
[178] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 76; Typed final draft of *Marilyn*, p. 168. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 4; Draft of *Of Women and Their Elegance*, p. 219. HRC, MS 2643, box 252, folder 1.
[179] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 44; Typed final draft of *Marilyn*, p. 93. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 4.

return each man his own sexual goods', and Kelley's famous 1949 calendar photograph of Monroe, which infuriated her production company because she is completely naked, is in the *Marilyn* calendar accompanied with the following analysis: 'The foundation of her art might be to speak to each man as if he were all of male existence available to her.'[180] Mailer describes Monroe's internalization of a sexualized male gaze, but does not question it. Mailer does not voice any critical reflection about the Monroe image or how the celebrity system works for female film stars. He does not interrogate the unequal dynamics that underlie the sex bomb image of Monroe in the photographs, but rather applauds that Monroe in her publicity stills '[i]rrepressibly […] whispers in the ear of the man who looks at the photo, "You can fuck me if you're lucky, Mr. Sugar."'[181] Sensitive to the period's theorization of media, Mailer presents his own theory of art and technology, one which has copulation as its centre:

> If the secret itch of the artist was once to paint his mistress naked, the core of writing may be to describe the sexual act and the core of acting to display fornication on a stage. As a corollary, the buried secret in a male photographer was once to photograph his woman nude, ideally her vagina, open and nude. It is a rule of thumb today: one cannot buy a Polaroid in a drugstore without announcing to the world, one chance in two, the camera will be used to record a copulation of family or friends. Everything technological now has the impulse to enter the act of creation, as much as art used to.[182]

Like Mulvey, McLuhan, and Sontag, Mailer sees a connection between photography and sex, but he does not condemn it.

Mailer's treatment of Monroe is sexist, but his identification with her passive, female, middlebrow image complicates the association of him with active, male, highbrow qualities. The deep affinity between Mailer and Monroe that recurs as a theme throughout *Marilyn* is fancifully introduced at the beginning of the narrative with an anagram-play on their names:

> For a man with a cabalistic turn of mind, it was fair and engraved conscience that the letters in Marilyn Monroe (if the 'a' were used twice and the 'o' but once) would spell his own name leaving only the 'y' for excess, a trifling discrepancy, no more calculated to upset the heavens than the most minuscule diffraction of the red shift.[183]

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[180] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 48; Typed final draft of *Marilyn*, p. 108. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 4.
[181] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 91.
[182] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 54.
[183] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 20.

Mailer develops his mystical connection to Monroe by presenting it as 'transcendence' that 'a great novelist' writes about 'a beautiful woman'. His pairing suggests a male, active diegesis and a female, passive image, but Mailer's concept of 'transcendence' has to do with both of them being 'exceptional people'.[184] Mailer's interview with Walter W. Robinson for the *Time* cover story about *Marilyn* reveals the extent to which Mailer sympathised with Monroe. Mailer explained that his foreword developed into a biography when he found her life to be so like his own: 'being on the phone all day, hassles, hang-ups, hustling, promoting, being misunderstood, misunderstanding others, being bad, being mucked'. He argued that a shared experience of celebrity also made him adept as her biographer:

> That's the thing about people who become professionals--they acquire an existence, a personna, [*sic*] a professional existence that transcends, but must coexist with, the original personality from which it sprung. Marilyn Monroe was a professional, she did a lot of things for money. The biographer faces the formidable task of winnowing out, sifting out which was the professional and which was the private.[185]

Mailer's persona, his 'professional existence' is also apparent in *Marilyn*. Writing in the third person, he describes how his and Monroe's paths often almost crossed. He states that his dream was to steal Monroe from Arthur Miller, in 'all his vanity' believing that 'no one was so well suited to bring out the best in her as himself':

> It was only a few marriages (which is to say a few failures) later that he could recognize how he would have done no better than Miller and probably have been damaged further in the process.[186]

Mailer draws upon his private life, even his marriages, but he treats himself as an entity separate from himself, a character, or an object like Monroe's photographs, a figure that he furthermore belittles: he has vanity, failures, and vulnerability.

Like Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, *Marilyn* is narrated in the third person, but the narrative technique seems in Mailer's work to be as much a result of the author's celebrity as an impressive literary feat contributing to it. Both photography and third-person narration replicate the effects of becoming a celebrity: the subject is made an object, the self is

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[184] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 19.
[185] Interview with Walter W. Robinson, 22 June 1973. HRC, MS 2643, box 152, folder 6.
[186] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 19-20.

made other, identity is split with the creation of a separate but connected, not entirely same copy of oneself. According to Mailer, film gave him the idea of third-person narration, which he first employed in *The Armies of the Night*. He pinpoints the instance of inspiration to the editing of his film *Wild 90* (1968) where he is a leading character:

> I had come to see myself as a piece of yard goods about which one could ask 'Where can I cut this?' The habit of looking at myself as if I were someone other than myself--a character ready to be described in the third person.[187]

Seeing yourself from the outside with the help of photography can give the effect of alienation that Mailer also associates with the experience of being a celebrity. In his 1994 interview with Madonna for *Esquire* Mailer explains:

> When one is talented enough to become a phenomenon, the sensation that the psyche is divided into two halves (with which all of us are more or less familiar) becomes so pronounced that one lives with it as a condition of existence.[188]

Like photographs of oneself and third-person narration, being a celebrity splinters the self.

Glass has argued that Mailer 'ballasted his mass cultural fame in a model of masculine modernist genius that was, by the post-World War II era, clearly residual' as second-wave feminism had invalidated 'hypermasculine public posturing' and a 'relation between masculinity and high cultural cachet'.[189] Mailer exudes male bravado with his objectification of Monroe, but *Marilyn* also demonstrates a posturing that incorporates submissive and passive components. He resigns himself to a hapless character version of himself and he uses self-deprecating third-person narration. Mailer's celebrity experience can be described as 'feminine' in the sense that women traditionally have been objectified. In his interview with Madonna he elaborates: 'There is nothing comparable to living with a phenomenon when the phenomenon is you and you observe yourself with a cool intelligence, your own.' [190] Mailer's description of the celebrity experience, including his thoughts on the division of the psyche that it induces, suggests a male authentic self and a female celebrity image. Observation and cool intelligence

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[187] Norman Mailer, *The Spooky Art: Thoughts on Writing* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 198.
[188] Norman Mailer, 'Madonna', in *The Time of Our Time*, by Norman Mailer (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 1114-35 (p. 1120).
[189] Glass, *Authors Inc.*, pp. 18, 177, 183.
[190] Mailer, 'Madonna', p. 1114.

suggests an active male diegesis whereas the phenomenon looked at is the image, the spectacle. *Marilyn* seems to incorporate both elements: Mailer narrates Monroe and her celebrity experience, but he is also himself an image in the text. The reader comes close to Mailer as an author, more than one would expect to in a biography, but it is a mediated personality that the reader encounters. It is furthermore a charming fallible persona: superficial but seductive like the photographs of Monroe. Mailer's text is thus also photographic in the sense that it incorporates feminine, passive, middlebrow aspects.

The Indexical Underpinnings of Mailer's Star Alignment

Although Monroe's photographs have a glossy aesthetic and show an idealised version of Monroe in an unreal setting, the photographs' indexical relationship to their subject is nonetheless instrumental to Mailer's alignment of his star with Monroe's. Mailer paradoxically extols the photographs as both synthetic and genuine. Mailer theorizes the referential aspects of Monroe's photographs in his 'Note on the Photographs' when he explains why text and images do not always correspond:

> She is an actress, and her experiences can reappear at odd moments across the years. A particular photo can portray a mood she may have felt a decade earlier. Another will reveal anticipation of pleasures or sorrows yet to come. [191]

The photographs may not reflect Monroe's experience at the time they were taken, but Mailer maintains their authenticity by arguing that they reflect experiences that Monroe has had or will have.

Mailer claims in a draft that the photographs may 'bear a sardonic relation to the prose, as if to offer the photographers an opportunity to refute some of the literary conjecture', but the photographs do not have this oppositional power in the published *Marilyn*. [192] Instead, the few places where Mailer directly references the photographs demonstrate that he uses their indexical prowess to support his claims. Photographs of Monroe as a child, for example, provide 'an early

[191] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 9.
[192] Typed draft of 'A Note to the Reader', p. 3. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 3.

record of a child who seems more likely to turn out an athlete than an actress'.[193] Mailer also mentions photographs by Greene to illustrate Greene's vision of Monroe in a Charlie Chaplin film:

> Of course, Greene was right. It was with Chaplin she should have made a film. We can see Greene's vision of the sort of film it might have been in those photographs he took of her in black net stockings. No ordinary relation reveals itself there between photographer and model, rather a mist of glamour, tenderness, amusement, sex and subtle sorrow.[194]

According to Mailer, the photographs not only illustrate Greene's vision of Monroe in a Chaplin film, they also divulge Monroe's special relationship to her photographer. Mailer does not refrain from using photographs as evidence for unverifiable claims, such that Monroe's foster mother loved her:

> Norma Jean even looks pampered in one snapshot where she is wearing a ruffled dress and scalloped bonnet. When we learn the outfit was put together by Ida Bolender on her sewing machine, the idea of a child who was utterly ignored in her first years has nothing to sustain it. Too much craft has gone into the making of the dress.[195]

According to Mailer, the documentation provided by the photograph, reproduced in the margin next to the text, invalidates Monroe's own version of her past. Even more controversially, Mailer utilizes photographs by Schiller, Barris, and Stern to support his conjecture that Monroe was not suicidal and that her death could have been the result of a CIA/FBI master plot to embarrass Robert Kennedy, with whom Monroe may have had a 'flirtation'. He asserts that Monroe never looked 'more in command of herself' with 'the devil of the orphanage in her eye' than in one of Schiller's photographs of Monroe, photographs introduced in the 'Note on the Photographs' as being taken 'not two month before her death'.[196] In a similar vein, he writes about Barris' photographs:

> The photographs taken by George Barris almost a month after she has been fired by Twentieth are hardly portraits to reveal an abyss. No suicide is contemplated in her eye. Just a sensitive and not unsturdy young woman sits in a sweater at the beach and looks wistful and tough.[197]

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[193] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 30.
[194] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 142. Mailer wanted to illustrate his point with a photograph. Typed final draft, p. 289. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 5.
[195] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 31.
[196] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 221, 232.
[197] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 227.

Tying his theory together, he suggests that Monroe's connection to Robert Kennedy is intimated in one of Stern's last photographs of her: 'she has never looked more like a Kennedy than in Stern's pictures of her drinking champagne.'[198]

Mailer's notes in his archive support the notion that the photographs serve a documentary function in relation to the text. In his manuscript, for example, Mailer wanted 'Before-After' photographs to document the results of her cosmetic surgery.[199] Mailer wanted *Marilyn* to begin with a series of iconic images, but he wanted this series followed by fifty photographs showing 'growing up of woman' and Monroe 'developing visually'. Further attesting to his wish for chronology and context, Mailer wanted another section with photographs of Monroe in relation to people such as her husbands and events such as her trip to Korea.[200] The correspondence of the photographs to his text was a paramount concern for Mailer. In his four pages of dense notes devoted to the photographs he objects to where certain photographs have been placed and suggests where they are better suited. Sometimes he asks for photographs other than the ones used or for photographs to be omitted. He wants the photographs to correspond to his plotline. Some photographs, for example, he argues come 'out of a more sophisticated period' than where they are placed, and some of the photographs come too early or too late in relation to when the people in them, such as DiMaggio, Miller, Paula Strasberg, Lawrence Olivier, or Yves Montand enter Monroe's life. He also wants photographs by certain photographers like de Dienes, Greene, and Shaw to appear in sections with timeframes that correspond to when they were taken. There are also specific photographs that he wants in certain places such as Kelley's 'calendar shot' or 'the Seven Year Itch premier picture'. Mailer wants the photographs to document both Monroe's life and his narrative, as the following plethora of objections illustrate: 'Chronologically + thematically wrong', 'I see no logic to this placement', 'I don't see its purpose here', 'This placement is meaningless', 'Fights

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[198] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 227.
[199] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 84; Typed final draft, p. 183. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 4.
[200] HRC, MS 2643, box 962.

the text', 'Doesn't work with the text', and 'Nothing special about placement'.[201] Mailer's opinion was not always accommodated, but his vision for the photographs' insertion into the biography illustrates his deep involvement with the photographs, his view of them as documentation, and his wish that the reader should also view them as such.

Mailer not only wanted a relationship between his text and the images that made use of photography's ability to document, he also relied heavily on photography in his research for the biography. In addition to notes on Monroe's films, which he acknowledges in *Marilyn* informed his biographical approach, his research material includes still photographs of Monroe, not all of which were reproduced in *Marilyn*.[202] From the very beginning of the project, Mailer pursued a photography connection to Monroe, writing on two separate notecards in his preparation for *Marilyn*:

> She began her career with still photographs and that is how it ended--with some of the best still photographs of her to be taken--go on to give quotes of some of the photographers.
>
> We never study a photograph harder than after someone is dead. What a relation she had to photographers!
> Give some quotes.[203]

Mailer treats both photographs and photographers as primary sources that can provide him with privileged insights about Monroe. In his reading of secondary literature, Mailer noted photographers' accounts of photographing Monroe. De Dienes and Greene were among the few people that Mailer interviewed and much of his narrative revolves around Monroe's relationship with these two photographers. Mailer also received accounts penned by Barris, de Dienes, Kelley, Kirkland, and Willoughby, all photographers whose photographs appear in *Marilyn*. In fact, Mailer follows Barris in his interpretation of Monroe's last photographs. Barris wrote in his letter to Mailer that he did not believe Monroe could have killed herself because she worked so hard for him in front of the camera and because her last words to him were: 'These are my champagne days. There's a future for me and I can't wait to get to it.' Mailer would have found support for his use of the photographs as evidence in Barris's recollection that Monroe 'took a

[201] HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folder 3.
[202] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 259, 261. HRC, MS 2643, box 148, folders 10-11, box 149, folder 1.
[203] HRC, MS 2643, box 962.

long, critical look at herself through a magnifying glass examining each photo' and told him, 'Yes, George, that's really me you've captured on film'.[204]

Highlighting how the photographs sensationally bear witness to Monroe, Mailer stresses the physical closeness of the photographers and Monroe. He commences his 'Note on the Photographs', for example, by introducing Schiller as 'one of three photographers present (not two months before her death) on the day she did her nude swimming scene in *Something's Got to Give*' adding that 'he even saw Marilyn on the morning of her last day'. Schiller's interaction with Monroe acquires an almost mystical or mythical dimension with her death the same day. The physical proximity to Monroe that photographers of her experienced stands in contrast to Mailer, who deplores the fact that he never met her: 'Not having known her was going to prove, he knew, a recurrent wound in the writing.'[205] Never having met Monroe is a theme for Mailer--from early notes in preparation for *Marilyn*, to this concession in *Marilyn*, to Mailer's advertisement for *Marilyn*, which had the headline 'But Mailer never even met Monroe', to *Time*'s cover story 'Monroe Meets Mailer', and the television show that Mailer worked on with Schiller that was also to have this title. Photographs partly compensate Mailer for never having met Monroe. In approaching Monroe, Mailer treats her photographs as he treats her handwriting, a sample of which de Dienes sent him and which he had professionally analysed, or her horoscope, which he also had professionally drawn: as mystical but indexical traces of her.[206]

Most important for Mailer's interpretation of Monroe's star quality is his treatment in *Marilyn* of the photographs as indexical representations of her sexuality. In his fabrications, Mailer expands upon the photographs' depiction of sex as a mythical, nonconcrete commodity, but he also claims that the photographs attest to a promiscuous sexual life and that they hold up better in a 'literary court' than 'a hundred signed affidavits of one-night-stands':

> The best evidence, *force majeure*, is still her photographs--she looks in these years like the most popular blonde in the most expensive brothel in Acapulco, and while

[204] HRC, MS 2643, box 152, folder 7.
[205] Mailer, *Marilyn*, pp. 9, 19.
[206] HRC, MS 2643, box 149, folder 1.

> the look is manufactured, it is easier to assume the raw material partakes of existence than that it does not exist, and her sex is altogether synthetic.[207]

Mailer concedes that Monroe's appearance looks manufactured in the photographs, but by claiming that 'it is easier to assume the raw material partakes of existence', he champions photography's indexical relationship to its subject as well as its likeness. The relationship Mailer suggests between original and copy resonates with Kracauer's theory that the world itself has taken on 'a "photographic face" [ein 'Photographiergesicht']', being able to be photographed 'because it strives to be absorbed into the spatial continuum which yields to snapshots'.[208] That the world has acquired a 'photographic face' may reflect a loss of meanings and connections, but a face being photographic before it has been photographed does not lessen the indexical relationship between face and photograph.

For Mailer, the indexical relationship of the photographs to Monroe does not only mean that the sexual vibes on display are authentic, but that Monroe is a sexual genius and an artist. Although Mailer describes Monroe's look as manufactured in the photographs he ascribes her successful appearance to her 'witch's skill in relation to the eye of a camera'.[209] He describes how Monroe pre-empts the art of the photographer:

> [She is] our own Rubens of the 4 x 5 Speed Graphic. Click! For if the photographer is usually seen as the artist, and his model as a species of still life, she becomes the artist when she takes a pose: she paints the picture into the camera.[210]

The indexical relationship of the photographs to Monroe gives her agency. The 'enchanted simulations' have an origin: Monroe. Mailer sees the artificiality of the photographs as art and Monroe as the artist. The photographs are thus doubly indexical. The images are not merely traces of Monroe, their art is also Monroe's imprint. The onomatopoetic 'Click!' gives a sense of the immediacy and action that Mailer attributes to Monroe. Exalting her as a Rubens of

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[207] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 78. Mailer wanted to illustrate his point with a montage of four photographs, and his notes show that he had a specific photograph in mind with 'a whore in acapulco look'. Photography notes and typed final draft, p. 171. HRC, MS 2643, box 150, folders 3-4.
[208] ['weil sie in dem räumlichen Kontinuum aufzugehen strebt, das sie Momentaufnahmen ergibt'] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', in *Das Ornament der Masse*, by Siegfried Kracauer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 21-39 (p. 34); Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 47-63 (p. 59).
[209] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 60.
[210] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 50.

photography, Mailer furthermore makes his identification with her more noble, respectable. While the seductive artificiality of the photographs informs Mailer's fictions about Monroe's 'unspoken impulses', the photographs' indexical aspect suggests the seductive artificiality is created by a genius worthy of Mailer's own. Monroe is a genius of sex; Mailer is a genius of literature. Photographic reference is thus integral to Mailer's alignment of his star with Monroe's. As Mailer writes, 'Set a thief to catch a thief, and put an artist on an artist.'[211] Although Monroe does not have an avant-garde look, Mailer presents her as a highbrow artist on a par with Stein. Mailer has a different approach to beauty than Stein, but their emphasis on reference is the same. Monroe's enormous sex appeal is not created for her; it is artificial because she is her art. The indexical relation of the photographs to Monroe also adds to their middlebrow, pleasing aspects. Not only is it gratifying that 'it is just like that', as Stein would say, but confidence in the photographs' ability to document also means that the reader comes close to this sex genius by viewing her photographs, just like the reader comes closer to Stein with her photographs. Monroe's photographs thus seduce both because they are simulations and because they are indexical.

Deploying Monroe's photographs to support his fantasizing text and to position himself as a genius of literature, Mailer uses them as he describes Monroe using them: as a publicity weapon. According to Mailer, when Monroe is barred from acting roles, she organizes photographs of herself to be taken during the swimming pool scene in *Something Got to Give*, thus transforming herself into a 'female Napoleon back from Elba to raise one last army for a march on Twentieth'.[212] Photography is construed as a medium for power, control, and self-appropriation--not unlike the 'advertisements' that Mailer recommends using in his collection of essays, *Advertisements for Myself* (1959):

> *It is sometimes fatal to one's talent not to have a public with a clear recognition of one's size. The way to save your work and reach more readers is to advertise yourself.*[213]

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[211] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 20.
[212] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 225.
[213] Norman Mailer, *Advertisement for Myself* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1961), p. 21. Italics Mailer.

Marilyn was a successful addition to Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself*. Many of the reviews, for example, picked up on and elaborated upon the connection Mailer posits between himself and Monroe. The title of the *Time* cover story was 'Two Myths Converge', the *New York Review of Books* adjusted Mailer's 'set a thief to catch a thief' to 'set a myth to catch a myth', and one of the favourable reviews that Mailer included in his advertisement described the combination of Mailer's and Monroe's 'highly charged' personalities as 'high voltage'.[214] Like the *Time* cover, many reviews also combined photographs of Monroe and Mailer.[215] The *Washington Post*, for example, inserted a photograph of Mailer as one of the multiple images of Monroe in an Andy Warhol silkscreen, making the biographer an icon on a par with his subject.[216]

Jonathan D'Amore argues that Mailer represents a new postmodern conception of celebrity authorship with his 'embrace of the nuance of self-promotion and his acceptance of the inevitability of an author's partial abdication of control of his or her reputation'.[217] Mailer did, however, try to control the reception of *Marilyn* with advertisements, statements, a press conference, and a promotional tour. Not resigning himself to only observing his celebrity image, Mailer uses photographic reference in his attempt to control it, as a means of self-determination. Monroe's photographs and Mailer's text exude the artificiality of their celebrity personae, but both are at the same time attempts at controlling those personae. In her meditation on the relationship between personality, publicity, and autobiography in *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein is unclear about whether they are different or the same:

> How can you dream about a personality when it is always being created for you by publicity, how can you believe what you make up [in works of fiction] when publicity makes them up to be so much realer than you can dream. And so

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[214] Advertisement by Grosset and Dunlap, *New York Times*, pp. 469-71; 'Two Myths Converge: NM Discovers MM', *Time*, 16 July 1973, pp. 60-70; Michael Wood, 'Kissing Hitler', *New York Review of Books*, 20 September 1973, pp. 22-4.
[215] See John Coleman, 'Mailer in Monrovia', *Observer*, 11 November 1973, p. 37; Lehmann-Haupt, 'Aquarius on Gemini--I', p. 27; 'Mailer's 'Marilyn' Is a Fast-Buck Job', *Human Events*, 25 August 1973, p. 9.
[216] Tom Donelly, 'Mailer Looks at Marilyn and (Of Course) at Norman', *Washington Post*, 24 June 1973, p. G1.
[217] Jonathan D'Amore, *American Authorship and Autobiographical Narrative: Mailer, Wideman, Eggers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 61.

> autobiography is written which is in a way a way to say that publicity is right, they are as the public sees them. Well yes.[218]

Stein posits a circular relationship between personality, publicity, and autobiography. Although autobiography is publicity, it is also an empowering resource, a way of reclaiming identity and reputation. In a world of that sees celebrity as fiction, both Mailer and Stein use photography's and life-writing's referential aspects to control that fiction. Although the works are partly fictional themselves, they claim a privileged connection to their subjects and tighten that connection by inserting photographs. Despite being implicated in the machinery of publicity, photographic traces remain vehicles for authenticity and agency. Using photographs of bodies, Stein's and Monroe's, the authors buttress claims about 'genius' that entitle them to a place in eternity, like saints.

The Legacies of Stein's and Mailer's 'Good Bad' Books

In his autobiography of 1963, Jean-Paul Sartre describes how he used to relish the thought that he could deceive death by leaving a legacy in words: 'Chance had made me a man, generosity would make me a book [Le hasard m'avait fait homme, la générosité me ferait livre]'. He imagines a rebirth in words as a larva bursting into 'folio butterflies' 'feverishly beating their pages' before settling on a shelf in the Bibliothèque Nationale: 'The butterflies would be none other than myself. Me: twenty-five volumes, eighteen thousand pages of text and three hundred illustrations, including a portrait of the author.'[219] Although he denounces this aspiration in favour of a life lived actively and meaningfully in the present, the title of the autobiography, *Les mots*, highlights how it paradoxically achieves the dream he has scorned. With their life-writing, Stein and Mailer also create an everlasting body in words, but with their combination of photographic traces and fictional devices, they create personae that exceed both their physical bodies and the physical bodies of their books. Sartre imagines how as a book he will be spread out on a table dazzling the reader. This is certainly what happened with *The Autobiography of*

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[218] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, p. 53.
[219] ['Ces papillons ne seraient autres que moi. Moi: vingt-cinq tomes, dix-huit mille pages de texte, trois cents gravures dont le portrait de l'auteur.'] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 160-1; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Words*, trans. by Irene Clephane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964), pp. 121-2.

Alice B. Toklas and *Marilyn* when they were published, but since then they seem for the most part to have been left on the shelf. Mailer continues to be considered an important literary figure, for example with the recent publication of his selected letters and essays, but *Marilyn* receives almost no scholarly attention and as a token of its lack of esteem is excluded from the Library of America's collection of Mailer's works.[220] Although *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* continues to draw scholarly attention, particularly for its transgression of the autobiographical pact, it is primarily as a personality that Stein has survived in mainstream culture. Most notable perhaps is Kathy Bates's portrayal of her in Woody Allen's film *Midnight in Paris* (2011), where Stein appears as a host for important gatherings and an authority willing to give the main protagonist advice on his writing. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in the end thus made it to Hollywood, although probably not in the way Stein imagined. The massive popularity of Allen's film shows how Stein's personality continues to eclipse even her 'easy' work such as her autobiographies. As in Stein's burglary story, it seems to have been enough for the legacy of her and Mailer's personalities that their works once were produced.

The photographic illustrations in the works, in particular, have not had a successful afterlife. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Marilyn* continue to be published, but the original illustrations are omitted. Stein's photographs were left out even in the first paperback edition, and the most recent editions of *Marilyn* have either omitted the original illustrations or used others.[221] It is doubtful, however, that the photographs would continue to have the effect they had when the works were published. Mailer writes on one of his notecards about Monroe: 'It was as if she worked in films for her life and did still photography in anticipation of her end.'[222] Mailer seems to suggest that Monroe secures her legacy with her photographs, but her photographs can have a less pleasing effect than the one Mailer derives from them. Kracauer describes how the meaning of photographs change over time in relation to a diva and a

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[220] For another study of *Marilyn* see Carl E. Rollyson Jr., '*Marilyn*: Mailer's Novel Biography', *Biography*, 1 (1978), 49-67.
[221] Norman Mailer, *Marilyn* (London: Virgin Books, 2012); Norman Mailer and Bert Stern, *Marilyn* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2011); Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Random House, 1955).
[222] HRC, MS 2643, box 962.

grandmother: while 'the contemporaneous viewer believes that he or she sees the film diva herself in the photograph, and not just her bangs or the pose of her head', 'an *old* photograph presents itself as the reduction of a contemporaneous one'.[223] In the photograph of the grandmother, for example, the clothes are seen 'as a cast-off remnant that wants to continue to hold its ground', which like a ghost is simultaneously 'comical and terrifying [komish und furchtbar]'.[224] The outdated aesthetic of Monroe's photographs can similarly make them seem silly, sad, and sometimes even repulsive. Stein's photographs on the other hand do not provoke a shudder. They have become history, like the photograph of the grandmother eventually will: 'Once the grandmother's costume has lost its relationship to the present, it will no longer be funny; it will be peculiar, like an ocean-dwelling octopus.'[225] The photographs in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* are interesting, but not thrilling, exciting, or as revealing as they would have been in 1933. They are too distant, too much part of a world separated from our own, like the one beneath the ocean waves. Monroe, perhaps, is still too close for comfort. As Kracauer writes: 'The recent past which claims to be alive is more outdated than the past that existed long ago and whose meaning has changed.'[226] Although the photographs were integral to Stein's and Mailer's presentations of themselves, the power of those photographs seem to have waned, suggesting the photographic critic Hubert Damisch might be right in his judgement that 'of all images the photographic one--leaving aside its documentary character--wears out the most quickly'.[227]

In disentangling the construction of Stein and Mailer as celebrities, it is important to analyse how the authors make themselves popular, but the troubling aspects of the way they do

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[223] ['Der Zeitgenosse glaubt auf der Photogrpahie die Filmdiva selber zu erblicken; nicht ihre Ponny-Frisur nur oder die Pose ihres Kopfes'] [die *alte* Photographie gibt sich als die Verkleinerung der gegenwärtigen] Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', pp. 29-30; Kracauer, 'Photography', p. 54. Italics Kracauer.
[224] ['Auf der Photographie wird das Kostüm der Großmutter als ein abgeworfener Rest erkannt, der sich fortbehaupten möchte'] Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', p. 31; Kracauer, 'Photography', pp. 55-6.
[225] ['Wenn das Kostüm der Großmutter die Beziehung zum Heute verloren hat, wird es nicht mehr komisch sein, sondern merkwürdich wie ein submariner Polyp.'] Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', p. 38; Kracauer, 'Photography', p. 62.
[226] ['Das jüngste Vergangene, das Leben beansprucht, ist abgelebter als das vor langem Gewesene, dessen Bedeutung sich gewandelt hat.'] Kracauer, 'Photographie', pp. 30-1; Kracauer, 'Photography', p. 55.
[227] Hubert Damisch, 'Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image', *October*, 5 (1978), 70-2 (p. 72). First published in *L'arc* (Paris), 1963.

so should not be overlooked. In one of the many drafts for his *Marilyn* advertisement, Mailer writes defensively: 'But it is a good bad book.'[228] He is commenting on the middlebrow genre, subject, and appearance of his work, but one might argue that *Marilyn* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* are 'bad' not only in an aesthetic sense but also in an ethical sense. With her celebration of Dillinger as a personality, Stein also aestheticizes crime. She analyses how the possibility of having one's photograph in the public domain can prompt one to commit a crime, but she does not criticize it:

> I say anybody in America can be a public one, and anybody in America being able to be a public one it has something to do with the hero crime and so many people are always doing this thing doing the hero crime, it gets into anybody who can have his picture where it is to be seen by anybody.[229]

Stein not only does not condemn the urge to be 'a public one', she strives for it herself, sometimes to the detriment of others, as the protests of Tzara and others demonstrate in *Testimony against Gertrude Stein*, a pamphlet published by the literary journal *Transition* as a response to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Mailer is also attuned to the dark underside of celebrity culture, mentioning for example the photographer who was killed chasing Monroe and Miller's 'newsworthy automobile'.[230] With the anecdote, however, Mailer makes Monroe's celebrity seem more alluring than frightening. He himself propagates this celebrity culture, in the process, like Stein, hurting others. Where Tzara along with Georges Braque, Eugene Jolas, Maria Jolas, Henri Matisse, and André Salmon published their grievances in a pamphlet, Maurice Zolotow and Fred Lawrence Guiles served Mailer legal papers for plagiarising their biographies. But being 'the book industry's most scandalous event since the Clifford Irving hoax with Howard Hughes', as one review proclaimed, the plagiarism case only heightened *Marilyn*'s publicity. [231]

Despite Stein's and Mailer's offenses, there is something liberating about their ruthless techniques. Both Stein and Mailer are provocateurs with their embrace of the disreputable, as

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[228] HRC, MS 2643, box 148, folder 7.
[229] Gertrude Stein, 'American Crimes and How they Matter' *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 March 1935, p. 13.
[230] Mailer, *Marilyn*, p. 161.
[231] Sarris, 'Marilyn', p. BW1.

was Monroe. Kael claimed in her review that Monroe 'did what others had the "good taste" not to do, like Mailer, who puts in what other writers have been educated to leave out.'[232] The candour of the way the authors merge art with self-interest and business is refreshing, especially if the rationale behind art for art's sake, the antithesis of middlebrow art, is questioned. As Bourdieu explains, a fixation on technique means that 'pure art' does not involve itself with social and political questions and is thus 'in covenant' with the dominant sections of the bourgeoisie.[233] In the next chapter we will see a different kind of art, an art that critiques society. Stein's and Mailer's works do not have a progressive agenda, but they are nonetheless political in the personal sense. They seek to have an impact on the world, even if that impact only pertains to the authors' public image.

[232] Kael, 'Marilyn: A rip-off with genius', p. 233.
[233] Bourdieu, 'Le marché des biens symboliques', p. 87; Bourdieu, 'The Market of Symbolic Goods', pp. 30-1.

Chapter 3: Critical Imagery: Photography, Fiction, and Montage in the Life-Writing of Virginia Woolf and W. G. Sebald

Approaching the inkhorn with his quill, the eponymous hero of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) suddenly sees with his mind's eye the face of the Russian princess who broke his heart. 'Memory' then inexplicably substitutes this face with one of a shabby poet whom Orlando once saw sitting at a servant's table composing lines. The narrator describes how these two images, lying on top of each other like lantern slides, cause Orlando to pause and how these pauses disrupt his life: 'It is these pauses that are our undoing. It is then that sedition enters the fortress and our troops rise in insurrection.'[1] The images of the princess and the poet are connected and united in their power to arrest Orlando's conventional life and ignite in him his twin rebellions of unlicensed love and literary ambition. Like the images that Orlando sees, the images inserted into Woolf's and W. G. Sebald's works function as pauses in the narrative, pauses that interrupt the progression of reading; and like Orlando's pauses, they function as occasions for rebellious reflection. 'Creative' photography worried Walter Benjamin not only because of its marketability, the aspect we saw Gertrude Stein and Norman Mailer manipulate, but also because of its ability to endow anything with beauty or 'cosmic significance' while hiding 'the human connections in which it exists'.[2] Woolf and Sebald demonstrate, however, that photographs can be used creatively to reveal human connections and the injustices that mar them. They do this with the help of montage, a technique associated with the historical avant-garde such as Surrealism and Dadaism. In avant-garde works, according to Peter Bürger, 'the individual sign does not refer primarily to the work as a whole, but to reality'.[3] The reader is thus 'free to respond to the individual sign as an important statement concerning the praxis of

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[1] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), pp. 75-6.
[2] Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Hermann Schweppenhäuser and Rolf Tiedemann, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), II (1977), pp. 368-85 (p. 383); Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Marcus Paul Bullock and others, 4 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996-2003), II: *1927-1934*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith (1999), pp. 507-30 (p. 526).
[3] ['Im avantgardistischen Werk verweist das Einzelzeichen nicht primär auf das Werkganze, sondern auf die Wirklichkeit'] Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 126; Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 90.

life, or as political instruction'.[4] Inserted into works that primarily present themselves as fiction, Woolf's and Sebald's photographs act as particularly cogent but also critical references to the everyday world in which the reader exists.

With their protests against the status quo, Woolf and Sebald, like avant-gardists, distance themselves from the hidden alliance that 'pure art' has with bourgeois values.[5] Neither author, however, is usually thought of as avant-garde.[6] According to Bürger, Woolf exemplifies the modernist emphasis on form, an emphasis that he argues seals off art from the praxis of life.[7] More than half a century separates Sebald from the historical avant-garde (and Woolf), but both he and Woolf practice 'uninhibited eclecticism', a 'postmodern' tendency that Bürger argues continues the avant-garde project.[8] They furthermore develop specific strategies that the historical avant-garde initiated. André Breton, who spearheaded Surrealism, combined fiction, life-writing, and photographs in *Nadja* (1928), but he found the 44 inserted photographs 'dreary and disappointing', the places they depicted stripped of the 'magic' they had held for him when he in his wanderings with Nadja had seen them through her 'fern-colored eyes'.[9] Unlike the photographs in *Nadja*, the photographs in Woolf's and Sebald's works highlight common rather than private experiences. The authors call upon the collective aspect of photography, the ability of the medium to share information that we saw reinforced Vladimir Nabokov's and Doris Lessing's recollections and made them more generally relevant. Engaging with the societal and historical aspects of life rather than the private coincidences that Breton pursues in *Nadja*,

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[4] ['Der Rezipient kann das Einzelzeichen, sei es als lebenspraktisch wichtige Äußerung, sei es als politische Anweisung, aufnehmen.'] Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*, p. 126; Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 90.
[5] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le marché des biens symboliques', *L'année sociologique*, 22 (1971), 42-126 (p. 87); Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Market of Symbolic Goods', trans. by R. Swyer, *Poetics* 14 (1985), 13-44 (pp. 30-1).
[6] Some Woolf scholars have argued for her avant-garde status, for example Christine Froula. In her work, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (2005), Froula sees Woolf and Bloomsbury in relation to the Enlightenment project however, rather than any art movement on the continent. Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
[7] Peter Bürger, 'Dissolution of the Subject and the Hardened Self: Modernity and the Avant-garde in Wyndham Lewis's Novel *Tarr*', in *The Decline of Modernism*, trans. by Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), pp. 127-36, (p. 127).
[8] Peter Bürger, 'Everydayness, Allegory and the Avant-garde: Some reflections on the Work of Joseph Beuys', in *The Decline of Modernism*, pp. 147-61, (p. 150).
[9] Mark Palizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 302.

Woolf and Sebald thus effectively put into practice the revolutionary principle that the Situationists, successors to the historical avant-garde, recommended in relation to photography. In their user's guide to 'détournement', the practice of distortion by which the Situationists sought to make interventions in everyday life, Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolfman not only cite photography as an example of 'détournement mineur', an element that is inherently détourned, but they also suggest that détourned novels be accompanied by illustrations that do not have immediately obvious relationships to the text.[10] We will see how fiction in Woolf's *Orlando* and in Sebald's four major works ensures an ambiguous relationship between text and images, creating a montage of heterogeneous elements that in their complex relationships raise questions about society.

Woolf advocates a critical stance towards one's subject in her essay on life-writing, 'The New Biography' (1927). She applauds the 'equal' relationship that she argues exists in new biographies between the biographer and the biographer's subject, highlighting how this ensures the biographer's 'right to independent judgement'. She connects a discerning treatment of the biographical subject to the use of art:

> Raised upon a little eminence which his independence has made for him, he [the biographer] sees his subject spread about him. He chooses; he synthesises; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become an artist.[11]

She not only admires how Harold Nicolson uses 'devices of fiction in dealing with real life' in *Some People* (1927), a work she uses as an example of the new biography, but she also praises how he approaches his 'bigwigs fearlessly'.[12] Woolf wrote biographies of Roger Fry (1940) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel (1933), but it is in *Orlando*, published a year after 'The New Biography', that Woolf experiments most radically with the role of the biographer as an artist and the criticism of one's subject that this may facilitate. Woolf's succinct plot summary, jotted down in her diary, shows she envisioned herself as both biographer and artist in *Orlando*: 'a biography beginning in the year 1500 & continuing to the present day, called

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[10] Guy-Ernest Debord and Gil J. Wolfman, 'Mode d'emploi du détournement', *Les Lèvres nues*, 8 (May 1956), 2-9 (p. 4.)
[11] Virginia Woolf, 'The New Biography', in *Granite and Rainbow*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), pp. 149-55.
[12] Woolf, 'The New Biography', p. 153.

Orlando: Vita [Sackville-West]; only with a change about from one sex to another.'[13] *Orlando* has the subtitle *A Biography*, but Orlando's impossibly long life, illustrated with portraits of him as a boy in the Elizabethan age and lastly as a thirty-six-year-old woman in 1928, seems to designate the work as a novel. The work also does not identify Vita Sackville-West as its subject. The illustrations, however, include photographs of Sackville-West posing as Orlando. In his introduction to the *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Nigel Nicolson, son of Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson (the author of *Some People*), suggests that Woolf 'identified' Sackville-West as her model for Orlando 'without shame on either side' by the dedication and the photographs.[14] According to Sackville-West's biographer, Victoria Glendinning, the illustrations prove that 'no attempt [was] made to conceal the original of Orlando'.[15] Paradoxically, the images are the component that most assertively indicates the life-writing aspect of this work of art. They most demonstratively tie Orlando to Woolf's friend and lover, and with their intimate connection to their subject, they are instrumental to Woolf's critique of Sackville-West's social class, the aristocracy.

Fiction also complicates the life-writing aspect of Sebald's four major works: *Schwindel. Gefühle* from 1990, published as *Vertigo* in 1999, *Die Ausgewanderten* from 1993, published as *The Emigrants* in 1996, *Die Ringe des Saturn* from 1995, published as *The Rings of Saturn* in 1998, and *Austerlitz*, published in German and English in 2001.[16] Sebald claims his works consist simultaneously of 'real-life stories' and 'fictional stories'.[17] In relation to *The Emigrants*, for example, he stresses that Dr. Henry Selwyn 'lived in that house', Selwyn's wife 'was just like that', Paul Bereyter was his primary-school teacher, and Ambros Adelwarth his

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[13] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1977-84), III (1980), p. 161 (5 October 1927).
[14] Nigel Nicolson, 'Introduction', in *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975-80), III (1977), p. xxii.
[15] Victoria Glendinning, *Vita: The Life of V. Sackville-West* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 205.
[16] Michael Hulse translated *Vertigo*, *The Emigrants*, and *The Rings of Saturn*, and Anthea Bell translated *Austerlitz*. Sebald was deeply involved with all the translations--an involvement, which measured in time, tallied 350 hours in the case of *The Rings of Saturn*. See Jon Cook, 'Lost in Translation? Conversation with Jon Cook' in *Saturn's Moons: W. G. Sebald--A Handbook*, ed. by Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2011), pp. 356-63. See also the articles by Hulse and Bell in the same volume.
[17] Steve Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', in *Saturn's Moons*, pp. 364-375, (pp. 366, 372-3).

great-uncle.[18] It is unclear, however, what the work's fiction is. No character, for example, lives longer than is humanly possible. As in *Orlando*, however, photographs secure potent connections to lives lived. For Sebald, inserting photographs is a comprehensive endeavour, comprising a vital strain throughout his oeuvre: his four major works contain 306 photographs in all. He deliberately engages with some of the theoretical aspects of photography that I have dealt with throughout the thesis. In a grant application, now located in his archive, Sebald writes that his use of 'documentary/photographic material' brings into play oppositions such as those between the search for truth and invention, presence and absence, the silence of images and the dynamics of text.[19] We will see how these juxtapositions also impel the reader to take a critical and involved stance towards the world and its history. In the process, Sebald merges art, life-writing, and criticism in a way that resonates with Woolf's vision in 'The New Biography'.

Illustrations were integral to *Orlando* from its conception. Shortly after securing permission from Sackville-West to write *Orlando*, Woolf replied that she imagined the work as 'a little book, with pictures and a map or two,' and asked to visit Knole, Sackville-West's ancestral castle, in order to select paintings for its illustrations.[20] Woolf compiled the illustrations while she wrote *Orlando*. Her letters and diary chart how ideas for illustrations emerged, developed, changed, and in some cases, were abandoned.[21] The letter correspondence between Woolf, Sackville-West, and Vanessa Bell, Woolf's sister, reveals that much thought and activity were invested in the production and selection of illustrations: film, portfolios, cameras, costumes, and photographs were exchanged, discussed, brought, and sent; and besides Knole, trips were made to the Lenare studio in London, Bell's and Duncan Grant's studio, and Sackville-West's home, Long Barn.[22] *Orlando*'s 'List of Illustrations' enumerates the final

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[18] Carole Angier, 'Who is W. G. Sebald?', *Jewish Quarterly*, 43 (1996), 10-4.
[19] ['Dem text beigegeben ist dokumantarisches/fotographisches material, über das Fragen wie warheitssuche/erfindung, anwesenheit/abwesenheit, ruhe des bildes/dynamik des texts ins spiel gebracht werden.'] Winfried Georg Sebald Papers. Marbach, Deutsches Literatur Archiv (DLA), MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 11.
[20] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 430 (14 October 1927). Sackville-West later helped Woolf procure photographs of the paintings. Vita Sackville-West, *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Louise DeSalvo and Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 252 (11 October 1927).
[21] Woolf, *Letters*, III, pp. 434-5 (30 October 1927, 6 November 1927, 11 November 1927).
[22] Sackville-West, *Letters*, p. 258 (17 November 1927); Woolf, *Letters*, III, pp. 434, 488-9, 497 (30 October 1927, 27 April 1928, 29 April 1928, 9 May 1928, 12 May 1928).

result of Woolf and her collaborators' labours. Combining photographs and photographic reproductions of paintings, the illustrations are all portraits depicting Orlando, possibly Orlando's forefather, and three of Orlando's lovers. Photographs of Sackville-West illustrate Orlando as a woman and a photograph of Bell's daughter, Angelica Garnett, illustrates Orlando's first love, 'The Russian Princess as a Child'. Paintings of Sackville-West's ancestors illustrate the male Orlando and Orlando's suitor, 'The Archduchess Harriet'. A final painting, not of Sackville-West's ancestors, illustrates the lover who becomes Orlando's husband, 'Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire'. The British edition has one more illustration than the American due to the painting of one of Sackville-West's ancestors printed on the dust jacket, but the illustrations are otherwise the same in both editions, with the same titles and approximate locations within the text.[23] *Orlando* does not indicate who the original subjects of the portraits are, only specifying with their titles, which double as captions, whom the portraits portray in the narrative.

Images were also integral to Sebald's production of his works. Handwritten drafts in his archive contain markings that indicate where he wanted the images, which ones, and the size he wanted them.[24] First typescripts include the images.[25] He also let publishers know exactly where he wanted them reproduced.[26] Except for three omitted in *The Emigrants*, the images are the same in the English and German editions and their places in the text also correspond. Sebald's works do not include a 'List of Illustrations'. Embedded in the works without captions or plates of their own, the images most often share the page with the main body of the text. There are 70 images in *Vertigo*, 79 in *The Emigrants*, 71 in *The Rings of Saturn*, and 86 in *Austerlitz*. In preparing the images Sebald had the help of Michael Brandon-Jones, photographer for the Art History department at the University of East Anglia. The images are copied from books, pamphlets, articles, postcards, or from photographs found, inherited, or made by Sebald. The motifs are as diverse as the sources. The varied subjects include paintings

[23] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928). I will henceforth cite from the British edition.
[24] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 1, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 6.
[25] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 7.
[26] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 8.

and drawings, people and animals, landscapes and cityscapes, lists and diagrams, curiosities and everyday objects. All of them offer, like *Orlando*'s images, incongruent illustration for the text.

The authors' engagement with the visual arts extends beyond the insertion of images, many of them photographic reproductions of paintings, and the use of a technique, montage, most often used with images, both still and moving. Elements of portraiture also inform the text. 'The New Biography' is most often quoted for Woolf's comparison of 'truth' to 'granite' and 'personality' to 'rainbow' and her claim that biography must contain both. Woolf argues that the 'truth of fact' and the 'truth of fiction' are incompatible but concedes that 'a little fiction mixed with fact can be made to transmit personality very effectively'.[27] In his description of writing, Sebald like Woolf expresses a complex understanding of truth that distinguishes between fiction and non-fiction but stresses the relevance of both: 'You have this string of lies, and by this detour you arrive at a form of truth which is more precise, one hopes, than something which is strictly provable.'[28] We will see how principles borrowed from visual art, especially sketch and caricature, help these authors combine fact and fiction in ways that achieve 'truth'.

Orlando as Snob: Paintings of Sackvilles[29]

When Woolf introduced the idea of *Orlando* to Sackville-West, she explained that Sackville-West's 'excellence as a subject' arose largely from her 'noble birth,' adding teasingly: '(But whats [*sic*] 400 years of nobility, all the same?)'.[30] Even before she contemplated *Orlando*, Woolf wrote of Sackville-West in her diary: 'Snob as I am, I trace her passions 500 years back, & they become romantic to me, like old yellow wine'.[31] From the outset, Woolf thus tied her interest in Sackville-West to her own snobbishness. This was a character trait that had great

[27] Woolf, 'The New Biography', pp. 154-5.
[28] Joseph Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', in *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W. G. Sebald*, ed. by Lynne Sharon Schwartz (New York: Seven Stories, 2007), pp. 93-118 (p. 108).
[29] I have previously published a version of this section. Christine Fouirnaies, 'Was Virginia Woolf a Snob? The Case of Aristocratic Portraits in *Orlando*', *Woolf Studies Annual*, 22 (2016), 21-40.
[30] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 429 (9 October 1927).
[31] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1977-84), II (1978)*,* pp. 235-6 (19 February 1923).

interest for Woolf, who made it a theme for introspection in one of the papers she read to the Bloomsbury Memoir Club in 1936. In this paper, entitled 'Am I a Snob?,' she juxtaposes her desire to engage with members of the upper class with her indifference toward meeting writers, intellectuals, and scientists--she would rather meet the Prince of Wales than Einstein--and concludes that she is 'a coronet snob,' confessing: 'I want coronets; but they must be old coronets; coronets that carry land with them and country houses; coronets that breed simplicity, eccentricity, ease'.[32] Although there are no coronets on display in the portraits that illustrate *Orlando*, they nonetheless portray the coronet-wearing segment of society in a visually convincing and enticing manner, thus seemingly satisfying Woolf's craving for 'coronets'. However, the illustrations express more than Woolf's 'attraction to aristocracy, to Englishness, to wealth,' which Suzanne Raitt identifies as part of Woolf's attraction to Sackville-West as a lover.[33] The illustrations also articulate the ambivalence to these 'social privileges' that Woolf, according to Raitt, later demonstrates in *Three Guineas* (1938). Woolf's question 'Am I a Snob?' echoes a question Orlando asks near the end of the novel, when she seeks out 'what people call the true self':

> 'What then? Who then?' she said. 'Thirty-six; in a motor-car; a woman. Yes, but a million other things as well. A snob am I? The garter in the hall? The leopards? My ancestors? Proud of them? Yes!'[34]

Orlando's question--'A snob am I?'--is affirmed by the final exclamation, as well as her evocation of the garter in the hall and the leopards, which according to Sackville-West's *Knole and the Sackvilles* (1922) can be found at Knole.[35] Inserted for immediate ocular inspection, the illustrations incorporate Sackville-West, Knole and the Sackvilles (her ancestors) into *Orlando* in an even more obvious way than the garter and the leopards. However, the illustrations are not used to champion aristocratic pride. Rather, as Woolf's ironical stance in 'Am I a Snob?' similarly implies, being a 'coronet snob' is deplored.

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[32] Virginia Woolf, 'Am I a Snob?', in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), pp. 181-98 (p. 186).
[33] Suzanne Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 160.
[34] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 279.
[35] Vita Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles* (London: Heineman, 1922), pp. 2-3, 29.

Sackville-West also illustrated *Knole and the Sackvilles* with portraits of her ancestors, including one which Woolf cropped for *Orlando*, but these give a venerable impression of Sackville-West's heritage. She describes at least 35 portraits, using them to access the personalities of different historical Sackvilles and to connect herself to them. Sackville-West explains that growing up at Knole, its legends, and portraits 'grew into the very texture' of her life; that as a child, she tried to arrange her hair like a girl in one of the portraits; and that 'the centuries meant Thomas or Richard or Edward Sackville; Holbein, Vandyck or Reynolds'. [36] Research reveals that most of the paintings reproduced in *Orlando* are Elizabethan paintings of Sackvilles. The first Sackville portrait is a late-sixteenth-century portrait of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, 1st Earl of Dorset (1536-1608), reproduced on the Hogarth Press jacket. The illustration is not given a title in *Orlando*, but following the list of illustrations it is stated that the '*Illustration used on the jacket is reproduced by kind permission of the Worthing Art Gallery*'.[37] The Woolf editor and scholar John Henry Stape has researched this portrait, finding that the original was destroyed in an air raid on 23 February 1944 in London, where it had been sent for repair. [38] The rest of the Sackville portraits, three in all, were chosen at Knole on 18 October 1927 with Sackville-West.[39] The portraits are still held at Knole, and the original identities of the subjects, as well as the period and the painters, can thus be ascertained. A painting by Marc Gheeradts of Mary Curzon, the Countess of Dorset (1585-1645), who was married to Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset (1589-1652), is used to portray 'Archduchess Harriet', Orlando's suitor. 'Orlando as a Boy' is illustrated by a double portrait by Cornelius

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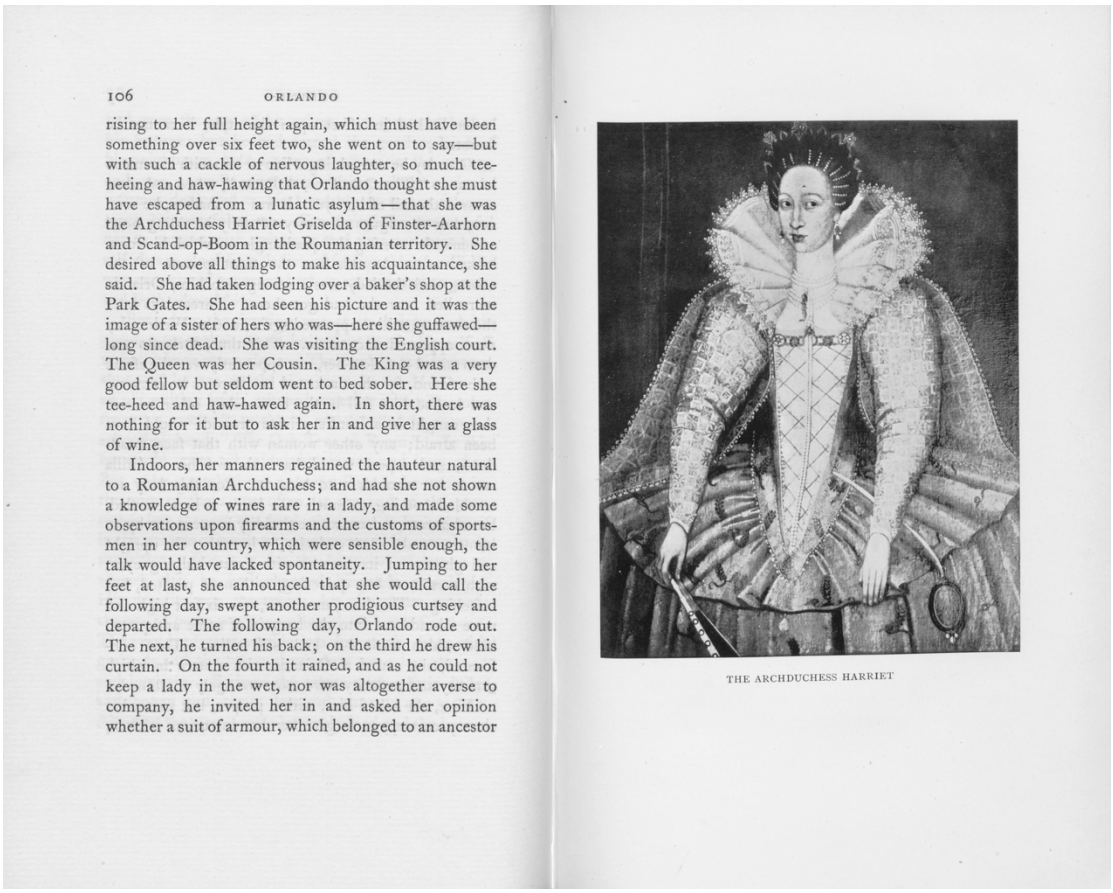
[36] Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, pp. 10, 28-9, 68, 83, 157.
[37] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 13. Italics Woolf.
[38] The painting had the following inscription on its frame, which is not included in *Orlando*: 'THO[S]. SACKVILLE Created Baron BUCKHURST 8th of June 1567. Afterwards Earl DORSET. Died 19th of April 1608'. In an article written about this portrait for *Sussex Notes and Queries* in 1941, the historian Louis Francis Salzman claims that the inscription was added in the nineteenth century and argues that the subject is not Thomas Sackville, but either Sir William More (1563-1600) or Sir George More (1553-1632). L. F. Salzman, 'A Sixteenth-Century Portrait', *Sussex Notes and Queries*, 8 (1941), 205-7. John Henry Stape argues that despite Salzman's doubts about the portrait's subject, Woolf and Sackville-West believed it to be Thomas Sackville as the illustration is referred to as the 'photograph of the panel of Thomas Sackville' in letters exchanged between Leonard Woolf and Worthing Art Gallery. John Henry Stape, '"The Man at Worthing" and the Author of "The Most Insipid Verse She had Ever Read" Two Allusions in Orlando', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 50 (1997), 5-6.
[39] Vita Sackville-West quoted in *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters 1930-39*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson (London: Collins, 1966), p. 32 (letter to Harold Nicolson, 28 October 1927).

Nuie which shows Edward Sackville (?-1646) and Richard Sackville, 5th Earl of Dorset (1622-1677) standing side by side. This is the painting that also appears in *Knole and the Sackvilles*, but Woolf crops it so only the boy on the left, Edward Sackville, is shown. Gerard Soest's painting of Richard Sackville, the Richard left out of 'Orlando as a Boy', is used for the 'Orlando as Ambassador' illustration. This last illustration has been thought to be a painting of Lionel Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset.[40] However, Richard Sackville's name is written in the lower right-hand corner on the canvas of the original painting (outside the scope of the section that Woolf used for her illustration in *Orlando*). The Sackvilles used to illustrate Orlando are thus not distant relatives, but brothers, and Mary Curzon, used to illustrate the Archduchess Harriet, is in fact their mother. As we will see, both the similarity of the portraits in their sitters' physical traits and their conspicuous embedding in aristocratic culture and symbols enable Woolf to mount a critique of the aristocracy.

The Sackville paintings that Woolf selected to illustrate *Orlando* showcase ridiculous, violent, and decadent characteristics of the aristocracy. Gheeradt's caricature-like portrait of Mary Curzon, which illustrates the Archduchess Harriet, is the Sackville portrait most obviously used satirically (Figure 25).

[40] Sandra M. Gilbert, 'A Note on the Illustrations', in *Orlando*, by Virginia Woolf (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. xlvii-xlix (p. xlviii); John Henry Stape, ed., *Orlando*, by Virginia Woolf (Oxford: Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1998), p. 196.



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rising to her full height again, which must have been something over six feet two, she went on to say—but with such a cackle of nervous laughter, so much tee-heeing and haw-hawing that Orlando thought she must have escaped from a lunatic asylum—that she was the Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster-Aarhorn and Scand-op-Boom in the Roumanian territory. She desired above all things to make his acquaintance, she said. She had taken lodging over a baker's shop at the Park Gates. She had seen his picture and it was the image of a sister of hers who was—here she guffawed—long since dead. She was visiting the English court. The Queen was her Cousin. The King was a very good fellow but seldom went to bed sober. Here she tee-heed and haw-hawed again. In short, there was nothing for it but to ask her in and give her a glass of wine.

Indoors, her manners regained the hauteur natural to a Roumanian Archduchess; and had she not shown a knowledge of wines rare in a lady, and made some observations upon firearms and the customs of sportsmen in her country, which were sensible enough, the talk would have lacked spontaneity. Jumping to her feet at last, she announced that she would call the following day, swept another prodigious curtsey and departed. The following day, Orlando rode out. The next, he turned his back; on the third he drew his curtain. On the fourth it rained, and as he could not keep a lady in the wet, nor was altogether averse to company, he invited her in and asked her opinion whether a suit of armour, which belonged to an ancestor

THE ARCHDUCHESS HARRIET

Figure 25 'The Archduchess Harriet', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 106.

In *Knole and the Sackvilles*, Sackville-West refers to another portrait of Curzon, describing her in this instance as 'severe, uncompromising, but impeccable'.[41] In the portrait used in *Orlando*, Curzon also comes across as severe and uncompromising with her stern expression and rigid pose, but she seems more ridiculous than impeccable. She is excessively accessorized with a massive farthingale, several sleeves, a cartwheel ruff, jewels, a headpiece, a fan and a mirror, and her facial and bodily features are simplified and exaggerated. Her torso, no wider than her sleeves, makes her look impossibly slender and tall. Intriguingly, the portrait is reproduced in a 1934 survey of Elizabethan dress. The two quotations that accompany the portrait in this survey attest to the extremity and vanity that Curzon's appearance exudes: in the first, Montaigne ridicules the slender waists achieved through measures such as swallowing gravel, ashes, coals, dust, tallow, and candles; in the second, Fynes Moryson remarks upon the strange practice of

[41] Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, p. 86.

wearing a mirror at one's girdle.[42] In *Orlando*'s text, the bumptious behavior and amorous advances of the Archduchess (who turns out to be an Archduke, thus adding another farcical layer to Curzon's portrait) repel Orlando. With his comic height, bulging eyes, lank cheeks, and high headdress--qualities that can all be observed in the portrait--the Archduke is repeatedly compared to a hare. This comparison nods to the harebrained demeanor of the Archduke, but may also playfully refer to Henry Lascelles, 6th Earl of *Hare*wood (1882-1974), Sackville-West's unsuccessful suitor. As the Archduke, Lascelles eventually married 'a very great lady', Mary, the Princess Royal, and the official photographs of him from this wedding reveal, much like Gheeradt's portrait of Curzon, elongated body proportions, a rigid stance, and ornate garb.[43] By compounding the identities of Curzon and Lascelles in the illustration of the Archduke, Woolf ridicules them both, and sets up a pompous aristocratic type to be scorned, as Orlando does when she laughs at the Archduke and refuses the title and fortune that he offers her.

The portrait on *Orlando*'s dust jacket offers a more concrete critique of the ruling classes, and a more personal one, for Thomas Sackville was instrumental to the self-understanding and self-fashioning of Sackville-West and her immediate family (Figure 26).

[42] H. K. Morse, *Elizabethan Pageantry: A Pictorial survey of Costume and its Commentators from c. 1560-1620: Special Spring Number of The Studio* (London and New York: The Studio, 1934), p. 59.
[43] Henry George Charles Lascelles, 6th Earl of Harewood; Princess Mary, Countess of Harewood by Vandyk. Whole-plate glass negative, 28 February 1922. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

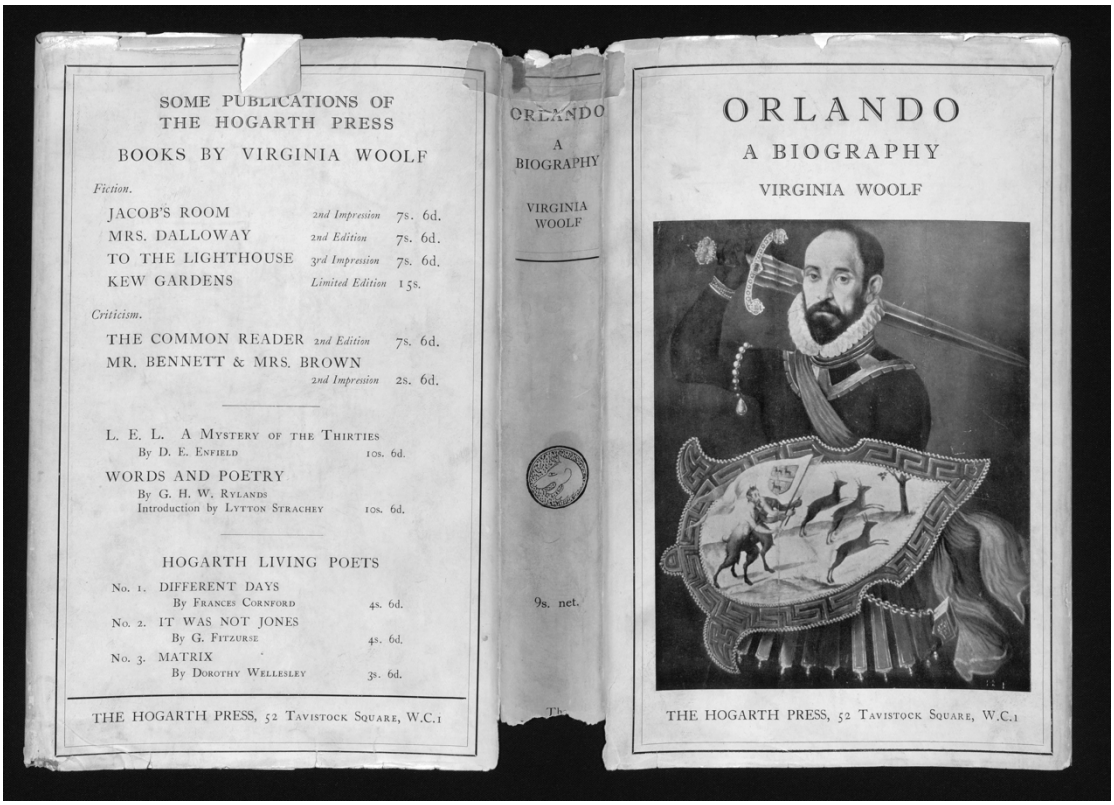

Figure 26 Dust Jacket, Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928).

The first Sackville that Sackville-West describes in *Knole and the Sackvilles* is Thomas Sackville and she concludes by describing her grandfather, Lionel Sackville-West, 2nd Baron Sackville (1827-1908), who 'bore a really remarkable resemblance' to Thomas Sackville.[44] Moreover, Sackville-West's father, Lionel Edward Sackville-West, 3rd Baron Sackville (1867-1928), visually emulated the first Lord of Knole by dressing up as him for a photograph in 1911.[45] Woolf plays upon the way the Sackville-Wests venerated and pictorially celebrated Thomas Sackville by placing a portrait of him on the cover of *Orlando*. The reader, however, is not likely to recognize Thomas Sackville in the portrait, encountering instead a nameless, middle-aged, Elizabethan man of wealth, wielding a sword and a shield, wearing armory, jewelry, and black paint on his naked upper body. The martial ardour, decadent privilege, and gauche, blackened body of Thomas Sackville segue into the opening line of *Orlando*, which pits Orlando 'in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafter.' The origin of

[44] Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, p. 219.
[45] Lionel Edward Sackville-West, 3rd Baron Sackville as Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset by Speaight Ltd, published by Hudson & Kearns Ltd. Photogravure, 20 June 1911, published 1912 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

the head can be traced back to the imperial violence committed by Orlando's forefathers: 'Orlando's father, or perhaps his grandfather, had struck it from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa'.[46] Orlando's inheritance, captured visually in the portrait of Thomas and textually in the opening line, is one of colonial arrogance and aggression. There are many less absurd and more dignified portraits of Thomas Sackville, for example the one of him in his role as diplomat reproduced in Sackville-West's *Knole and the Sackvilles*, but Woolf's choice of a Sackville depicted as outlandish and aggressive ensures that injustices of the aristocracy are forcefully portrayed and denounced.

Knole and the Sackvilles also describes the Sackvilles in the portraits chosen to depict Orlando. As a young man, Edward Sackville, the boy in 'Orlando as a Boy', was 'murdered in cold blood' by Parliamentarians--a story, which, along with Nuie's portrait, served as inspiration for the 'enormous novel' that Sackville-West wrote when she was thirteen. Richard Sackville, the man in 'Orlando as Ambassador', has no particular interest according to Sackville-West, 'save that he translated *Le Cid* into English verse and wrote a poem on Ben Jonson'. It seems, however, that Woolf chose Edward and Richard Sackville to portray Orlando not for of their life stories, but because they as brothers with similar traits could be easily compounded, and because Richard Sackville looks remarkably like Sackville-West. The resemblance of Edward Sackville, Richard Sackville, and Vita Sackville-West in these portraits facilitates the transition from painted Orlandos to photographed Orlandos, from historical Sackvilles to Sackville-West, from male Orlando to female Orlando. Sackville-West concludes *Knole and the Sackvilles* with the death of her grandfather and the display of his portrait: 'Then he fell ill and died when he was over eighty, and became a name like the others, and his portrait took its place among the rest, with a label recording the dates of his birth and death.'[47] Lionel Sackville-West's portrait is described as being inserted into a long line of Sackvilles, thus becoming part of a whole, which ties in with the grand hereditary unity Sackville-West proclaims for the Sackvilles:

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[46] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 15.
[47] Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, pp. 82, 106, 112, 220.

> From generation to generation they might stand, fully equipped, as portraits from English history [….] But let them stand each as the prototype of his age, and at the same time as a link to carry on, not only the tradition but also the heredity of his race, and they immediately acquire a significance, a unity.[48]

Woolf pushes Sackville-West's assertion to the extreme, using portraits not merely to depict different individuals of the same lineage, but different stages of the same person. In the process individual characteristics and identities are erased and a caricatured aristocratic type instead emerges--not unlike the way in which the men in the photographic illustrations of *Three Guineas* are not identified but instead reduced to types as Merry Pawlowski has pinpointed.[49] By combining different Sackvilles to produce one figure Woolf is thus also mocking the way in which Sackville-West constructs a grandiose but reductive picture of herself in *Knole and the Sackvilles*.

The Sackville portraits selected to portray Orlando are not as farcical and hyperbolic as either the Archduchess illustration or the jacket illustration, but they are aristocratic in a traditional way, impressing upon the viewer the subjects' inherited wealth and authority.[50] The facial expressions of Edward and Richard Sackville are content and placid, their features refined, and their hair luscious (Figure 27 and 28). Edward stands self-assuredly with one hand placed on his hip; the other handles what looks like pieces of a game laid out on a table (Figure 27).

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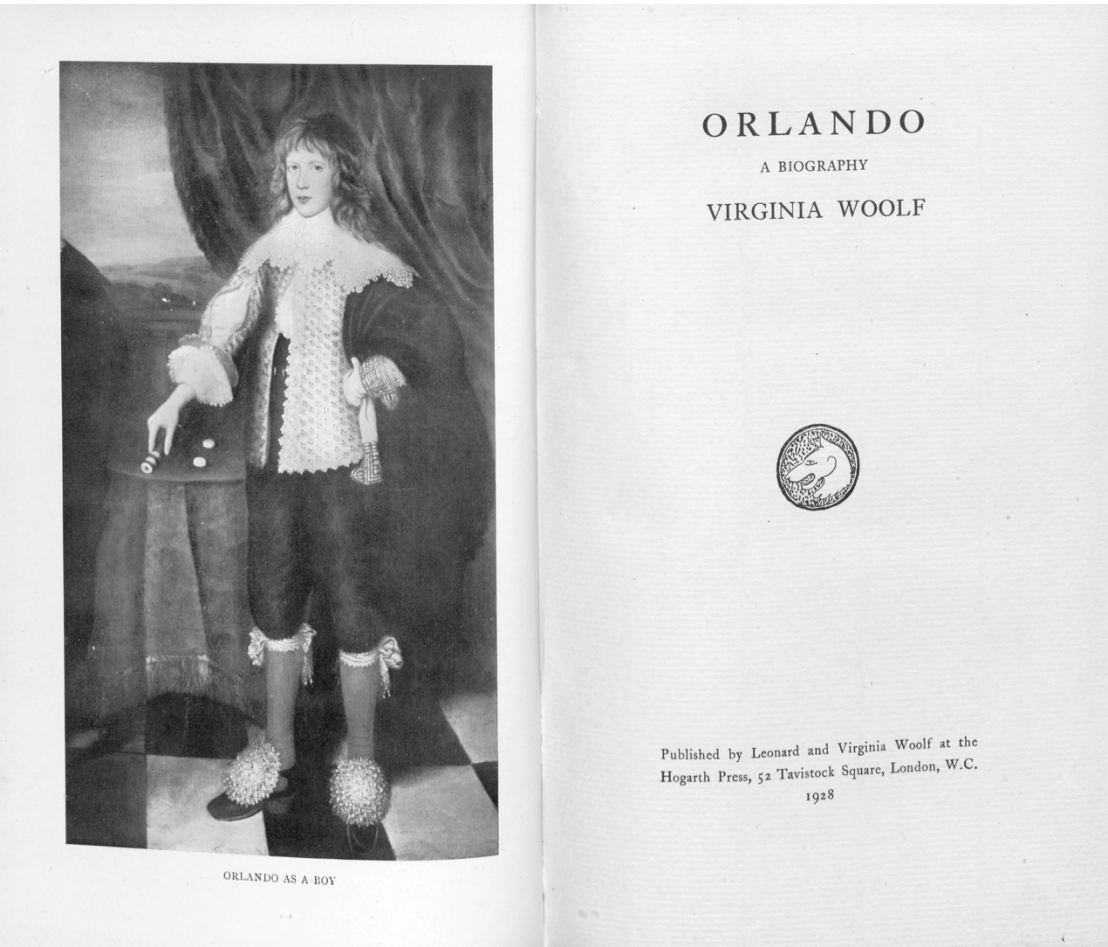
[48] Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, p. 28.
[49] Merry Pawlowski, 'Virginia Woolf's Veil: The Feminist Intellectual and the Organization of Public Space', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 722-51 (p. 728).
[50] For the distinction between aristocratic and non-aristocratic portraiture see Joanna Woodall, 'Introduction: Facing the Subject', in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. by Joanna Woodall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 1-25 (p. 4).


ORLANDO AS A BOY

ORLANDO

A BIOGRAPHY

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C. 1928

Figure 27 'Orlando as a Boy', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 2.

His impressive surroundings include a checkered floor, a heavy tasseled curtain, and a painted landscape painting in the background. His dress consists of an elaborately embroidered collar, a textured and scalloped vest, frill sleeves, draped shawl, breeches with bows, and narrow shoes with gargantuan pompons. Edward's pose, setting and attire all suggest that he is extravagantly privileged, perhaps even spoiled. The lavishness of Edward's dress makes its way into the text when Orlando rushes to greet Elizabeth I at his home, thrusting on 'crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes on them as big as double dahlias'--a precise description of Edward's dress in the portrait. Only Richard's upper body can be seen in his portrait, but like Edward's, it is ornately dressed (Figure 28).

ORLANDO AS AMBASSADOR

ostrich feather fans above their heads, to call upon the other ambassadors and dignitaries of state. The ceremony was always the same. On reaching the courtyard, the Janissaries struck with their fans upon the main portal, which immediately flew open revealing a large chamber, splendidly furnished. Here were seated two figures, generally of the opposite sexes. Profound bows and curtseys were exchanged. In the first room, it was permissible only to mention the weather. Having said that it was fine or wet, hot or cold, the Ambassador then passed on to the next chamber, where again, two figures rose to greet him. Here it was only permissible to compare Constantinople as a place of residence with London; and the Ambassador naturally said that he preferred Constantinople, and his hosts naturally said, though they had not seen it, that they preferred London. In the next chamber, King Charles's and the Sultan's healths had to be discussed at some length. In the next were discussed the Ambassador's health and that of his host's wife, but more briefly. In the next the Ambassador complimented his host upon his furniture, and the host complimented the Ambassador upon his dress. In the next, sweet meats were offered, the host deploring their badness, the Ambassador extolling their goodness. The ceremony ended at length with the smoking of a hookah and the drinking of a glass of coffee; but though the motions of smoking and drinking were gone through punctiliously there was neither tobacco in the pipe nor coffee in the glass, as, had either smoke or drink been real, the human frame

Figure 28 'Orlando as Ambassador', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 113.

The silken cloak and jewel-embellished exude leisure and luxury. The 'long Turkish cloak' in which Orlando wraps himself whilst reveling in the Constantinople morning from his balcony emulates the rich, shiny material that envelops Richard in cascading folds and ripples.[51] The material wealth depicted in the portraits is thus directly incorporated into the narrative, and the portraits provide an actual view of the splendour.

Descriptions of portrait galleries in the narrative, however, add a decadent dimension to the opulence of the illustrations. When Orlando is abandoned by the Russian princess, Sasha, he takes to 'pacing the long galleries and ballrooms with a taper in his hand, looking at picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody whom he could not find'. The portraits function as a hall of mirrors, reflecting Orlando's loss. They nourish his 'strange delight in

[51] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 20-1, 111.

thoughts of death and decay'--thoughts that are developed when his moody nocturnal perambulations lead him to the house's sepulchre:

> It was a ghastly sepulchre; dug deep beneath the foundations of the house as if the first Lord of their family, who had come from France with the conqueror, had wished to testify how all pomp is built upon corruption; how the skeleton lies beneath the flesh; how we that dance and sing above must lie below; how the crimson velvet turns to dust; how the ring (here Orlando, stooping his lantern, would pick up a gold circle lacking a stone, that had rolled into a corner) loses its ruby and the eye which was so lustrous shines no more. 'Nothing remains of all these Princes', Orlando would say, indulging in some pardonable exaggeration of their rank, 'except one digit,' and he would take a skeleton hand in his and bend the joints this way and that.[52]

The sense of doom that the gallery portraits inspire extends to the house and to Orlando's ancestry. A metonymic as well as a symbolic connection is established between the macabre ancestral portrait galleries, Orlando's house, the dissolution of Orlando's lineage, and the portraits of Sackvilles used as illustrations of Orlando. The authority of aristocratic portraits is usually accentuated when these portraits are placed in galleries such as Orlando's or those at Knole as they visually construct the genealogical lineage that gives the subjects in the portraits their power. Galleries in *Orlando*'s narrative, however, signify waste, ruin, and doom. Yet, although Orlando is the last in his line, and despite the fact that he defeats death just as a portrait uncannily preserves its sitter for eternity, Orlando is not an eerie or morose figure, and *Orlando* is not a Gothic or Decadent novel. Aristocratic portraits and portrait galleries rather give a moribund tint to the aristocratic heritage in which Orlando revels. The portraits of Orlando thus make a subtle but nonetheless denigrating critique of the aristocracy--despite the fact that the figure of Orlando is tied to Sackville-West, for whom Woolf had great affection.[53]

The decadence of the Sackville portraits puts on display the morbidity that Woolf detected at Knole and in its paintings on her first visit, writing in her diary: 'the extremeties & indeed the inward parts are gone dead. Ropes fence off half the rooms; the chairs & the pictures look preserved; life has left them.' Woolf was critical when she first visited Knole in 1924:

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[52] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 67.

[53] Colin Dickey also picks up on the 'momenti mori' aspect of the illustrations in *Orlando*, but he sees this in relation to the deathlike properties seen in photography in general by such theorists as Susan Sontag, and not in relation to how it is used tactically to denounce aristocracy. Colin Dickey, 'Virginia Woolf and Photography', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. by Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 375-91.

'You perambulate miles of galleries; skip endless treasures--chairs that Shakespeare might have sat on--tapestries, pictures, floors made of the halves of oaks; & penetrate at length to a round shiny table with a cover laid for one.' The contrast between endless objects and their sole owner becomes even sharper as she finds herself looking out of the window on her train-journey home to London:

> But its [*sic*] the breeding of Vita's that I took away with me as an impression, carrying her & Knole in my eye as I travelled up with the lower middle classes, through slums. There is Knole, capable of housing all the desperate poor of Judd Street, & with only that one solitary earl in the kernel.[54]

It seems that Woolf took away with her two impressions: the aristocratic distinction of Sackville-West and the social inequalities that accompany such a distinction. Through incorporating some of the portraits she saw at Knole in *Orlando*, Woolf is able to capture sentiments expressed in her diary. By selecting outrageous and extravagant Sackville portraits, and incorporating their ridiculous, offensive and decadent properties in her text, Woolf expresses the critical attitude that in her diary moderates the awe that she experienced when she visited Sackville-West at Knole for the first time. Woolf's thoughts in her diary on Sackville-West's 'breeding' furthermore bring to mind *Flush*, Woolf's biography of Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel. Like Orlando, Flush has a heightened sense of his pedigree's worth. Flush considers himself an aristocrat and is described as a snob, qualities that are ridiculed by the mere fact that he is a dog, and he furthermore has vain presumptions, pride, and qualms. When he is forced to part with his lice-infested coat, for example, he feels he has become 'nothing' with the loss of his 'insignia'. Eventually his hairless state turns out be the most satisfactory and Flush ends his days with an egalitarian disposition.[55] Woolf not only ridicules Flush as she does Sackville-West for his aristocratic self-worth, the frontispiece may also hide a reference to Sackville-West as the photograph is probably the one Woolf asked her to send of Henry, her husband's cocker spaniel.[56] The critique of aristocracy bites less in *Flush*, however, as a dog is

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[54] Woolf, *Diary*, II, p. 307 (5 July 1924).
[55] Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), p. 143.
[56] Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975-80), IV (1978), p. 380 (16 September 1931).

unlikely a snob. *Orlando*'s illustrations, in contrast, directly involve Sackville-West's family in a critical exposition of the aristocracy.

The Sackville portraits provide a material foundation and a direct connection to the Sackvilles, whom Woolf later in a draft of a 1940 letter to Sackville-West's son Benedict Nicolson used as a metonymy for the upper classes. In her letter, Woolf distances herself from Roger Fry's statement, 'I understand nothing of humanity in the mass', and explains that she with the *Common Reader*, *A Room of One's Own*, and *Three Guineas* had done her 'best to destroy Sackvilles and Dufferins'.[57] The illustrations are proof that Woolf's attack on 'Sackvilles', meaning the upper classes, was already begun in *Orlando*. Similarly to how she would use photographs in *Three Guineas* of men in official garb to expose their dress as preposterous and underpin the analogy she makes between patriarchy and Fascism, Woolf uses Sackville portraits as visual-rhetorical weapons employed against the institution the subjects represent--in *Orlando*'s case, the aristocracy.[58] In *Three Guineas*, the female narrator asserts that a man in official dress is not to women 'a pleasing or an impressive spectacle. He is on the contrary a ridiculous, a barbarous, a displeasing spectacle'. [59] The same could be said about the pompous, haughty, extravagant aristocrats exhibited in *Orlando*. In *A Room of One's Own*, when the narrator derides the 'pathetic devices' which make people feel superior, she cites as examples 'wealth, or rank, a straight nose, or the portrait of a grandfather by Romney'.[60] The implication is similar in *Orlando*: a notable painting of one's ancestor is an erroneous source of superiority. Elizabeth Hirsh has drawn attention to how Woolf's inclusion of the Sackville portraits functions as a way of taking possession of Sackville-West, de-privatizing her life,

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[57] Virginia Woolf, 'Draft of letter to Benedict Nicolson (24 August 1940)', in *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*, ed. by S. P. Rosenbaum (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 65.
[58] For studies of how Woolf uses the illustrations in *Three Guineas* to make an anti-fascist stance see the following studies: Diane F. Gillespie, '"Her Kodak Pointed at His Head": Virginia Woolf and Photography', in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Diane F. Gillespie (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press), pp. 113-47; Maggie Humm, 'Virginia Woolf and Visual Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 214-30 (p. 227); Rebecca Wisor, 'About Face: The *Three Guineas* Photographs in Cultural Context', *Woolf Studies Annual*, 21 (2015), 1-49.
[59] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938), pp. 39-40.
[60] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), pp. 52-3.

heritage, and estate.[61] However, Woolf not only takes ownership of Sackville-West's life, heritage, and estate via the Sackville portraits, she also uses the portraits to debunk Sackville-West's class. That the illustrations demonstrate negative aspects of the aristocracy is interesting in relation to Woolf's class politics, which Patricia McManus has shown continues to be a source of contention for critics.[62] *Orlando*, for example, has been read specifically by Sean Latham as an uncritical celebration of the aristocracy.[63] Careful attention to the illustrations offers a more nuanced perspective on *Orlando*'s politics and reveals that Woolf's ambivalence to the aristocracy started earlier and was more critical than customarily thought. Woolf may have had snobbish tendencies, but the illustrations in *Orlando* are not aristocratic portraits to be gleefully and uncritically consumed.

Orlando's Deviation from the Aristocracy

That the illustrations in *Orlando* deal with Sackville-West's aristocratic background accords with the social awareness that Woolf saw as central to life-writing. In 'A Sketch of the Past', Woolf stresses that life-writing must analyse how society, including class, has influence on the subject:

> Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class; well, if we

[61] Elizabeth Hirsh, 'Virginia Woolf and Portraiture', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. by Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 160-77 (pp. 171-5).
[62] Patricia McManus, 'The "Offensiveness' of Virginia Woolf: From a Moral to a Political Reading', *Woolf Studies Annual* 14 (2008), 91-123. Feminist studies have done much to challenge the conception that Woolf was apolitical, mostly through focusing on Woolf's essays, diaries and later works. See for example studies by Jane Marcus, Anna Snaith and Alice Wood. Jane Marcus, '"No More Horses': Virginia Woolf on Art and Propoganda', *Women's Studies* 4.2-3 (1977), 265-89; Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 2000); Alice Wood, *Virginia Woolf's Late Cultural Criticism: The Genesis of 'The Year', 'Three Guineas' and 'Between the Acts'* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). Much scholarship on Woolf's class politics has centered on her relationship to the working classes. John Carey includes Woolf among those modernists who felt threatened by the working classes; Alison Light writes about Woolf's ambivalent and fraught relationship with her servants; and Alex Zwerdling attributes the absence of the working classes in Woolf's fiction to her 'middle-class guilt'. John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber, 1992); Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants* (London: Fig Tree, 2007); Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 98.
[63] Sean Latham, *"Am I a Snob?" Modernism and the Novel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 90-117.

> cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes.[64]

While the paintings of Sackville-West's ancestors depict not only Orlando's aristocratic background, but also Sackville-West's, the photographs of Sackville-West by contrast demonstrate that Orlando's (and Sackville-West's) identity is not completely conditioned by the aristocracy on display in the paintings. Unlike the 'preserved' and 'dead' paintings from Knole, the photographs of Sackville-West do not originate in the aristocracy. Woolf could have chosen paintings of Sackville-West to illustrate Orlando. The portrait by the society portrait painter Philip Alexius de László de Lombos (1910) would have provided a natural continuation of the aristocratic vein of the Sackville portraits. Woolf instead chose a medium that she could control and which furthermore is considered cheap, modern, and egalitarian. With its easy and widespread production, photography as a medium is considered less prestigious than painting as well as an instigator of the 'democratisation' of portraiture.[65] The lower status of photography seems to be echoed in the illustrations' titles, which unlike 'Orlando as a Boy' and 'Orlando as Ambassador' are written with lower-case letters: 'Orlando on her return to England', 'Orlando about the year 1840' and 'Orlando at the present time'.

Since the photographs are produced specifically for *Orlando*, they offer a commentary tailored to Orlando and Sackville-West. 'Orlando on her return to England' is often assumed to be by the Lenare studio in London, but the Lenare photograph that is similar to this illustration located with the Monk's House Albums at Houghton Library is slightly different--both in composition and quality.[66] It is more likely that the illustration was produced in the studio shared by Vanessa Bell and her partner Duncan Grant. In a letter to Sackville-West, Woolf wrote: 'You'll lunch here at *one sharp* on Monday wont [*sic*] you: bringing your curls and clothes. Nessa wants to photograph you at 2, that is if she thinks the Lenare too bad. I'm not

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[64] Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being*, pp. 64-137 (p. 80).
[65] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 16, 34-59.
[66] Virginia Woolf's Monk's House Albums. Cambridge, Mass., Houghton Library, MS Thr 564, folder 94.

sure'. [67] Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann write in a footnote to this letter that another illustration, 'Orlando about the year 1840', the second photograph of Sackville-West, resulted from this session.[68] As the Lenare photograph for 'Orlando on her return to England' indeed seems to have been deemed 'too bad', it is possible both photographs were taken in Bell and Duncan's studio. There is also another photograph that looks like 'Orlando on her return to England', a blurry one that Madeline Moore gives the caption, 'Vita Sackville-West posing as a lily in Vanessa Bell's studio, 1928'.[69] That at least two versions of 'Orlando on her return to England' were discarded, including one taken in the Lenare studio, suggests the precedence of creative vision in the photographs. 'Orlando at the present time', the last photograph of Sackville-West and the last illustration in *Orlando*, was most likely taken by Leonard Woolf at Long Barn, the home Sackville-West shared with her husband. In a letter to Sackville-West, Woolf explained that:

> I wanted to ask if it would be convenient should we call in on Sunday on our way back; at Long Barn. It has now become essential to have a photograph of Orlando in country clothes in a wood, to end with. If you have film and a camera I thought Leonard might take you.'[70]

Woolf's request seems to have been granted as 'Orlando at the present time' shows a country-clothes clad Sackville-West in a wood.

In the 1920s, many people could not afford to have their portrait painted, but almost everyone could have their photograph taken. Photography is thus not as rooted in social status as painting. Moreover, social indicators are easily and cheaply imitated in photographs, making them more mutable and unreliable. This is exemplified in the photography of Woolf's great-aunt Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), whose subversion of class in the production of her photographs Woolf emphasised:

> Boatmen were turned into King Arthur; village girls into Queen Guinevere. Tennyson was wrapped in rugs: Sir Henry Taylor was crowned with tinsel. The parlour-maid sat for her portrait and the guest had to answer the bell . . . She cared nothing for the miseries of her sitters nor for their rank. The carpenter and

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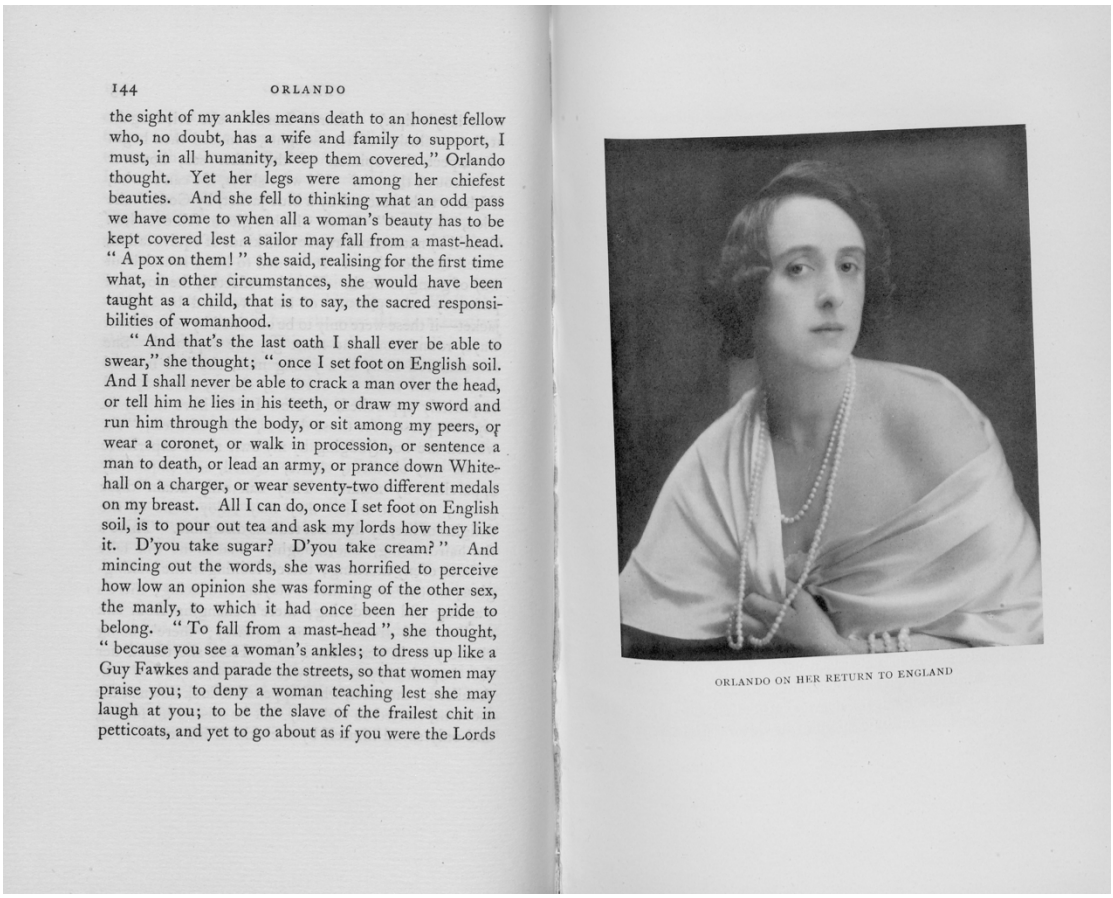
[67] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 435 (11 November 1927).
[68] Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, ed., *Letters*, III, p. 435.
[69] Madeleine Moore, *The Short Season Between Two Silences* (Boston, London and Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp. 98-9.
[70] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 488 (27 April 1928).

> the Crown Prince of Prussia alike must sit as still as stones in the attitudes she chose, in the draperies she arranged, for as long as she wished.[71]

'Orlando on her return to England' and 'Orlando about the year 1840' are particularly reminiscent of Cameron's photographs. Woolf turns a present-day aristocrat into an aristocrat of the past rather than a village girl into royalty, or a knight into a pauper, but the act of posing is made explicit. 'Orlando on her return to England' deliberately imitates 'Orlando as an Ambassador' with Sackville-West's pose and guise, but the photograph appears fraudulent and insincere (Figure 29).



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the sight of my ankles means death to an honest fellow who, no doubt, has a wife and family to support, I must, in all humanity, keep them covered," Orlando thought. Yet her legs were among her chiefest beauties. And she fell to thinking what an odd pass we have come to when all a woman's beauty has to be kept covered lest a sailor may fall from a mast-head. "A pox on them!" she said, realising for the first time what, in other circumstances, she would have been taught as a child, that is to say, the sacred responsibilities of womanhood.

"And that's the last oath I shall ever be able to swear," she thought; "once I set foot on English soil. And I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my breast. All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it. D'you take sugar? D'you take cream?" And mincing out the words, she was horrified to perceive how low an opinion she was forming of the other sex, the manly, to which it had once been her pride to belong. "To fall from a mast-head", she thought, "because you see a woman's ankles; to dress up like a Guy Fawkes and parade the streets, so that women may praise you; to deny a woman teaching lest she may laugh at you; to be the slave of the frailest chit in petticoats, and yet to go about as if you were the Lords

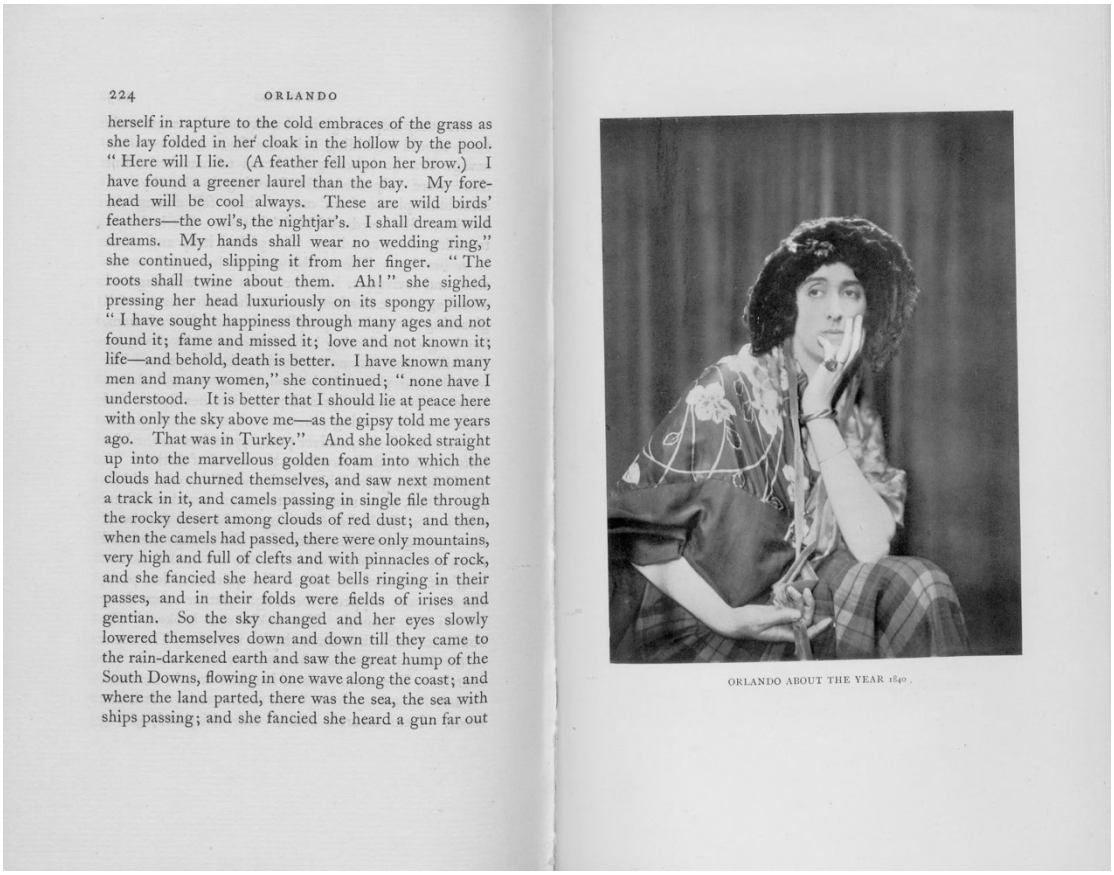
ORLANDO ON HER RETURN TO ENGLAND

Figure 29 'Orlando on her return to England', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 144.

According to the narrative, Orlando returns to England during the Reformation, thus with its title, 'Orlando on her return to England', the photograph is claimed to predate the invention of photography. 'Orlando on her return to England' was supposedly made to look like a painting

[71] Virginia Woolf, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women*, by Julia Margaret Cameron with introductions by Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry (London: Hogarth Press, 1926), pp. 6-7.

by Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), who painted many of the portraits at Knole, but it is obviously a photograph. [72] 'Orlando about the year 1840' is also anachronistic (Figure 30).



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herself in rapture to the cold embraces of the grass as she lay folded in her cloak in the hollow by the pool. "Here will I lie. (A feather fell upon her brow.) I have found a greener laurel than the bay. My forehead will be cool always. These are wild birds' feathers—the owl's, the nightjar's. I shall dream wild dreams. My hands shall wear no wedding ring," she continued, slipping it from her finger. "The roots shall twine about them. Ah!" she sighed, pressing her head luxuriously on its spongy pillow, "I have sought happiness through many ages and not found it; fame and missed it; love and not known it; life—and behold, death is better. I have known many men and many women," she continued; "none have I understood. It is better that I should lie at peace here with only the sky above me—as the gipsy told me years ago. That was in Turkey." And she looked straight up into the marvellous golden foam into which the clouds had churned themselves, and saw next moment a track in it, and camels passing in single file through the rocky desert among clouds of red dust; and then, when the camels had passed, there were only mountains, very high and full of clefts and with pinnacles of rock, and she fancied she heard goat bells ringing in their passes, and in their folds were fields of irises and gentian. So the sky changed and her eyes slowly lowered themselves down and down till they came to the rain-darkened earth and saw the great hump of the South Downs, flowing in one wave along the coast; and where the land parted, there was the sea, the sea with ships passing; and she fancied she heard a gun far out

ORLANDO ABOUT THE YEAR 1840.

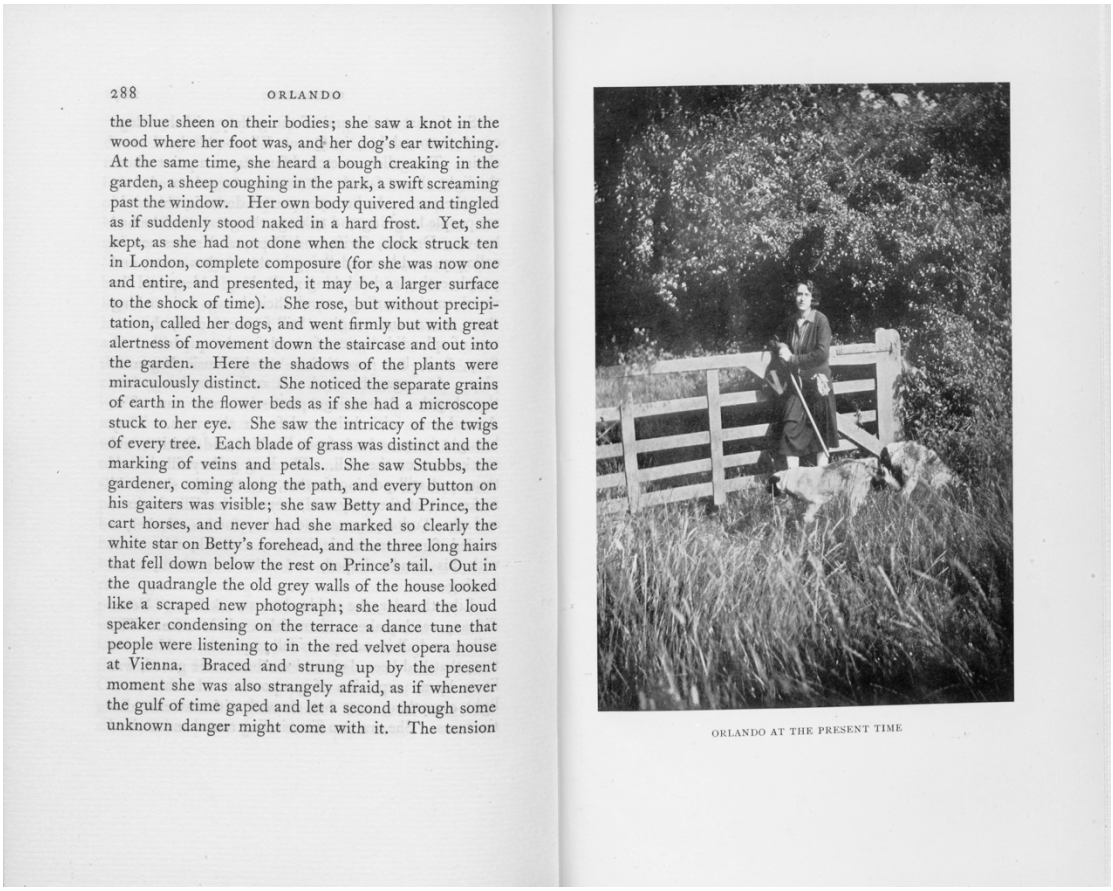
Figure 30. 'Orlando about the year 1840', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 224.

It pretends to be a Victorian photograph ('about the year 1840')--but as Glendinning has observed, Sackville-West does not look '1840 in the least'.[73] The clash and clutter of patterns and accessories in Sackville-West's attire correspond to the metaphorical way in which the Victorian period is described in the text, especially in Orlando's vision of the Victoria Memorial as 'a conglomeration […] of the most heterogeneous and ill-assorted objects, piled higgledy-piggledy', but the kimono-style top and checkered skirt diverge from what was worn in the Victorian era as well as the bombazine skirt, bassinette, and crinolines that Orlando buys in the narrative.[74] The pretention of 'Orlando on her return to England' and 'Orlando about the year 1840' is thus flaunted, dissociating Sackville-West from her aristocratic guise, distancing her

[72] Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 205; Vita Sackville-West, *Knole* (London: National Trust, 1954), p. 41.
[73] Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 205.
[74] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 209-13.

from the Sackvilles, and preventing her from becoming conflated with her aristocratic identity. Furthermore, whereas the Sackvilles in the historical portraits are subsumed into one aristocratic type (it is only with my research for example that the original identity of the subject in 'Orlando as Ambassador' is revealed), Sackville-West has an indexical presence in the photographs that in her role as a public figure was and is recognizable. In these photographs that imitate the Sackville portraits, but which parade their own artifice, Sackville-West is shown to be not quite like her ancestors and Orlando not uniformly a Sackville-like character. They assert Orlando's aristocratic heritage by emulating the Sackville paintings, but they also mark Orlando and Sackville-West's difference from the aristocracy and the Sackvilles.

Unlike the photographs that show Sackville-West as Orlando in the past, 'Orlando at the present time' possesses a snapshot aesthetic with corresponding associations of spontaneity, immediacy, and intimacy (Figure 31).



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the blue sheen on their bodies; she saw a knot in the wood where her foot was, and her dog's ear twitching. At the same time, she heard a bough creaking in the garden, a sheep coughing in the park, a swift screaming past the window. Her own body quivered and tingled as if suddenly stood naked in a hard frost. Yet, she kept, as she had not done when the clock struck ten in London, complete composure (for she was now one and entire, and presented, it may be, a larger surface to the shock of time). She rose, but without precipitation, called her dogs, and went firmly but with great alertness of movement down the staircase and out into the garden. Here the shadows of the plants were miraculously distinct. She noticed the separate grains of earth in the flower beds as if she had a microscope stuck to her eye. She saw the intricacy of the twigs of every tree. Each blade of grass was distinct and the marking of veins and petals. She saw Stubbs, the gardener, coming along the path, and every button on his gaiters was visible; she saw Betty and Prince, the cart horses, and never had she marked so clearly the white star on Betty's forehead, and the three long hairs that fell down below the rest on Prince's tail. Out in the quadrangle the old grey walls of the house looked like a scraped new photograph; she heard the loud speaker condensing on the terrace a dance tune that people were listening to in the red velvet opera house at Vienna. Braced and strung up by the present moment she was also strangely afraid, as if whenever the gulf of time gaped and let a second through some unknown danger might come with it. The tension

ORLANDO AT THE PRESENT TIME

Figure 31. 'Orlando at the present time', Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), facing p. 288.

The photograph appears near the end of the novel, when Orlando is her 'single self, a real self' and also the same age as Sackville-West. Although Sackville-West is posing, her demeanor and dress are relaxed, and the setting is informal, outside in nature--characteristics of the snapshots Woolf took privately of friends and family.[75] Among unleashed dogs, wild-growing grass, and heavy foliage, Sackville-West seems at ease and content, resting her arm on a rustic gate. Although the 'country clothes' that Sackville-West wears do not match the 'whipcord breeches and leather jacket' that Orlando changes into 'in less than three minutes' in the narrative--the sight of which is claimed to ravish the viewer with 'the beauty of movement'--they do not seem different from everyday and everyman's clothes.[76] Movement is also apparent in the photograph, not only with the blurry outlines of the dogs rummaging in the grass, but also Sackville-West's walking stick indicates recent activity. The dogs are not attentive dogs like the ones used as symbols of loyalty in historical portraits but are caught in mid-action. This photograph, in which Sackville-West seems to pose as herself, thus seems less stilted, elevated, and preserved and more lively, down-to-earth, and free-spirited than the Sackville portraits and the photographs pretending to be from the Restoration and Victorian period.

That the photograph shows Orlando 'in a wood', as Woolf writes in her letter, probably on the path that she in the narrative takes to the oak tree, highlights her connection to literature, for nature, and in particular the oak tree, inspired Orlando to write 'The Oak Tree', which like Sackville-West's 1926 poem 'The Land' (also a celebration of rural nature) wins a prize. In the narrative, Orlando is described as 'a nobleman afflicted by the love of literature', as if literature and nobility are incompatible; he suspects that he 'was by birth a writer, rather than an aristocrat'; and his liking for literature translates into 'a liking for low company, especially for that of lettered people whose wits so often keep them under, as if there were the sympathy of blood between them'. The allusion to pastoral poetry in the photograph thus also distances Orlando from her aristocratic birth, associating her instead with literature, depicted in the text as belonging to the lower classes. Orlando's desire for literary recognition is the paramount

[75] For Woolf's private snapshots see Maggie Humm, *Snapshots of Bloomsbury: The Private Lives of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (London: Tate, 2006).
[76] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 282.

stimulus in the narrative, and when she achieves it 'photographs in the evening papers' are part of the fanfare. By referencing 'The Oak Tree', 'Orlando at the present time' also participates in the celebration. It should not be overlooked that Sackville-West was a popular author at the time of *Orlando*'s publication, and that these photographs, as well as *Orlando* as a whole, contribute to Sackville-West's celebrity. 'Orlando at the present time' thus has affinities with publicity photography, the 'photographs in the evening papers' mentioned in the text, and other hints of Sackville-West's success as a writer.[77] In her essay 'Lady Dorothy Nevill' (1925), Woolf compares the aristocracy to a cage with bars that limited Nevill's potential; the photographs of Sackville-West depict someone who, if not wholly freed, has at least to some extent roamed outside aristocracy's cage, delving into literature and, in the first two photographs of Sackville-West, yielding to jesting transmutations of her identity.[78]

Orlando can write 'The Oaktree' partly because her marriage to Shelmerdine is unconventional. Their union is unique primarily because they both contain male and female qualities: 'It was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman'.[79] Orlando sees marriage as an impediment to writing but succeeds nonetheless after she reflects on how unusual her marriage is:

> She was married, true; but if one's husband was always sailing round Cape Horn, was it marriage? If one liked him, was it marriage? If one liked other people, was it marriage? And finally, if one still wished, more than anything in the world, to write poetry, was it marriage? She had her doubts.[80]

The connection between Orlando's ability to write (despite being an aristocrat) and her combination of male and female qualities is explicit in Woolf's manuscript. Woolf wrote 'androgynous' alongside the word 'gunandros' as a note on the verso of a manuscript page where she describes how Orlando is 'not wholly a woman or a man' and therefore 'could

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[77] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 29, 280.
[78] Virginia Woolf, 'Lady Dorothy Nevill', in *The Common Reader*, by Virginia Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), pp. 248-54.
[79] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 232.
[80] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 238.

write'.[81] Woolf expands upon the connection between having male and female traits and being able to write in *A Room of One's Own*, claiming it produces greatness: 'It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties.' Woolf suggests that when Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote that a great mind is androgynous he meant that 'the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided.' Woolf claims that William Shakespeare, John Keats, Laurence Sterne, William Cowper and Charles Lamb were all androgynous and that Percy Bysshe Shelley was 'sexless'.[82] Woolf's association of androgyny with artistic creativity and intellectual perception accords with contemporary theories of sexuality, which saw homosexuality and bisexuality as connected to the existence of both male and female traits in a person and as producing creative individuals.[83] The theories of Edward Carpenter, one of the theorists whom Barbara Fassler has shown influenced Bloomsbury's views on sex, are especially interesting in relation to *Orlando*.[84] Carpenter claims that those of 'Uranian' temperament, by which he means 'those whose lives and activities are inspired by a genuine friendship or love for their own sex', make up 'a large number of the artist class', which he ventures may be due to the 'dual nature' of this temperament and 'the swift and constant interaction between its masculine and feminine elements'. Not only does Carpenter describe 'Uranians' as an artistic 'class', he also stipulates that they may upend the class system. He argues that 'the Uranian people may be destined to form the advance guard of that great movement which will one day transform the common life by substituting the bond of personal affection and compassion for the monetary, legal and other external ties which now control and confine society.' He sees the 'Uranian' relationship as a 'leveler' and a contribution to

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[81] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: The Original Holograph Draft*, ed. by Stuart Nelson Clarke (London: Stuart Nelson Clarke, 1993), p. 228.
[82] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, pp. 148, 156.
[83] Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1901), pp. 17, 102, 140, 143, 173; Sigmund Freud, '"Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness' (1908) and 'The Psychogenesis of a case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (1920), in *Collected Papers*, ed. by Ernest Jones, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1933-50), II (1946), pp. 76-99 (p. 85) and pp. 202-231 (pp. 213-4); Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (London: Heinemann, 1906), pp. 45, 48, 65.
[84] Barbara Fassler, 'Theories of Homosexuality as Sources of Bloomsbury's Androgyny', *Signs*, 5.2 (1979), 237-51.

'democracy' because it is unlike other relationships produced by 'a sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class, and unites in the closest affection the most estranged ranks of society'.[85] Orlando does not engage in an amorous relationship with someone far below her rank, like Sackville-West did with Woolf, but her androgyny helps explain how she can break the bounds of aristocracy, engage with 'low company', and write poetry.

One of the primary ways in which *Orlando* expresses its subject's androgyny is with descriptions of Orlando's appearance, which in the process equates androgyny with attractiveness. When Orlando is a man, the Archduchess Harriet courts him because she has 'seen his picture and it was the image of a sister of hers'. When Orlando is an ambassador in Constantinople, the biographer-narrator describes how he with his 'beauty, birth, and some rarer gift, which we may call glamour' becomes 'the adored of many women and some men'. At the moment of Orlando's transformation, when she stands 'stark naked', she is described as more 'ravishing' than any human being, her form combining 'the strength of a man and a woman's grace'.[86] Orlando's chief attributes, shapely legs and incandescence, characterise Orlando both as a man and as a woman and are furthermore features that attracted Woolf to Sackville-West.[87] The biographer-narrator describes the strong reactions of those who look upon Orlando. Elizabeth I's lips, for example, twitch as she examines Orlando's eyes, mouth, nose, breast, hips and hands, and when Orlando departs for the Polish wars she recalls him for she cannot bear 'to think of that tender flesh torn and that curly head rolled in the dust'. The biographer-narrator not only often refers to Orlando as handsome, beautiful, and lovely, the biographer-narrator also claims that 'we rhapsodise' when we look at Orlando, the first-person plural 'we' presumably meaning both the biographer-narrator and the reader.[88]

The illustrations allow the reader to partake in the narrative's rapture over Orlando's androgynous appearance. The painted portraits of Sackvilles used to illustrate Orlando as a boy

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[85] Edward Carpenter, 'The Intermediate Sex', in *Homosexuality: A Cross Cultural Approach*, ed. by Donald Webster Cory (New York: Julian Press, 1956), pp. 139-206 (pp. 195-6, 192). First published by George Allen (London, 1908).
[86] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 106, 115, 126-7.
[87] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 16, 24-5, 51, 107, 109, 144; Woolf, *Diary*, III, p. 52 (21 December 1925).
[88] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 17, 25-6.

and as an ambassador show men with soft facial features, gentle demeanors, and stereotypically effeminate qualities. Edward Sackville in 'Orlando as a boy' is a pretty teenager, his hair is long and luscious, his outfit is delicate, and especially his slippers with giant pompoms suggest daintiness. He lightly fingers what looks like dice or pebbles on a table, and although the narrator contemplates its possibility, Richard Sackville does not in fact hold a sword in 'Orlando as Ambassador'--unlike Thomas Sackville on the cover illustration emulating Orlando's forefathers. Richard Sackville looks rather meek with his rich mane resting on his silk-swathed shoulders, his calm and contemplative gaze, and tentative smile. Not only is the portrait's composition analogous with the next illustration, the first photograph of Sackville-West, but the sitters also bear a striking physical resemblance with their curly dark hair, oval facial shapes, big round eyes, long noses, and narrow mouths. Woolf called the portraits 'the two Orlando's' in her letters to Sackville-West, and assured her that they 'fit like a glove'.[89] Talia Schaffer's misjudgment that 'Orlando as Ambassador' is a photograph of Sackville-West testifies to the androgynous features of both Richard Sackville and Vita Sackville-West.[90] The photographs of Sackville-West show her as a woman, but the features that Woolf thought 'handsome' can be seen in them all, and especially the last photograph, where Sackville-West stands with her tall stature self-assuredly outside in nature, demonstrates how Woolf could have thought that Sackville-West resembled a 'manly' 'grenadier'.[91] Sackville-West does not wield a sword, but she does have a walking stick. *Orlando*'s illustrations thus also act like the photographs of themselves that Woolf and Sackville-West exchanged: as objects of desire.[92] Nigel Nicolson claims that *Orlando* is 'the longest and most charming love-letter in literature,' and supports his claim with the erotic way Woolf plays with Sackville-West's image, dressing her in 'furs, lace and emeralds', teasing her, flirting with her, and in the end photographing her

[89] Woolf, *Letters*, III, pp. 435, 442 (6 November 1927, 5 December 1927).
[90] Talia Schaffer, 'Posing *Orlando*', in *Sexual Artifice: Persons, Images, Politics*, ed. by Ann Kibbey, Kayann Short, and Abouali Farmanfarmaian (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 26-63 (pp. 27, 55-6).
[91] Woolf, *Diary*, II, p. 217 (15 December 1922).
[92] Sackville-West, *Letters*, pp. 332, 337-38, 350 (2 February 1929, 7 February 1929, 3 April 1929).

'in the mud at Long Barn.'[93] *Orlando*'s illustrations suggest that it was not only Sackville-West's aristocracy that made her romantic to Woolf ('like old yellow wine'), but also her androgyny and her identity as a writer.

While Orlando's androgyny is celebrated as an ideal that with its connection to literature offers a life antipathetic to Orlando's aristocratic heritage, her female gender figures as a form of class oppression. Although Orlando cross-dresses in the text, and Sackville-West was known for her masculine attire, Sackville-West is consistently shown as a woman in women's clothes in the photographs produced for *Orlando*. In a discussion of whether sex affects identity, the narrator compares 'Orlando on her return to England' to 'Orlando as Ambassador'. First Orlando's portraits are used to 'prove' that Orlando's face has remained 'practically the same'; later, they are used to reflect 'certain changes':

> The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion.[94]

Perhaps because the narrator-biographer directly implicates the illustrations in a discussion of gender identity, the connection that the text makes between gender and class, and its relevance to the illustrations, has been overlooked. This class dimension emerges, however, if one follows Orlando's line of thought as she reflects on being a woman on her return journey home to England:

> I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my breast.[95]

This is a decidedly patrician picture of the male sex: Orlando bemoans that, as a woman, she has lost status and privileges, such as wearing a coronet. It is worth noting that the uproar in Constantinople happens just as Orlando is crowned with a ducal coronet, and that he turns into a woman immediately after he has been robbed of it. Orlando's change to a woman thus also

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[93] Nigel Nicolson, 'Part V', in *Portrait of a Marriage*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 187-233 (p. 201).
[94] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 171.
[95] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 144.

marks a change of class, which anticipates the way in which Woolf casts gender difference as class inequality in *Three Guineas*, the female narrator addressing the opposite sex:

> Your class possesses in its own right and through marriage practically all the capital, all the land, all the valuables, and all the patronage in England. Our class possesses in its own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables, and none of the patronage in England. [96]

Not only does Woolf substitute gender with the word 'class', she conceptualizes the difference between the two in terms of wealth usually associated with the upper class (capital, land, valuables, patronage).

In *Orlando* the narrator's gender discussion is centred around women's clothes, and these clothes act as visual metaphors in the illustrations for the way in which Orlando as a woman is 'clothed with poverty and ignorance, which are the dark garments of the female sex'. When Orlando returns by ship to England she contemplates her new sex for the first time, a reflection that lasts the length of the voyage and which takes place on the pages adjacent to 'Orlando on her return to England'. It is the first time that she wears the 'dress of a young Englishwoman of rank', the Turkish trousers that she wore before cited as an explanation for why Orlando as of yet 'had scarcely given her sex a thought'. When Orlando does give her sex thought it forms itself around the attractions and restrictions of her new dress: she delights in its appearance but reflects that she would not be able to swim in it if she leapt overboard. On the other hand, she savours the idea of being saved, but then remembers the derogatory word that as a man she would have called a woman who threw herself overboard in order to be rescued (a word the narrator omits as it is 'disrespectful in the extreme and passing strange on a lady's lips'). Orlando wonders if she must 'respect the opinion of the other sex, however monstrous', in which case she must curtail her natural inclinations:

> Candid by nature, and averse to all kinds of equivocation, to tell lies bored her. It seemed to her a roundabout way of going to work. Yet, she reflected, the flowered paduasoy--the pleasure of being rescued by a blue-jacket--if these were only to be obtained by roundabout ways, roundabout one must go, she supposed. She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled. 'Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires,' she reflected; 'for women are not

[96] Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 33.

> (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature.'

Like women's clothing, conventional gender roles constrict Orlando. She cannot explain to the Captain, who acts as a guardian to her, that she, who has now been 'lapped like a lily in folds of paduasoy', had once been a Duke, an Ambassador, had 'hacked heads off, and lain with loose women among treasure sacks in the holds of pirate ships'.[97] The way Sackville-West is lapped like a lily (or a Lely) in 'Orlando on her return to England' is thus contrasted not only to her former masculine identity, but also to the titles and actions of the ruling class. Sackville-West herself felt a victim during the photographic session for 'Orlando on her return to England'; as she told her husband, she was miserable 'draped in an inadequate bit of pink satin with all my clothes slipping off'.[98] She looks equally uncomfortable in 'Orlando around the year 1840', propped up and weighed down by an excess of clothes and accessories. Orlando enjoys being a woman, but her dress reflects that there are certain constraints that distance her from her former rank. For example, when she returns to England as a woman her right to her wealth and possessions is contested. In the end Orlando wins her case; Sackville-West, on the other hand, did not as a woman inherit her beloved Knole when her father died in January 1928, the same year as *Orlando*'s publication.

Orlando deals with the constraints of female garments and female roles by cross-dressing. She enjoys standing in front of the mirror, admiring the various ways different adornments offset her beauty, but then sighs 'Life, a lover,' exchanges her pearls and satins for 'knickerbockers of an ordinary nobleman', and departs for London. The mirror-gazing attests to Orlando's newfound vanity, but the cross-dressing prevents her from serving, as the narrator in *A Room of One's Own* argues women do, as a mirror 'reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.' Cross-dressing is also Orlando's response when Alexander Pope, whom Orlando entertains, presents her with 'the rough draught of a certain famous line in the "Characters of Women"'--the line is omitted, but it could very well be the one Woolf includes in *A Room of*

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[97] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 146-8.
[98] Sackville-West quoted in Glendinning, *Vita*, p. 182.

One's Own: 'Most women have no character at all.'[99] Although Orlando receives Pope's line with a curtsey, she must cool her cheeks after he leaves her, 'for really she felt as if the little man had struck her'. Once she has recovered, she opens the cupboard containing her men's clothes, choses a 'black velvet suit richly trimmed with Venetian lace', checks that her petticoats had 'not lost her the freedom of her legs', and leaves her home incognita.[100] The liberties of cross-dressing described in the text leads Schaffer, with the help of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble*, to read the illustrations as masquerades that in their imperfection reveal maleness and femininity to be artificial constructs. However, none of the illustrations show Orlando cross-dressing. The illustrations rather demonstrate the oppression of dress than the liberties of cross-dressing. Contrary to Erika Flesher's claim that the illustrations in *Orlando* oppose sex as a determinant of identity and Schaffer's claim that they suggest the artifice of male and female identities, the portraits question the strict separation of male and female gender identities rather than their essential and inherent nature.[101] Woolf does not claim that sexual identity is either irrelevant or constructed, but, rather, sets up an androgynous ideal, and casts gender difference in relation to status. It is a conception of androgyny that is much more aligned with the sexual theories that held sway in Woolf's circle than with later developments in gender theory, such as Butler's, which would not allow for the essentialism and appraisal with which androgyny is attributed in *Orlando*. Androgyny, as it is crystallized in the thinking of Bloomsbury--with fixed, but mixed masculine and feminine elements that are considered inherent, inherited, and advantageous for art and creativity--corresponds to the picture of Orlando that the illustrations construct and the picture of androgyny that they propagate. Only the Archduke is portrayed as cross-dressing in the illustrations, but both he and Curzon's portrait are denounced as aristocratic and repulsive.

The portraits of Orlando's other lovers, Sasha and Shelmerdine demonstrate that Orlando is attracted to feminine, non-aristocratic types. Both illustrations, along with the

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[99] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, pp. 44, 53.
[100] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 194-5.
[101] Erika Flesher, 'Mock Biography and Photography', in *Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. by Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), pp. 39-47; Schaffer, 'Posing *Orlando*', pp. 26-63.

photographs of Sackville-West, capture and accentuate qualities that oppose those on display in the historical paintings of the Sackvilles. Although the titles indicate that Sasha, who is modeled on Violet Trefusis, with whom Sackville-West had an affair, is a princess, and Shelmerdine, based on Harold Nicolson, is an esquire, the portraits do not signal their rank, but rather their feminine and childlike qualities. Although Sasha is an adult in the narrative, Garnett is a child in the photograph. Woolf wrote to Bell when she received the photographs she had asked her to take of Garnett as the Russian princess:

> The photographs are most lovely, and I cannot thank you sufficiently for the pains you have been at, I think with a little re-arrangement one or two might do: a trifle young, thats all, but I'm showing them to Vita, who doesn't want to be accused of raping the under age. My God--I shall rape Angelica one of these days: she is the jasper of jocundity, of all your brood: a per se.[102]

The innocent expression and soft features of the man in the painting used to illustrate Shelmerdine also gives him childlike qualities, which resonates with the descriptions of Shelmerdine in the text as a 'boy (for he was little more)'.[103] In her memoir, Sackville-West also attributes part of her attraction to Nicholson to his 'boyishness'.[104] By showing Sasha and Shelmerdine as children, their sex--if not quite in absentia--is at least underdeveloped, obscured, set aside. Furthermore, unlike the colossal, dense, and solid Sackville portraits, these portraits are modest. The photograph of Garnett is similar to the many photographs that Bell took of Garnett: as a child Garnett's 'favourite vice was dressing up', and Bell, like her great-aunt Cameron, favoured 'quite extravagantly "artistic" poses' in her photographs. [105] The portrait expresses this playful, domestic, dress-up atmosphere, and it also has a homemade quality with paint applied to its foreground and background. The medium of the Shelmerdine illustration is pastel, also less formal than painting, and the style is soft, demure, and fluid. The portraits of Sasha and Shelmerdine offer an alternative to stale aristocracy with their feminine, childlike

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[102] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 497 (12 May 1928).
[103] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 227.
[104] Vita Sackville-West, 'Part One', in *Portrait of a Marriage*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson, pp. 3-42 (p. 32). Woolf also described Nicholson in her diary as a 'childlike man'. Woolf, *Diary*, III, p. 145 (4 July 1927).
[105] Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett, *Vanessa Bell's Family Album* (London, Jill Norman and Hobhouse, 1981), pp. 11, 81.

qualities, and informal aesthetic. There is no illustration depicting Woolf in *Orlando*, but the portraits used to illustrate Orlando's lovers reflect Woolf's feminine gender and lower class.

Montage and Caricature in *Orlando*

The nine illustrations in *Orlando* are similar in quantity, style, and display to the nine illustrations in Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921), which Woolf describes in 'The Art of Biography' (1939) as a model of 'triumphant' biographical achievement.[106] As in *Queen Victoria*, the illustrations consist of portraits, some painted, others photographed; they primarily depict the biography's subject, but also secondary personages; and they are integrated into the text intermittently on single plates. The illustrations in *Orlando* differ from Strachey's biography, however, by containing more identities than one in each portrait. Unlike *Queen Victoria*, where the subjects in the portraits all have only one identity such as queen or prince consort, there are at least two or three layers in each of the illustrations in *Orlando*: the original identity of the subject in the portrait, the identity given to the subject by the caption, and the identity of the individual in Sackville-West's life. The illustrations of Orlando reference Vita Sackville-West, as well as various historical Sackvilles, and the illustrations of Orlando's lovers reference the original sitters, such as Angelica Bell and Mary Curzon, as well as individuals with whom Sackville-West had romantic relationships: Violet Trefusis, Henry Lascelles, and Harold Nicholson. Woolf wrote in her diary on 22 October 1927 that *Orlando* would be 'based on Vita, Violet Trefusis, Lord Lascelles, Knole &c.'[107] These biographical connections are underscored by hints in the text, but also by physical likenesses. As we have seen, the Sackvilles used to illustrate Orlando look like Sackville-West, and Lascelles's appearance is remarkably similar to the elongated features, rigid pose, and official dress of Archduchess Harriet (the painting of Mary Curzon). The man in the painting used to illustrate Shelmerdine is also reminiscent of a young Nicolson with his slender, boyish features, soft jawline, almond-shaped eyes, and delicate mouth. In fact, Sackville-West originally bought the painting of the

[106] Virginia Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1942), pp. 119-26 (p. 122).
[107] Woolf, *Diary*, III, p. 162 (22 October 1927).

unknown man because she thought it looked like her husband. [108] In the portrait of Sasha, Bell likewise channels Trefusis's dark, feminine, romantic features.

The way disparate identities are compounded in single illustrations to create virtual composite portraits is an operation of appropriation and compilation similar to the one employed by the friends described in Woolf's essay *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (1934). The friends each make up stories about the people in Sickert's portraits and then cut into reproductions of the paintings in order to develop the lives they each read into them:

> They fetched a book of photographs from Sickert's paintings and began cutting off a hand or a head, and made them connect or separate, not as a hand or a head but as if they had some quite different relationship.[109]

Cutting, composing, and combining are also operations Woolf performs with her illustrations, taking paintings from Knole and giving them new identities, posing friends and family in front of the camera, and combining them not only with text, but in Bell's photograph, also with paint. The portraits, however, still portray their original subjects. Woolf does not provide information about them, but it is still possible to deduce that Sackvilles populate the painted portraits and Sackville-West the photographs. Even if the reader does not recognize the original subjects of the portraits, conspicuous historical incongruities signal that the portraits refer to identities other than the ones indicated in the captions. The portraits of the Russian Princess and Orlando on her return to England are ostensibly Elizabethan and Restoration, predating the invention of photography, but they are obviously photographs. Although it had just been made possible to catch the human figure in a daguerreotype in 1840, the photograph of Orlando 'about the year 1840' is also incongruent with its supposed historical time. Whereas the previous identities of the subjects in Sickert's portraits are lost in Woolf's story as well as the invented new lives, the friends in the end retreating into silent lands of their own whilst they cut and paste, seeing things only they can see, *Orlando*'s illustrations communicate their appropriations and transformations. Woolf invents new relationships without dispensing with original material--identities are stacked and incongruities flaunted.

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[108] Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, ed., *Letters*, III, p. 484.
[109] Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (London: Hogarth Press, 1934), p. 12.

From an aesthetic viewpoint that opposes composition to photographic art, such as Siegfried Kracauer's, Woolf's photographs can be considered 'overcomposed' borderline cases that tend toward the graphic arts rather than 'photography proper'.[110] Kracauer gives photomontage as an example of a borderline case, and, in fact, all the illustrations in *Orlando* have much in common with photomontage as practiced by the historical avant-garde, especially Dada. In the first monograph on the Dadaist John Heartfield, Sergei Tretyakov teaches that photomontage is not restricted to a montage of photographs: 'No: it can be photo and text, photo and color, photo and drawing.' The combination of photographs and text can have montage effects: 'if the photograph, under the influence of the text, expresses not simply the fact which it shows but also the social tendency expressed by the fact, then this is already a photomontage.'[111] It is the relationship of the parts to the whole that characterises photomontages rather than the specific medium used. The way in which Woolf's illustrations contradict *Orlando*'s narrative and even their own titles suggest this aspect of photomontage, as does the way in which the illustrations not only refer to but also remark upon specific sociological and political contexts. By displaying old and new identities simultaneously, the coexistence of which imparts critical messages about the aristocracy and conventional gender norms, Woolf's illustrations function like Heartfield's photomontage of Hitler, *Adolf, the Superman, Swallows Gold and Spouts Tin* [*Adolf, Der Ubermensch: Schlukt Gold und reder Blech*] (1932). A photograph, 'Hitler Speaking in the Lustgarten, Berlin, April 4, 1932', shows Hitler as an animated orator, but Heartfield has superimposed an x-ray of a chest, substituting the spine with a column of coins, onto the despot's body. The photomontage highlights the discrepancy between Hitler's socialist rhetoric and his corporate backing. Superimposition is concrete in Heartfield's photomontage, virtual in Woolf's illustrations, but messages are prioritized in both. The way the message of *Orlando*'s illustrations is prioritized over their aesthetic makes them anti-aesthetic to the same degree as the photomontages of the historical avant-garde: the paintings and photographs are in Woolf's rendition, like photomontages, no

[110] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 18.
[111] Segei Tretyakov, *John Heartfield: A Monograph* (Moscow: OGIS State Publishing House, 1936).

longer coherent or organic, and neither is the work into which they are inserted. Bürger emphasises that Heartfield's photomontages are images intended for reading and for specific political purposes, but he also maintains that the fragments of avant-garde photomontages critique or engage with the world by providing no unity of meaning. Bürger argues, with assistance from Theodor Adorno, that an artwork composed of incongruent fragments engages with the praxis of life, not only by incorporating 'fragments of reality', but also by splintering the unity of that 'reality', refusing to provide a 'reconciliation of man and nature'.[112] Although the overlapping of identities in Woolf's illustrations has a message, there is not complete congruence between the parts, and the incongruence between the images and the text also splinters the unity of the work. The exact relationship of the images to the narrative can never be completely deciphered; the images will always continue to challenge the reader.

Turning to Woolf's critical writing on biography, we see how a refusal to give a definite, complete, unified picture also allows *Orlando* to combine 'the truth of real life and the truth of fiction' without their mutual destruction. In 'The New Biography' Woolf argues that Nicolson achieves mixing 'the truth of real life and the truth of fiction' by 'using no more than a pinch of either', for although both truths are 'genuine', they are also 'antagonistic': 'let them meet and they destroy each other.' In 'The Art of Biography' she holds Strachey's *Victoria* up as a model for the new biography, but rejects his later biography of Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928), as a failure: 'In the *Victoria* he treated biography as a craft; he submitted to its limitations. In the *Elizabeth* he treated biography as an art; he flouted its limitations.' Woolf argues that one would think that Elizabeth I would lend herself well to 'a book that was not only a biography but also a work of art', but because biography 'must be based on fact', 'the combination proved unworkable; fact and fiction refused to mix'.[113] *Orlando* ruthlessly mixes fact and fiction, using more than a pinch of each, but it incorporates into its text caveats and limitations usually associated with portraiture in the visual arts. One of the friends in *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* claims that the painter is 'among the best of biographers': 'cloaked in

[112] Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*, p. 104; Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 78.
[113] Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', pp. 122-3, 152.

the divine gift of silence' he is not 'tripped up by those miserable impediments called facts': 'he paints--lies, paltriness, splendour, depravity, endurance, beauty--it is all there and nobody can say, But his mother's name was Jane not Mary.' [114] *Orlando* promises no answers and sometimes retreates into silence. The biographer admits the desire to 'wrap up in a book something so hard, so rare, one could swear it was life's meaning', but adds, 'back we must go and say straight out to the reader who waits a-tiptoe to hear what life is--alas, we don't know.' The biographer-narrator takes a moment in the narrative--'well over half an hour'--to wait for an answer to why Orlando sleeps for a whole week, and when none materialises acquiesces: 'let us get on with story'. When the conversation between Orlando and Shelmerdine becomes so intimate that it exceeds replication, the biographer-narrator deliberately leaves 'a great blank'--an empty space the length of a third of a page. Elsewhere the biographer-narrator admits: 'we are now in the region of "perhaps" and "appears"'. The narrator describes how the biographer and the reader alternately catch and lose sight of Orlando, but asserts that one may 'sketch' her in her various activities. In her diary, Woolf herself uses terminology inspired by the visual arts in describing the 'truthful; but fantastic' *Orlando*: 'I shall sketch here, like a grand historical picture, the outlines of all my friends […] Vita should be Orlando, a young nobleman […] & it should be truthful; but fantastic.'[115] The text resembles a portrait rather than a biography with its freedom, but also with its inconclusiveness and reticence. The limits of the narrator's biographical acumen in a work that so blatantly transgresses biography mocks traditional biography and prevents *Orlando* from being consumed as one. However, they do not undermine the truthfulness of *Orlando*, but signal its status as a literary portrait--as both truthful and fantastic.[116]

In 'A Sketch of the Past', Woolf conceptualizes her writing of people from her past as either sketches or caricatures, sketches implying incomplete pictures and caricatures signifying simple, complete, and finite Dickensian characters.[117] She explains that people whom she only

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[114] Woolf, *Walter Sickert*, pp. 13-14.
[115] Woolf, *Diary,* III, pp. 156-7 (20 September 1927).
[116] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 68, 220-21, 253, 271, 310.
[117] Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', p. 73.

knew as a child appear as caricatures because she never saw them live on to be altered, as she altered, but then corrects herself because although her mother died when she was thirteen, she cannot see her as a complete character, only as a sketch. The incongruence of signs in the illustrations and the reticence of the narrative suggest *Orlando* is like a sketch, but the work has more in common with caricature. The way multiple identities are referenced seems to swell rather than obscure the contours of the Orlando character, and the text is not composed of fragments such as Woolf's own 'Sketch of the Past'. The portrait given of Orlando is more compact than a sketch, so complete and overpowering, in fact, that it overwhelmed Sackville-West, who in response to reading *Orlando* wrote in a letter to Woolf:

> I feel like one of those wax figures in a shop window, on which you have hung a robe stitched with jewels. It is like being alone in a dark room with a treasure chest full of rubies and nuggets and brocades. Darling, I don't know and scarcely even like to write, so overwhelmed am I how you could have hung so splendid a garment on so poor a peg. Really this isn't false humility; *really* it isn't. I can't write about that part of it, though, much less ever tell you verbally.[118]

Sackville-West compliments Woolf on *Orlando*, but the likeness Woolf has constructed of her makes her feel almost insufficient or lesser in comparison. When Woolf finished writing *Orlando*, she wrote to Sackville-West: 'The question now is, will my feelings for you be changed? I've lived in you all these months--coming out, what are you really like? Do you exist? Have I made you up?'[119] Sackville-West replies that she is 'real', but Woolf's urge to 'make up' Sackville-West is, like the montage in the illustrations, connected to Woolf's pleasure in writing, 'the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together.'[120] Woolf cites the influx of cameras as a cause for a more diversified approach in life-writing, but she also stresses that the parts in the end must create a whole:

> Since we live in an age when a thousand cameras are pointed, by newspapers, letters, and diaries, at every character from every angle, he [the biographer] must be prepared to admit contradictory versions of the same face. Biography will enlarge its scope by hanging up looking glasses at odd corners. And yet

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[118] Sackville-West, *Letters*, p. 305 (11 October 1928).
[119] Woolf, *Letters*, III, p. 474 (20 March 1928).
[120] Sackville-West, *Letters*, p. 282 (3 April 1928); Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', p. 72.

> from all this diversity it will bring out, not a riot of confusion, but a richer unity.[121]

According to this statement, the multiplicity of perspectives associated with the advent of photography should be countered with more images in life-writing--more mirrors that reflect different sides of the same person. Ostensibly, a sketch would be able to capture 'the contradictory versions of the same face', however with its incompleteness, a sketch would not be able to provide unity. *Orlando* reflects a tension between sketches in Woolf's life-writing and the desire for unity which she saw as a goal and a pleasure in her writing.

That *Orlando* exaggerates and satirizes Sackville-West's features also associates the work with caricature and the kind of critique that this kind of representation offers. Woolf's compilation of different individuals in the illustrations also allows her to simplify and amplify certain characteristics and similarities between people--and specifically construct an aristocratic type that in combination with the text is derided as decadent and preposterous. When Woolf applauds how Nicolson has 'had the courage to rid himself of a mountain of illusion' she also mentions Max Beerbohm, the caricaturist, as an influence on his humorous but critical approach to his subjects. According to Woolf, Nicolson laughs at himself and others, 'and since his laughter is the laughter of intelligence it has the effect of making us take the people he laughs at seriously'.[122] Woolf also approaches her subject fearlessly with wit and humour, but the implications are serious. Before commencing on her next work, Woolf reflected on *Orlando* in her diary:

> Orlando was the outcome of a perfectly definite, indeed overmastering impulse. I want fun. I want fantasy. I want (& this was serious) to give things their caricature value. And still this mood hangs about me. I want to write a history, say of Newnham or the womans movement, in the same vein.[123]

Although Woolf sometimes refers to *Orlando* as a joke in diary entries and letters to friends, the work was part of an impetus to caricature social institutions that led to *A Room of One's Own*.[124]

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[121] Woolf, 'The Art of Biography', pp. 124-5.
[122] Woolf, 'The New Biography', p. 152.
[123] Woolf, *Diary*, III, p. 203 (7 November 1928).
[124] Woolf, *Diary*, III, pp. 164, 177, 183 (20 November 1927, 18 March 1928, 22 March 1928, 31 May 1928); Woolf, *Letters*, III, pp. 506-7, 552- 554 (letter to Quentin Bell, 5 June 1928, letter to High Walpole, 1 July 1928, letter to Roger Fry, 16 October 1928).

In *Orlando*, the poet Nicholas Greene, whose visit to Orlando's country estate makes Orlando 'unaccountably ashamed of the number of his servants and of the splendour of his table', writes a 'spirited satire' on his return to London:

> It was so done to a turn that no one could doubt that the young Lord who was roasted was Orlando; his most private sayings and doings, his enthusiasms and follies, down to the very colour of his hair and the foreign way he had of rolling his r's, were there to the life. And if there had been any doubt about it, Greene clinched the matter by introducing, with scarcely any disguise, passages from that aristocratic tragedy, the Death of Hercules, which he found as he expected, wordy and bombastic in the extreme.[125]

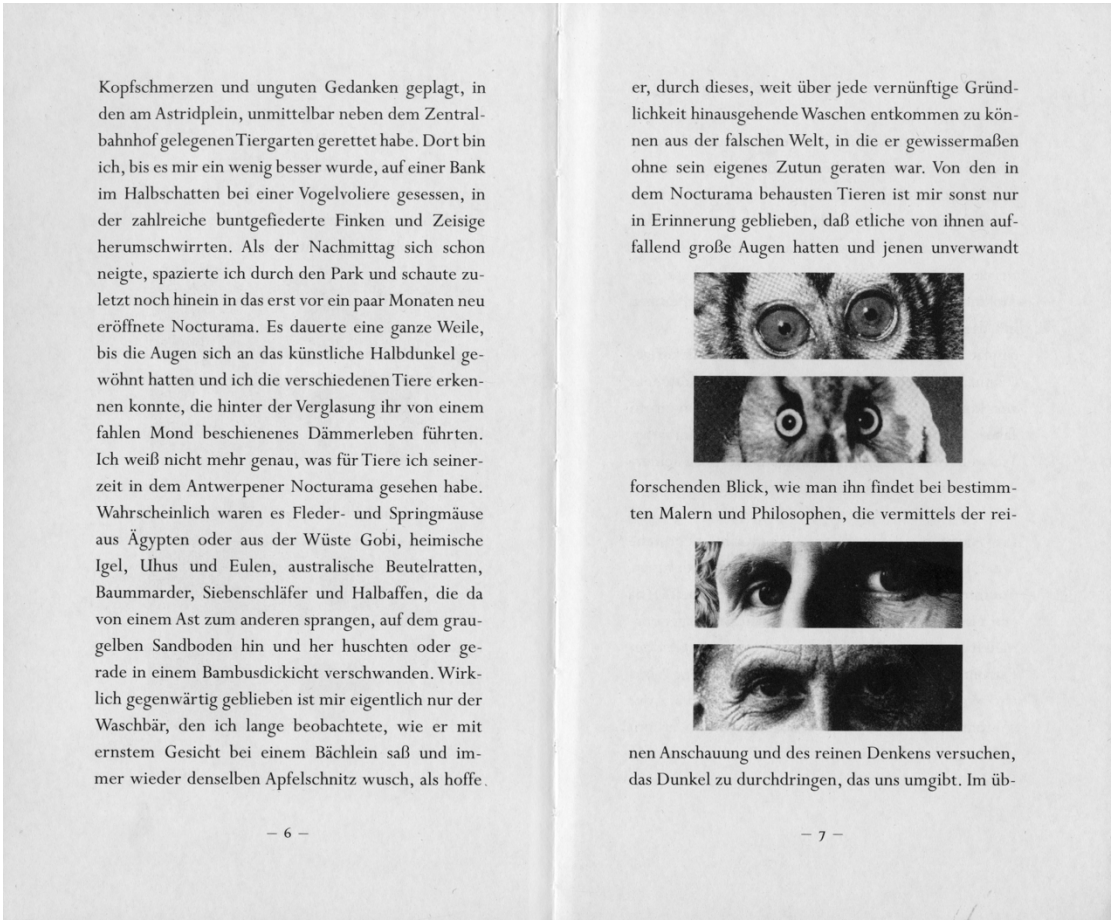
In this *mise en abîme*, the way Greene 'roasts' Orlando mirrors Woolf's treatment of Sackville-West in *Orlando*. No one can doubt that Orlando is Sackville-West, especially not when the photographs are taken into consideration. Just as Greene incorporates material from Orlando's *Death of Hercules,* Woolf incorporates material not only from Sackville-West's *Knole and the Sackvilles*, but many paintings associated with Knole and the Sackvilles, and most potently, she includes photographic traces of Sackville-West's physical form. With her illustrations, Woolf demonstratively breaches what could have been a self-enclosed, self-contained, autonomous work. *Orlando* reaches outside itself, beyond the text, establishing a direct material link to the aristocracy, adding a concreteness and pertinence that the narrative alone could not have achieved. Conversely, with its approximation of portraiture, the text disregards conventions, dodges censorship, and the 'compromise, evasion, understatement, overstatement, irrelevance and downright falsehood' that the 'Law of Libel' according to one of the friends in *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* enforces upon the biographer.[126]

Montage and Sketch in Sebald's Works

Whereas Woolf highlights the incongruent relationship between her text and images in some of her captions, Sebald inserts images into his text to create an almost seamless effect. The images appear on the same page as the text, printed with the same dark ink, and no captions or borders

[125] Woolf, *Orlando*, pp. 88-9.
[126] Woolf, *Walter Sickert*, p. 14.

set them apart. The first four images in *Austerlitz*, for example, are couched within a single sentence (Figure 32).



Kopfschmerzen und unguten Gedanken geplagt, in den am Astridplein, unmittelbar neben dem Zentralbahnhof gelegenen Tiergarten gerettet habe. Dort bin ich, bis es mir ein wenig besser wurde, auf einer Bank im Halbschatten bei einer Vogelvoliere gesessen, in der zahlreiche buntgefiederte Finken und Zeisige herumschwirrten. Als der Nachmittag sich schon neigte, spazierte ich durch den Park und schaute zuletzt noch hinein in das erst vor ein paar Monaten neu eröffnete Nocturama. Es dauerte eine ganze Weile, bis die Augen sich an das künstliche Halbdunkel gewöhnt hatten und ich die verschiedenen Tiere erkennen konnte, die hinter der Verglasung ihr von einem fahlen Mond beschienenes Dämmerleben führten. Ich weiß nicht mehr genau, was für Tiere ich seinerzeit in dem Antwerpener Nocturama gesehen habe. Wahrscheinlich waren es Fleder- und Springmäuse aus Ägypten oder aus der Wüste Gobi, heimische Igel, Uhus und Eulen, australische Beutelratten, Baummarder, Siebenschläfer und Halbaffen, die da von einem Ast zum anderen sprangen, auf dem graugelben Sandboden hin und her huschten oder gerade in einem Bambusdickicht verschwanden. Wirklich gegenwärtig geblieben ist mir eigentlich nur der Waschbär, den ich lange beobachtete, wie er mit ernstem Gesicht bei einem Bächlein saß und immer wieder denselben Apfelschnitz wusch, als hoffe

– 6 –

er, durch dieses, weit über jede vernünftige Gründlichkeit hinausgehende Waschen entkommen zu können aus der falschen Welt, in die er gewissermaßen ohne sein eigenes Zutun geraten war. Von den in dem Nocturama behausten Tieren ist mir sonst nur in Erinnerung geblieben, daß etliche von ihnen auffallend große Augen hatten und jenen unverwandt

forschenden Blick, wie man ihn findet bei bestimmten Malern und Philosophen, die vermittels der rei-

nen Anschauung und des reinen Denkens versuchen, das Dunkel zu durchdringen, das uns umgibt. Im üb-

– 7 –

Figure 32 Photographs of eyes, W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (München Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), p. 7.

In this sentence the narrator recounts a final memory of visiting the Antwerp Zoo:

> Otherwise, all I remember of the denizens of the Nocturama is that several of them had strikingly large eyes, and the fixed, inquiring gaze found in certain painters and philosophers who seek to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us purely by means of looking and thinking.[127]

The images are not only typographically embedded in the text, they also resonate strongly with its content. As in *Orlando*, however, the parts do not make a whole; the text and images do not complete each other. The reader can presume that the four sets of eyes belong to the animals,

[127] ['Von den in dem Nocturama behausten Tieren ist mir sonst nur in Erinnerung geblieben, daß etliche von ihnen auffallend große Augen hatten und jenen unverwandt forschenden Blick, wie man ihn findet bei bestimmten Malern und Philosophen, die vermittels der reinen Anschauung und des reinen Denkens versuchen, das Dunkel zu durchdringen, das uns umgibt.'] W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (München Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), p. 7; W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2001), p. 3.

painters, and philosophers mentioned in the sentence in which the images appear, but *Austerlitz* itself offers no guarantee. In fact, the narrator states earlier that he cannot recall exactly which creatures he saw in the Nocturama, which seems at odds with their pictorial presence. Furthermore, because the images only show eyes, a purely pictorial identification of the subjects in the images is nearly impossible. Sebald's illustration of his statement thus begets more questions than answers: What animals do the images depict? Are they the animals that the narrator saw on his visit to the Antwerp Nocturama? Who are the people in the images? Are they painters and philosophers? Is the narrator the author of these images or do they originate elsewhere? The stylized images of eyes signal that they have been repurposed, but they do not indicate why. A skeptical reader may conclude that the images have no connection to the narrative, depicting random animals and people. Sebald's archive reveals that the animal images depict a three-striped night monkey and an owl, cut and cropped from a publication about the Antwerp Nocturama that the zoo's General Curator sent Sebald in 1989.[128] The human eyes belong to Jan Peter Tripp, a painter, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, a philosopher, and Sebald copied and cropped these images from books.[129] The images thus do not deceive the reader, but identifying them requires extensive research and prompts further questions, such as why Sebald chose the eyes of Tripp and Wittgenstein. The narrative does not provide an immediate answer, nor do the identities of the images establish whether a trip to Antwerp took place or whether Sebald is the narrator.

As in *Orlando*, the presence of fiction in Sebald's works creates a 'contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements', Bürger's definition of avant-garde montage. The narratives, which in all the works consist of observations and histories that the narrator gives of people and places that he comes across on his travels, hint at autobiography: the narrator in all the works is born in 'W.', which could stand for Wertach, the town where Sebald was born; as a child the narrator moves to 'S.', which could stand for Sonthofen, where Sebald moved when he was eight years old; the narrator later spends time in Manchester, and finally settles in Norfolk,

[128] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 14.
[129] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 6.

which also agrees with the development of Sebald's expatriate life. The name of the narrator's wife is always Clara, suggesting a single identity, but not Ute, the name of Sebald's wife. The works do not identify themselves as non-fiction or fiction. Quotations from reviews, however, adorn all editions of Sebald's works and these often mention Sebald's blend of genres. The book covers thus encourage a suspicious reading that the work itself may not. In addition to these paratextual appendages, Sebald's interviews act as influential directives on how to read his works. Sebald is ambiguous about his relationship to the narrator. About *Vertigo*, for example, he says: it 'has very strong autobiographical elements, i.e., it looks at a period of disturbance in the narrator's life'.[130] It is unclear whether the narrator in this instance is Sebald or not. His works belong to Philippe Lejeune's category of '*borderline cases* [*cas-limites*]', where the identity between author and narrator is indeterminate, although we will see that this 'Pirandellian game of ambiguity [jeu pirandellien d'ambiguïté]' can, unlike Lejeune's judgment, be played seriously.[131] In Sebald's statements about the lives of others in his works, he claims both fictional and non-fictional components. In relation to *The Emigrants*, for example, he contends that the four main stories 'follow pretty much the lines or the trajectories of these lives as they were in reality', but he also admits that he made 'changes', 'extending certain vectors, foreshortening certain things, adding here and there, taking something away.'[132] He argues that these are 'marginal changes, changes of style rather than substance', but despite Sebald's reassurance, the reader has no way of determining what in the narrative is 'style' and what is 'substance'. Furthermore, Sebald casts doubt on the images that the reader may otherwise interpret as non-fiction. He claims that five to ten percent of his images are 'forgeries' while the rest are what he calls 'authentic', by which he means that they come from the sources that the text suggests.[133] But the text seldom identifies the images or sources, making verification impossible. By differentiating between fiction and non-fiction Sebald secures their

[130] Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', p. 103.
[131] Philippe Lejeune, *Je est un autre: L'autobiographie de la littérature aux médias* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), p. 32; Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 32; Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin and trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 19, 31. Italics Lejeune.
[132] Eleanor Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', in *The Emergence of Memory*, pp. 37-61 (p. 38).
[133] Angier, 'Who Is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4; Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', p. 366.

heterogeneous status. By not specifying what in his works is which, Sebald creates tension and uncertainty that prevents a synthesis of text and images. Like Woolf, Sebald thus turns his works into montages, preventing his 'documentary/photographic material' from becoming 'mere illustration', as he writes in his grant proposal.[134] Like *Orlando*'s illustrations, the images frustrate easy reading and act as occasions for rebellious reflection.

Sebald's images compel us 'to probe our knowledge of other texts and pictures and our knowledge of the world', which is also what the 'aura of remembrance' in the artworks of Jan Peter Tripp does according to Sebald. Without tying his thoughts to avant-gardism, Sebald argues that this effect is achieved when remembrance is inserted into works 'by montage'. By spending time on the probing encouraged by montage, he argues, 'we enter into time recounted and into the time of culture'.[135] The disjointed way in which Sebald inserts images into his works, like the way he incorporates quotations from his favourite authors without naming them, what he himself calls 'tributes', but which also qualifies as 'détournement', compels Sebald's readers to enter 'into time recounted and into the time of culture.'[136] Explorations of Sebald's images have taken many forms: books, documentaries, films, scholarly studies, artwork, exhibitions, radio programs, and blogs. Many scholars, artists, and readers have tried to find images by visiting places described in the narrative (see, for example, the films of Ian Sinclair in Manchester, Jonathan Long in London, and Grant Gee in East Anglia).[137] Bloggers have been particularly successful in their searches, uploading photographs similar to Sebald's taken in places such as London, Prague, Terezin, Manchester, and East Anglia.[138] Blogs both connected and unconnected to the study of Sebald's works reveal identities and background information for images. The well-researched blog Vertigo is an excellent example of the former: its tagline

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[134] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 11.
[135] W. G. Sebald, 'As Day and Night, Chalk and Cheese: On the Pictures of Jan Peter Tripp', in *Unrecounted*, trans. by Michael Hamburger (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004), pp. 78-94 (p. 91).
[136] Piet de Moor, 'Echoes from the Past', in *Saturn's Moons*, pp. 350-354 (p. 353).
[137] *A German Genius in Britain*, dir. by Dai Jones (BBC Radio Four, 29 May 2014); *Austerlitz*, dir. by Jonathan Long (Source Photographic Review, 16 August 2013); *Patience (After Sebald)*, dir. by Grant Gee (Artevents, 2011).
[138] See for example: http://designobserver.com, https://dianajhale.wordpress.com, http://john-tyrrell.blogspot.co.uk, http://lookingforsebald.blogspot.co.uk, http://mursejlerne.blogspot.co.uk, https://norwitch.wordpress.com, https://sebald.wordpress.com, http://stalkingsebald.blogspot.co.uk, and http://www.wgsebald.de.

is 'Where literature and art intersect, with an emphasis on W.G. Sebald and literature with embedded photographs'.[139] Blogs that take a coincidental interest in some of the places described in Sebald's works such as Bavaria, Norfolk, or the East End of London exemplify the latter.[140] Browsing websites and perusing library shelves, my own investigation of the images has led me on an intellectual journey to unexpected places. The website of the École Vétérinaire, for example, led me to photographs of trees made of bronchial tubes, like the one reproduced in *Austerlitz*, as well as many other nauseating curiosities.[141] The photograph of the deserted Hulme estates in *The Emigrants* led me to a 1978 documentary about the slum conditions of the housing estate.[142] I found the photograph of a Welsh street in *Austerlitz* on a website called 'Gathering the Jewels', which features over 30,000 images related to Wales' cultural history collected from museums, archives, and libraries.[143] The photograph of a hall inundated with potato sacks, also in *Austerlitz*, I discovered in John Harris's book *No Voice from the Hall: Early Memories of a Country House Snooper* (1998), which also revealed other photographs that he took of country houses, which like the ones Sebald describes, were abandoned after the military's use of them during the Second World War.[144] As these examples show, explorations of Sebald's images reveal a wealth of information hiding in plain sight: in books, archives, documentaries, museums, on blogs, and in the world around us.

Similar to the way he incorporates images, Sebald also inserts 'remembrance', or life stories that he claims are 'real', into his works 'by montage'. These life stories, however, are harder to identify than the images, and impossible to delineate from his fiction. Michael Hamburger's account of appearing in *Rings of Saturn* illuminates Sebald's montage of fictional and nonfictional elements:

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[139] https://sebald.wordpress.com.
[140] See for example: http://www.hdbg.de/main/seminar/pop-up-01-bad_kissingen.html; http://www.literarynorfolk.co.uk/ditchingham.htm; http://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/02/27/at-st-clements-hospital/.
[141] https://www.vet-alfort.fr.
[142] *World in Action: Hulme Crescents*, dir. by Tim Hewat (Granada Television, 1978).
[143] http://education.gtj.org.uk/en/item1/4132.
[144] John Harris, *No Voice From the Hall: Early Memories of a Country House Snooper* (London: John Murray, 1998), p. 179.

> Factual accuracy would have called for the correction of a few biographical details in the account, had it not become clear to me by that time that the very nature of all Sebald's writings other than critical essays demanded such departures from the source material--that, in the context, it did not matter at all whether or not his account of my childhood experiences accorded with my recollection of them.[145]

Hamburger's evaluation of his portrayal in *Rings of Saturn* seems to validate Sebald's distinction between style and substance, fiction and non-fiction: according to Hamburger, only 'a few biographical details' would need to be corrected for 'factual accuracy' to be achieved. We can read Hamburger's own recollections in his memoir, *Strings of Beginnings* (1991), one more string in the web of text and images that Sebald's montage suggests, but what Sebald changed and why remains uncertain. Hamburger writes that he was 'happy to be a character in [Sebald's] work of fiction' partly because of his own experience writing a memoir. Sebald's writing may reflect what Hamburger calls 'a freedom from literalness', but this does not necessarily make it less true. Sebald distinguishes between fiction and non-fiction, but he also describes writing as a 'string of lies' that he hopes creates a 'truth' more 'precise' than something 'strictly provable'.[146] Sebald inserts life stories into his works as he does images and quotations, but not only do they resist identification as they are not always already published, their truth value depends upon interpretation, unlike photography, which although also subject to interpretation on the level of resemblance, has its indexical relationship to its subject. Hamburger mentions that Sebald took photographs when he visited him and describes Sebald's photographs in general as 'the visual counterparts of the transcription of documents or quotations, and a necessary complement, for Sebald, to his imaginative freedom.'[147] For the reader, Sebald's images not only function as certificates of the nonfictional foundation of Sebald's 'imaginative freedom', as autonomous, clearly delineable signs (often with exact counterparts in the public domain), they also act as useful starting points for exploring the referential aspects of Sebald's narratives.

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[145] Michael Hamburger, 'Translator's Note', in *Unrecounted*, pp. 1-9 (p. 3).
[146] Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', p. 108.
[147] Hamburger, 'Translator's Note', p. 4.

Despite the discoveries that explorations of Sebald's images yield, they do not make his fractured works whole. Not only can the fiction in the writing not be specified, which also means that the reader cannot trust the narrator's claims about the images or his stories about how they came to be included in the works (some are given to the narrator; others are taken, inherited, or pocketed), there are also the forged images. In interviews Sebald revealed that he had made Ambros Adelwarth's visiting card, as well as his diary (although he simultaneously claimed that the diary truly existed).[148] Sebald's photography assistant, Michael Brandon-Jones, has made a series of revelations: he cropped Jacques Austerlitz's square amateur photographs from *Pictures of Great Britain*; the photographs of Helen Hollaender are photographs of someone else; he himself took the photograph of an art historian's office in the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, claimed to be Austerlitz's, as well as the keys in *The Emigrants*.[149] Long has discovered that the painting of the ark does not exist in the masonic temple hidden within the Great Eastern Hotel, as it is suggested in *Austerlitz*.[150] The French blogger Jerôme Combier has found the mosaic at 'Number Twelve Šporkova' in a different street; and the Manchester blogger John Tyrrell has revealed that the photograph of Wittgenstein's house on Palatine Road in Manchester is not number 104, but 154.[151] I have found that the photograph of a woman whom Austerlitz believes might be his mother (Figure 35) is a photograph of Ema Destinnová (1878-1930), who died before Austerlitz would have been born, and that the photograph of Evelyn Fitzpatrick, the uncle of Austerlitz's friend Gerald, is a 1936 photograph of Evan Morgan (1893-1949) of Tredegar House, (Figure 33).[152]

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[148] Angier, 'Who Is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4.
[149] *Austerlitz*, dir. by J. J. Long.
[150] *Austerlitz*, dir. by J. J. Long.
[151] http://lookingforsebald.blogspot.co.uk; http://john-tyrrell.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/manchester-after-sebald.html.
[152] Nathan Bevan, 'The spying Welsh Lord, his occult secrets, and the dancing kangaroo', *Wales Online*, 5 April 2013 <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/lord-tredegar-evan-morgans-life-2518914> [accessed 16 April 2019]; Václav Holzknecht and Bohumil Trita, *Ema Destinnova* (Prague: Panton, 1972), dust jacket.

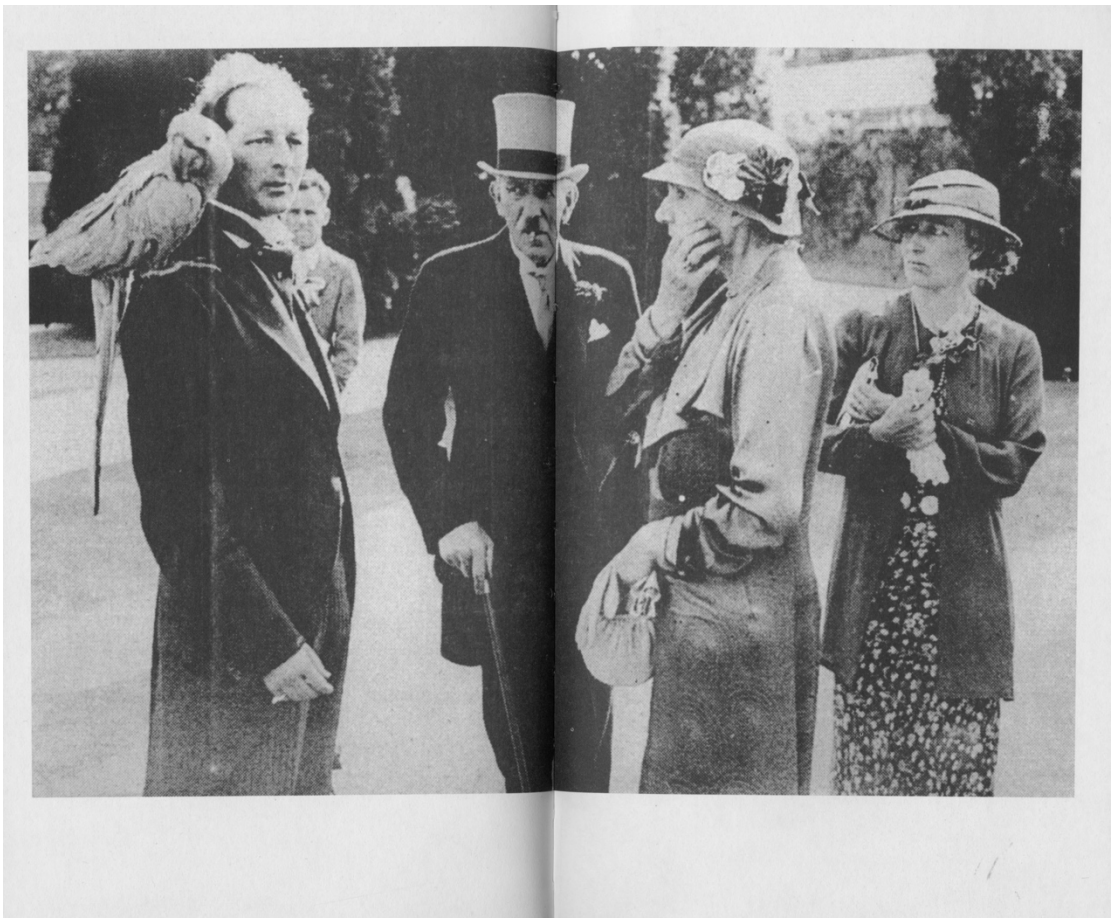

Figure 33 Photograph of Evan Morgan, W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (München Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), pp. 124-5.

It is thus possible to determine that some of the images do not correspond to the identities that Sebald's narrative suggests for them, but the scope of Sebald's forgeries remains unknown.

Sebald's use of montage makes his life-writing resemble a sketch. His narrator does not like Woolf's insert blank spaces or spell out caveats, but his works resemble sketches with their 'freedom from literalness', their lack of clarifying information, and their refusal to identify their subjects. Sebald's vigilance regarding the copying of images without their original captions testifies to this deliberate reticence.[153] Like Woolf, Sebald rejects the impulse to 'wrap up in a book something so hard, so rare, one could swear it was life's meaning', as *Orlando*'s narrator formulates it.[154] Woolf creates fictional relationships between text and images that are incongruous; Sebald's fiction creates dissonance with uncertainty. Sebald thus unfolds the

[153] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 6, Schwindel. Gefühle, folder 2.
[154] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 271.

critical potential of sketch. While Woolf's caricature-like critique is directed at specific societal injustices, Sebald's critique calls into question the way we perceive the world and engage with it. By exploiting the inherent fictional aspect of language and the silence of images, Sebald takes a step further in splintering the unity of a 'reality' and in obstructing a 'reconciliation of man and nature'.[155] Sebald thus also brings to light the progressive possibilities of photography's lack of narrative and language. This silent aspect of photography troubled Benjamin, who therefore advocated captions as the only means of communicating a photograph's context and the circumstances of its production.[156] Sebald demonstrates that as long as recipients are suspicious of the images, which he achieves by including 'forgeries', the absence of captions can actually motivate a profound engagement with those aspects that Benjamin feared photographs without captions would erase. The work of the many blogs related to Sebald suggest his call for a deeper involvement with aspects of the world to some extent has been heeded. Bloggers also often add photographs and stories inspired by the style of Sebald's images and narrative, demonstrating that his works inspire an engagement with the world beyond the verification of his images. The plethora of blogs related to Sebald also feature engagements with subjects other than those mentioned in his works. One blog dedicated to architecture, for example, is named *Andromeda Lodge* after a house in *Austerlitz*. The blogger wonders whether the Andromeda Lodge is 'real' and imagines trying to find it, but the house primarily functions as a source of inspiration for the blog that, like Sebald's works, consists of memories, images, and historical anecdotes.[157]

Following a descriptive rather than a narrative style of writing, Sebald also, like Woolf, achieves portraiture-like qualities for his text. Despite reticence, uncertainty, and an unwillingness to identify, Sebald's written portraits abound in minute details (much like photographs). Sebald refers to the visual arts when he conceptualizes his own writing, explaining that he works like a 'painter', and that the aim of his work is 'to create tiny pools of

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[155] Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*, p. 104; Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 78.
[156] Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 527; Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 385.
[157] http://andromeda-lodge.tumblr.com/about.

timelessness'.[158] In several interviews he imparts his reverence for the experience of standing in front of paintings in museums and being 'taken out of time', calling the experience a 'snapshot for all eternity' and claiming that this is what he tries to replicate with his use of images and in his writing. These writerly attempts at 'momentary, self-regulating equilibriums', as Sebald calls them, is reflected in the erudite digressions of his prose. Proving that his text arrests time, some have accused it of inaccessibility, others for inducing boredom.[159] Not only is Sebald's text flanked by images that can be seen, including many paintings, an extensive use of ekphrasis also infuses the text with stasis, slowing down narrative progression. With these textual and pictorial strategies Sebald approximates the spatiality that he admires in the pictorial arts, encouraging the reader not only to enter 'pools of timelessness', but a 'time of culture', reading the works slowly, studying the images like Sebald does paintings in museums, and spending time contemplating other relevant information.

The 'Authenticity' of Sebald's Images

The uncertain relationship of Sebald's images to fiction has led some scholars to focus on how they deceive the reader, either because they are different from that which the text suggests or because Sebald has forged them. Tim Wright, who grew up in Hingham where the 'Dr Henry Selwyn' chapter of *The Emigrants* takes place, points out that the tree in one of the images does not exist in his hometown, as the text suggests, and therefor is a 'phoney'.[160] It is worth mentioning that Sebald states in an interview that Selwyn did not live in Hingham, but in another village in Norfolk.[161] Associates from the Institute of Cultural Inquiry in Los Angeles are similarly disappointed when they try to '(re)shoot)' Sebald's images by 'retracing' his walk in *The Rings of Saturn*. They conclude: 'the images in Sebald's book are not simple indices of a

[158] de Moor, 'Echoes from the Past', p. 353.
[159] Geoff Dyer, 'A Symposium on W. G. Sebald', *The Three Penny Review*, 89 (2002), 18-21 (p.18); James Elkins, '4 / 3/ W. G. Sebald, Rings of Saturn', 11 March 2014, <http://writingwithimages.com/?page_id=475> [accessed 16 April 2018]
[160] Tim Wright, 'Sebald's Tree: The Development of a 90% True Digital Story', in *Searching for Sebald: Photography after W. G. Sebald*, ed. by Lise Patt with Christel Dillbohner (Los Angeles: Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007), pp. 248-55, (p. 249).
[161] Angier, 'Who is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4.

world "out there" but are more often fetishes of a world withheld; not signs but signposts to a "truth that lies elsewhere."' They stress the sense of unreality that beset their endeavour:

> More than once we had the odd sensation it was Sebald's images that had created the world before us, instead of the other way around. In some circumstances, strange forces seemed to be in play so that try as we might, no photographs were obtained.[162]

The Associates' feeling that the images lack an indexical connection to 'a world "out there"' acquires an almost occult bent.

Although Sebald's works contain fiction and forgeries, his assertions of pictorial authenticity in his interviews, acting as appendices to his works, should not be overlooked. According to his estimates, about 275-291 out of the total 306 images are from 'authentic' sources, with 69-73 'authentic' images on average in each work. Of the 233 images that I have been able to identify, at least 223 correspond to the broader narrative of Sebald's works. These findings support Sebald's estimation that 90 to 95 percent of his images are 'authentic'.[163] I believe the ones I have not been able to identify would similarly adhere to Sebald's statistics, but even if fifty rather than ten percent of them do not correspond to the narrative (which is unlikely), the total number of 'forgeries' would still only amount to fifteen percent.

Sebald ties the 'authenticity' of his images to their 'sources'.[164] His archive provides some of these, but it is possible to identify most of the images without looking through Sebald's papers. The identification of Sebald's images depends upon indicators provided in the text, how recognizable the image is, and the knowledge of the reader. Some of the people in the images are well known and the images of them can thus be identified. Besides Wittgenstein and Tripp, Sebald also includes images of Frank Auerbach, Marie-Henri Beyle (Stendhal), Roger Casement, Empress Dowager Cixi, Edward FitzGerald, Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. From the bloodied tunic of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria to the cluster of stars called Eagle Nebula, unique objects also make the verification of subjects

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[162] Institute of Cultural Inquiry Research Team, 'A Truth That Lies Elsewhere', in *Searching for Sebald*, pp. 492-509 (p. 492).
[163] Angier, 'Who Is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4; Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', p. 41; Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', p. 366.
[164] Angier, 'Who Is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4; Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', p. 366.

in images possible. At least a fourth of the images feature architecture or landscapes that can be verified. These include train stations, fortifications, hotels, palaces, grand houses, public gardens, lakes, ruins, volcanoes, libraries, bridges, cemeteries, hospitals, museums, industrial facilities, landmarks, houses, and streets. The identity of all these correspond to places mentioned in the text surrounding the images. Often, investigations lead to Sebald's exact image. Luzern's online 'stadtarchiv', for example, contains *Austerlitz*'s photograph of the Luzern train station, which was taken in 1971 when the station burned.[165] The paintings, drawings, statues, models, and murals that Sebald reproduces can also be identified, although they are not always reproduced well or in full.[166] The reader can also find exact counterparts to Sebald's stills from films and his excerpts from books that feature text.[167] In interviews and critical writings, Sebald mentioned his habit of perusing junk shops for photographs and postcards, perhaps playfully intimating the origin of some of the images.[168] Sebald's archive suggests, however, that he researched found photographs carefully and that postcards depict what the narrative suggests they do: for example, the Cimitero di Staglieno in Genoa, the Winter Garden at Somerleyton Hall (dismantled in 1914), or the Dunwich ruins.[169]

Not all of Sebald's images can be identified, but at least forty percent of them exist in books, articles, or pamphlets. Many of the images are thus accessible, although their locations may be unexpected. For example, I searched Stendhal's works in vain for the drawings of a

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[165] http://www.stadtluzern.ch/de/dokumente/fotoalbum/welcome.php?action=showgallery&galid=6259.
[166] Sebald also includes artwork by Marie Henri-Beyle (1783-1842), Giotto di Bondone (1266/7-1337), Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), George Cruikshank (1792-1878), Louis van Engelen (1856-1940), Alec Garrard (1931-2010), Josef Hengge (1890-1970), Louis-François Lejeune (1775-1848), Franz Sales Lochbihler (1777-1845), Antonio di Puccio Pisanello (c. 1395 – c. 1455), Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), Willem van de Velde the Younger (1633-1707), Peter Vischer the Elder (1455-1529), and William Wyld (1806-89).
[167] Sebald includes stills from the Nazi propaganda film *Der Führer Schenkt Den Juden Eine Stadt* (1944) and the silent horror film *The Student of Prag* (1913) and text excerpts from the following works: *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft: Geshichte, Soziologie, Psychologie* (1955) by H. G. Adler, the memoir of Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully (1788), *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658) by Thomas Brown, *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668) by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Aufzucht der Raupen, Verarbeitung der Trockenkokons* (1939) by Friedrich Lange, and *Le Jardin de Plantes* (1997) by Claude Simon.
[168] Maya Jaggi, 'The Last Word', *Guardian*, 20 December 2001, p. G2 4; Arthur Lubow, 'W. G. Sebald Combines Memoir, Novel and Essay and Adds Photos', *New York Times*, 11 December 2001, p. E1; W. G. Sebald, **'**Moments masicaux' and 'An Attempt at Restitution', in *Campo Santo*, ed. by Sven Meyer and trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005), pp. 188-205 (p. 190), pp. 206-215 (p. 208).
[169] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 16, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 3, Vershiedenes Fotos, folders 12, 39-40.

child and of an adolescent inserted into *Vertigo* but stumbled one day in the library on a pictorial biography of Stendhal, which yielded the two unidentified images as well as one I had been unable to identify that depicts a plaster mold made from Matilde Viscontini Dembowski's hand.[170] Often Sebald's image exists in several sources. For example, I found *Austerlitz*'s photograph of the Theresienstadt office with prisoners' files in Dirk Reinartz's book *Deathly Still: Pictures of Concentration Camps* (1995), but Sebald's archive reveals that he used a reproduction from a magazine.[171] Images copied from sources in the public domain include ones that readers may assume to be photographs Sebald took on a walk in East Anglia. For example, Sebald's archive reveals that he copied the images of Southwold Lighthouse and Eccles Church Tower from books; the images of a ruined windmill, a beach, and Bawdsey Manor are copied from what looks like pamphlets or books; and the photograph of the bridge that crosses the river Blyth is from an article. The original caption to this last image not only identifies the bridge as corresponding to Sebald's narrative, it also adds a vignette that mirrors the surprising historical accuracy of Sebald's images: 'Bridge of the River Blyth: the previous one inspired the painting, the book and the film, "The Bridge". Written as fiction, the book turned out to be fact.'[172] Not only do Sebald's images act as indices of 'a world "out there"', to which the recreation of Sebald's East Anglia images in blogs also attests to, but the images themselves also exist in the public domain.[173] Rather than relegating 'truth' to a nebulous 'elsewhere', Sebald's images suggest that truth must be sought in the world we share, a world that to a large extent manifests itself in print culture.

As we have seen, some of Sebald's images have been discovered to be at variance with the narrative, but even in these cases, the images have a tangential relationship to the identities that the works suggest for them. Austerlitz's photographs of Britain are photographs of Britain; the photograph of Wittgenstein's house shows the philosopher's house; the photograph of Austerlitz's office is the office of someone who like him is a historian; the photographs of

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[170] Victor Del Vitto, *Album Stendhal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 43, 44, 185.
[171] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 6.
[172] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ringe des Saturn, folder 3.
[173] See for example: http://thelostbyway.com/2013/09/w-g-sebalds-southwold.html.

locations in Prague and Manchester are photographs of nearby locations; Evan Morgan was, like Gerald's uncle, an eccentric Welsh nobleman (Figure 33); and Ema Destinnová was, like Austerlitz's mother, a Czech opera singer who lived in Prague (Figure 35). The subject matter of the images most often has some sort of correspondence to Sebald's narrative, but the identity of the owners or authors of the images often surprises. For example, Sebald's archive reveals that the child's drawings inserted into *The Emigrants* have a signature outside the scope of Sebald's reproduction that belongs to Sebald's childhood friend. The drawings thus depict a child's view of a classroom and a train station in Sebald's childhood, although Sebald did not, as the reader may assume, draw them. Sebald's archive thus provides identities for images that correspond in surprising ways to the narrative of his works. His archive also includes a diary like the one photographed and inserted into *The Emigrants*, with writing pasted into it, suggesting Sebald was right in his confounding claim that although he made Adelwarth's diary it also truly existed.[174]

Sebald's images do not always originate from sources implied in the text and sometimes the images only have a tangential relationship to subjects in the narrative, but they are not forgeries in the sense of the photograph inserted into *The Emigrants* that the narrator claims the Nazis altered.[175] Research reveals that this photograph was indeed forged by the Nazis to look like books burning in a square.[176] The image is thus 'authentic' in that it corresponds to Sebald's narrative. The historical accuracy of Sebald's images, despite their tenuous relationship to his text, is precisely of utmost importance in relation to Germany's fascist past. The tendency in Germany not to speak about crimes committed during the Second Word War was a paramount concern for Sebald:

> I grew up in postwar Germany where there was--I say this quite often--something like a conspiracy of silence, i.e., your parents never told you

[174] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folder 12.
[175] W. G. Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten* (Franfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1993), p. 275; W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: The Harvill Press, 1996), p. 184.
[176] This photograph is discussed in 'In den Flammen starb der Geist', *Main Post*, 9 May 2013, <http://www.mainpost.de/ueberregional/politik/zeitgeschehen/In-den-Flammen-starb-der-Geist;art16698,7459828> [accessed 16 April 2019].

> anything about experiences because there was at the very least a great deal of shame attached to these experiences. So one kept them under lock and seal. [177]

One important experience in Sebald's childhood in relation to the 'conspiracy of silence' was the images he was presented with that showed concentration camps:

> I mean, one didn't really talk about the Holocaust, as it is called, in the 1960s in schools, nor did your parents ever mention it, God forbid, and they didn't talk about it amongst themselves either. So this was a huge taboo zone. But then pressure eventually saw to it that in schools the subject would be raised. It was usually done in the form of documentary films which were shown to us without comment. So, you know, it was a sunny June afternoon, and you would see one of those liberation of Dachau or Belsen films, and then you would go and play football because you didn't really know what you should do with it.[178]

Despite their own silence, the photographs undermine a 'conspiracy of silence'. For the rest of his life, images from the Second World War would haunt Sebald: 'to this day, when I see photographs or documentary films dating from the war I feel as if I were its child, so to speak, as if those horrors I did not experience had cast a shadow over me, and one from which I shall never entirely emerge.'[179] Like Doris Lessing, Sebald petitions photography to shed light on the dark shadow cast by a war he himself did not experience.[180] Sebald's assertion that 'the relationship between the historic reality behind these fictional stories and the images which are inserted in them is a very close one' is thus both correct and crucial.[181] The images combat oblivion by rescuing remnants of existences and experiences. Like the photographs from concentration camps, one of which appears in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's images act as remnants of history that cannot be dismissed.

Although many of his images have a connection to the Second World War, Sebald applies the ability of images to rescue past existences and experiences to various margins of history. Sebald felt that as a consequence of the 'conspiracy of silence' Germans ignored history in general. In his acceptance speech to the Collegium of the German Academy, Sebald complained that they in university spent a whole semester 'stirring' E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The*

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[177] Michael Silverblatt, 'A Poem of an Invisible Subject', in *The Emergence of Memory*, pp. 77-86 (pp. 84-5).
[178] Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', p. 105.
[179] W. G. Sebald, 'Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures', in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), pp. 1-106 (p. 71).
[180] Born 18 May 1944, Sebald's first year did, however, coincide with the last year of the war.
[181] Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', p. 366.

Golden Pot [*Der goldne Topf*] (1814), 'without once discussing the relation in which that strange story stands to the time immediately preceding its composition, to the fields of corpses outside Dresden and the hunger and epidemic disease in the city on the Elbe at that period.'[182] In *Vertigo*, the narrator not only expresses his admiration for the 'realism' of Pisanello's paintings, snippets of which are reproduced in work, but he also lauds how 'every feature, the principals and the extras alike, the birds in the sky, the green forest and every single leaf of it, are all granted an equal and undiminished right to exist'.[183] With his images Sebald grants this 'equal and undiminished right to exist' to subjects sidelined by history. Except for the photographs of Brooklyn Bridge and the Chrysler Building, there are no iconic images in Sebald's works. The subjects and objects in the images are obscure, and if they are famous, they are shown in relatively unknown images: for example, a nineteen-year-old Stendhal or a comical photograph of Kafka in an aeroplane.[184] Instead of the many famous depictions of the Battle of Waterloo, Sebald inserts a painting so obscure that I have been unable to identify the painter (Sebald's archive reveals he copied the painting from a postcard depicting the Waterloo battle).[185] Sebald's images show pieces of the world that are particular, overlooked, or conventionally considered insignificant. Like Austerlitz's primary-school teacher, André Hilary, who deplores the clichés, set pieces, stock-in-trade pictures and pre-formed images normally used to convey the battle of Austerlitz, and who instead visualizes the battle in its last scene through the eyes of the short-sighted Marshal Davout, Sebald seeks out details and alternative perspectives.[186] He sheds light on the lives of those 'obscure figures' who 'cluster in the shade' that the narrator in Woolf's short story, 'Phyllis and Rosamund' (1906), argues should be recorded.[187]

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[182] W. G. Sebald, 'Acceptance Speech to the Collegium of the German Academy', in *Campo Santo*, pp. 216-7.
[183] ['in der allem, den Hauptdarstellern und den Komparsen, den Vögeln am Himmel, dem grün bewegten Wald und jedem einzelnen Blatt dieselbe, durch nichts geschmälerte Daseinsberechtigung zugesprochen wird.'] W. G. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle* (Franfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1990), p. 84; W. G. Sebald, *Vertigo*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Havill Press, 1999), p. 73.
[184] Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*, pp. 15, 160; Sebald, *Vertigo*, pp. 11, 144.
[185] W. G. Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1995), p. 153; W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Harvill Press, 1998), p. 126. DLA, MS Sebald, Vershiedenes Fotos, folder 37.
[186] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, pp. 105-6; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, pp. 101-2.
[187] Virginia Woolf, 'Phyllis and Rosamond', in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), pp. 17-29 (p. 17).

By including images that show subjects forgotten or neglected in his montage of text and images, Sebald encourages a critical engagement with the world that is sensitive to its past. This history-based ethos is predicated on the images being 'authentic'. Like the connection of *Orlando*'s images to Sackville-West, the connection of Sebald's images to 'the historic reality behind these fictional stories' is crucial for the critique they mount of tendencies not to face past atrocities. Many of Sebald's images are similar to the paintings of Sackvilles in that they are repurposed, détourned, and some of them do not have identities that correspond completely to the narrative, but like Sackville-West's ancestors, they have a tangential relationship to subjects in the narrative. Sebald's images have a different photographic aesthetic, however, from Woolf's. Sebald does not pose subjects in front of the camera as Woolf does with her photographs of Sackville-West. Besides cropping, resizing, and darkening certain images, he generally leaves them intact. Whereas Woolf uses principles of composition consistent with those practiced by her great-aunt to construct her critique of society, Sebald's photographs invoke an aesthetic that favours photography's ability to reveal, lay bare, expose. His archive also suggests that when he tampered with an image, he did so for the sake of transparency. For example, Sebald cut and pasted a brochure from the Nazi prison camp Breendonk so the map he inserted into *Austerlitz* had the correct place names.[188] While Sebald's lack of inscription conflicts with Kracauer's and Benjamin's prescription for an ethical use of photography, his choice of subjects echoes Kracauer's emphasis on the empathy involved in the selection of motifs and Benjamin's call for 'delicate empiricism [zarte Empirie]'. As the prime example of ethical photography, both theorists highlight the photographs of Eugène Atget (1857-1927).[189] His gray-scale photographs of shop windows, deserted streets, and odd objects bear a striking resemblance to the photographs in Sebald's works. Benjamin applauds Atget's photographs for the alienation they convey between man and environment, which he argues engages a politically educated sight. Benjamin writes that it is no accident that Atget's photographs have been likened to those of a crime scene, asking 'isn't every square inch of our cities a crime scene?'

[188] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 6.
[189] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 377-80; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p. 518-20; Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, pp. 16, 19, 21.

Sebald's photographs also 'literalize' the 'conditions of life', though they focus on historical rather than economic conditions. Benjamin argues that the photographer's task is to reveal guilt. Whereas Woolf uses paintings of Sackvilles to mount a critique of the aristocracy, turning the opulence they display against them, Sebald uses the distancing effect of photography to unsettle our notions of the world and create awareness of the crimes on which our present is contingent. Benjamin argues that the 'logical counterpoint' of 'creative' photography is photography that unmasks its subject matter or uses 'construction' to highlight its context: while Woolf's do the latter, Sebald's do the former: Woolf constructs, Sebald unmasks.[190]

Sebald does not question whether history can be known, but actively tries to bring it to light. The existence of 'forgeries' does not negate the authenticity of the images but creates complex relationships that require reflection, investigation, and exploration. The images do not clarify Sebald's narrative but complicate it, frustrating an easy or holistic interpretation, changing the praxis of how the present thinks about its past. But the referential, albeit complex, readings of Sebald's works that the photographs encourage remain and resonate with the objectivity, documentation, and autobiography that he privileged in all postwar German literature. In his lecture on the air bombing of Germany during the Second World War, Sebald argues that it is with a 'documentary approach', one which includes genuine and authentic documents, 'that German post-war literature really comes into its own and begins the serious study of material incommensurable with traditional aesthetics.'[191] However, Sebald also claims in the speech he gave at the House of Literature in Stuttgart in 2001 that only in literature 'can there be an attempt at restitution over and above the mere recital of facts and over and above scholarship.'[192] The forgeries may make Sebald's works seem insincere, but they are in fact essential for his ethical aesthetics.

Auto/Biography Without Identification

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[190] Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', pp. 383-5; Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', pp. 526-7.
[191] Sebald, 'Air War and Literature', p. 59.
[192] Sebald, 'An Attempt at Restitution', p. 215.

When the narrator in *Austerlitz* retrieves one of the frail moths that Austerlitz has collected in Bakelite jars, he describes the moth's body as trembling 'on the edge of visibility'.[193] Austerlitz similarly describes the squirrels that he thinks he sees, and which have been rumoured to exist, among the pines in the courtyard of the new Bibliotèque Nationale as quivering 'on the edge of invisibility'.[194] Both instances of this turn of phrase evince the ubiquitous preoccupation with the perishable, ephemeral, and spectral that is a constant feature of Sebald's works. The moth and squirrels are still, however, visible. Sebald's images reflect a concern with the transient that is bound up with a committed engagement to historical material that the 'authenticity' of his images supports. But not all of Sebald's images can be identified. The many private family photographs in *The Emigrants* are especially resistant to outside identification. Sebald is adamant in interviews, however, that these photographs are 'authentic':

> The majority of the photographs do come from the albums that certainly middle-class people kept in the thirties and forties. And they are from the authentic source. Ninety percent of the images inserted into the text could be said to be authentic, i.e., they are not from other sources for the purpose of telling the tale.[195]

Sebald sometimes supports his assertions of authenticity with background stories for specific photographs. About the photograph of Adelwarth in Arab costume, for example, he recounts that he found it in his aunt's photograph album when he visited her in the United States in 1981.[196] Sebald was vehement about the 'authenticity' of this photograph, stating in another interview: 'It's not invented, it's not an accident, not one that was found and later inserted.'[197] The existence of this photograph in his archive and other family photographs like it (both ones inserted and ones not) supports Sebald's claim, but most of Sebald's images of people remain enigmatic.[198] Deductions can be made from photographs in Sebald's archive that seem to show

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[193] ['an der Grenze der Sichtbarkeit'], Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 237; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 233.
[194] ['an der Grenze der Unsichtbarkeit'], Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 393; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 392.
[195] Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', pp. 40-1.
[196] Angier, 'Who is W. G. Sebald?', pp. 10-4.
[197] Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', p. 41.
[198] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folders 8 and 10, Vershiedenes Fotos, folders 2 and 12.

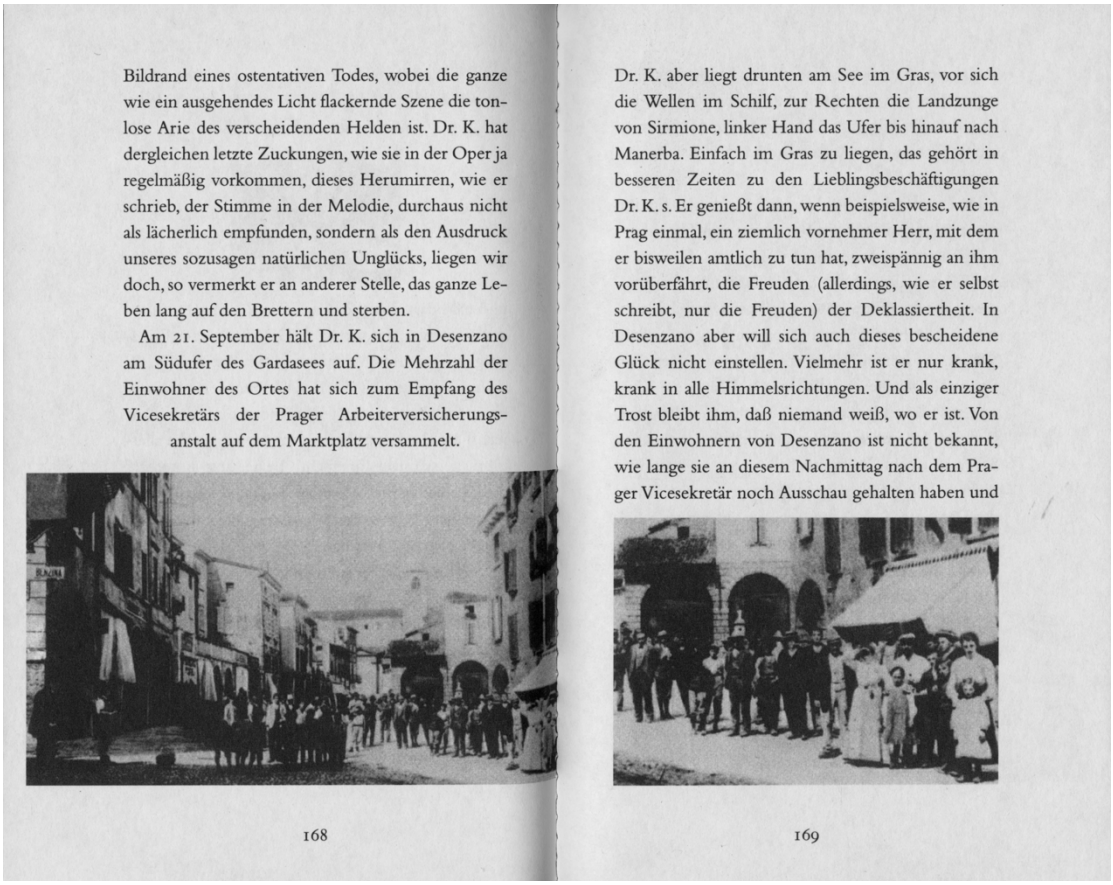
reoccurring family members, but many of the photographs that show biographical subjects not related to Sebald may be impossible to verify.

Sebald gives his works a montage effect by withholding identities for images, but the ability of images to exist without commentary also means he can include photographs without compromising privacy. The omission of images in the English edition of *The Emigrants* that relate to Hamburger and Auerbach, more public figures in England, suggests a concern for privacy (the images show Hamburger's house, a painting by Auerbach, and the artist's eyes). As does the restriction of certain materials relating to Austerlitz in Sebald's archive.[199] It is possible Sebald felt he could use the photograph of Adelwarth as an example of the photographs' authenticity in interviews because he was related to him. Due to the non-linguistic aspect of images he can include material from lives at risk of disappearing without identifying the subjects. Sebald thus extends the 'equal and undiminished right to exist' to witnesses at the margins of history. Sebald recounts in an interview that he wanted to write about 'the survivor syndrome', and was interested in Jean Améry, Primo Levi, and their suicides late in life, but that he suddenly became aware that he himself knew survivors of atrocities who had committed suicides or almost-suicides, and that these are the lives in *The Emigrants*: 'people who had gone through this career but whose lives were not nearly as public as those of these two writers, whose lives were largely obscure but perhaps for that reason needed to be written about.'[200] Sebald's archive also reveals that the tangential relationship that sometimes exists between images and the identities given to them in the narrative preserves privacy. For example, the images of what seem random graves in *The Emigrants* feature graves in the same graveyard as that of Sebald's biographical subjects. Sebald also took photographs of their graves, but if he had inserted them into his work, they would have revealed the subjects' names.[201]

Although some of Sebald's images lack identification, all of them can lay claim on the reader. Sebald describes the effect certain images have on him: 'the subject seems to come out of the image and seems to demand an answer about one thing or another', an 'appellative

[199] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 17.
[200] Cook, 'Lost in Translation?', p. 357.
[201] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folders 13-15.

presence' to which he must attend.[202] It is noteworthy that Sebald does not attribute the power of these photographs to the identity of the subjects. Photographs create similarly strong reactions in Sebald's narratives. In *Vertigo* the narrator relates how Kafka concludes that a girl deserves to be loved after seeing her photograph, and in *The Emigrants*, the narrator is impelled to visit the United States because a family photograph album comes into his hands, and he must investigate the lives of the people depicted.[203] Sebald's images also demand to be seen and felt, their subjects to be acknowledged, even when they are unknown. Sebald stages the images' claim on the viewer's attention by reproducing close-ups of images he has shown previously. In *Vertigo*, for example, he shows two images of townspeople gathered in a square to welcome Kafka in Desenzano (Figure 34).[204]



Bildrand eines ostentativen Todes, wobei die ganze wie ein ausgehendes Licht flackernde Szene die tonlose Arie des verscheidenden Helden ist. Dr. K. hat dergleichen letzte Zuckungen, wie sie in der Oper ja regelmäßig vorkommen, dieses Herumirren, wie er schrieb, der Stimme in der Melodie, durchaus nicht als lächerlich empfunden, sondern als den Ausdruck unseres sozusagen natürlichen Unglücks, liegen wir doch, so vermerkt er an anderer Stelle, das ganze Leben lang auf den Brettern und sterben.

Am 21. September hält Dr. K. sich in Desenzano am Südufer des Gardasees auf. Die Mehrzahl der Einwohner des Ortes hat sich zum Empfang des Vicesekretärs der Prager Arbeiterversicherungsanstalt auf dem Marktplatz versammelt.

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Dr. K. aber liegt drunten am See im Gras, vor sich die Wellen im Schilf, zur Rechten die Landzunge von Sirmione, linker Hand das Ufer bis hinauf nach Manerba. Einfach im Gras zu liegen, das gehört in besseren Zeiten zu den Lieblingsbeschäftigungen Dr. K. s. Er genießt dann, wenn beispielsweise, wie in Prag einmal, ein ziemlich vornehmer Herr, mit dem er bisweilen amtlich zu tun hat, zweispännig an ihm vorüberfährt, die Freuden (allerdings, wie er selbst schreibt, nur die Freuden) der Deklassiertheit. In Desenzano aber will sich auch dieses bescheidene Glück nicht einstellen. Vielmehr ist er nur krank, krank in alle Himmelsrichtungen. Und als einziger Trost bleibt ihm, daß niemand weiß, wo er ist. Von den Einwohnern von Desenzano ist nicht bekannt, wie lange sie an diesem Nachmittag nach dem Prager Vicesekretär noch Ausschau gehalten haben und

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Figure 34 Photograph of Desenzano, W. G. Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle* (Franfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1990), pp. 168-9.

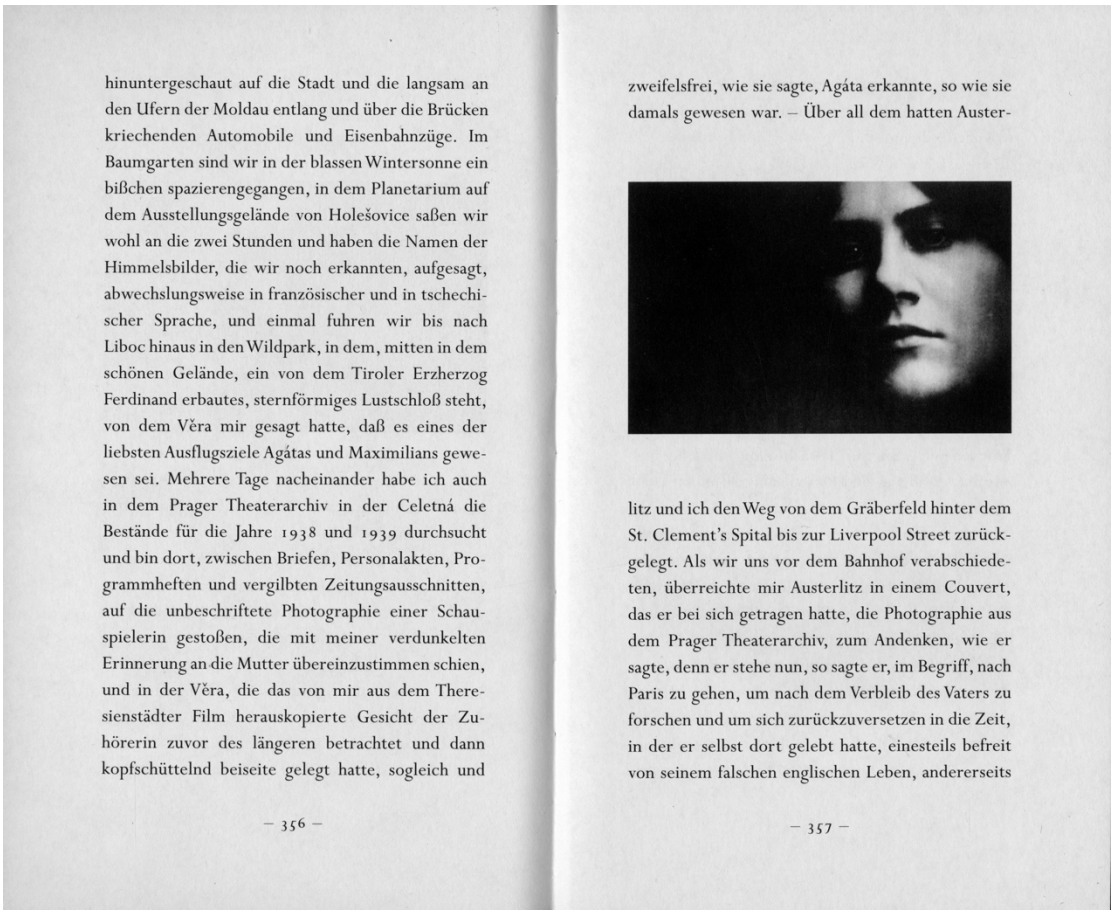
[202] Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', p. 366.
[203] Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten*, p. 103; Sebald, *The Emigrants*, p. 71; Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*, p. 182; Sebald, *Vertigo*, p. 167.
[204] See also this photograph in Klaus Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka: Pictures of a Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 85.

The narrator remarks that no record exists of 'how long the people of Desenzano continued their watch for the Deputy Secretary from Prague'.[205] In *Vertigo*, the reader is impelled to see these people, who in their photographs are eternally waiting, first from a distance, then in a close-up, as if the viewer is coming nearer, taking the place of Kafka, who never showed up. In *The Rings of Saturn*, the reader is impelled to see the dead corpse of Aris Klindt, first in a full reproduction of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1631), then in a close-up. The narrator argues that unlike the onlookers in the painting, whose gazes are directed at a schematic medical diagram, such as those envisaged by René Descartes, the painter himself sees and identifies with the body of Klindt, the convicted criminal whose body is being dissected but ignored by the spectators in the painting: 'His gaze alone is free of Cartesian rigidity.'[206] Sebald does not want the reader to remain within the realm of conception but to see, like he argues Rembrandt does, Klindt's dead body. The narrator's attack on Descartes is also a call for attention to materiality that Sebald enforces upon the reader with his inserted images.

For Sebald, the tangible aspect of images also has an intangible dimension that equally demands to be seen and acknowledged. In *The Emigrants*, the narrator repeatedly returns to look through Bereyter's album 'because, looking at the pictures in it, it truly seemed to me, and still does, as if the dead were coming back, or as if we were on the point of joining them.'[207] This threshold occupied by both the living and the dead is a constant feature of the photographs encountered in the different works. With photographs, the reader can like the narrator meet the look of people who are dead, like the three women sitting behind a loom in one of the photographs taken by the Nazi accountant Walter Genewein of the Lodz Ghetto.[208] One of the ways in which Austerlitz tries to find his mother is by scrutinizing the Theresienstadt film, and

[205] ['wie lange sie […] nach dem Prager Vicesekretär noch Ausschau gehalten haben'], Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*, p. 169; Sebald, *Vertigo*, p. 154.
[206] ['Er allein hat nicht den starren cartesischen Blick'], Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p. 25; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, pp. 13-7.
[207] ['weil es mir beim Betrachten der darin enthatenen Bilder tatsächlich schien und nach wie vor scheint, als kehrten die Toten zurück oder als stünden wir im Begriff, einzugehen zu ihnen.'] Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten*, p. 68-9; Sebald, *The Emigrants*, pp. 45-6.
[208] Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten*, p. 355; Sebald, *The Emigrants*, p. 237.

the discovery of the photograph that could be his mother, the photograph I have discovered depicts Destinnová, is in many ways the climax of *Austerlitz* (Figure 35).



hinuntergeschaut auf die Stadt und die langsam an den Ufern der Moldau entlang und über die Brücken kriechenden Automobile und Eisenbahnzüge. Im Baumgarten sind wir in der blassen Wintersonne ein bißchen spazierengegangen, in dem Planetarium auf dem Ausstellungsgelände von Holešovice saßen wir wohl an die zwei Stunden und haben die Namen der Himmelsbilder, die wir noch erkannten, aufgesagt, abwechslungsweise in französischer und in tschechischer Sprache, und einmal fuhren wir bis nach Liboc hinaus in den Wildpark, in dem, mitten in dem schönen Gelände, ein von dem Tiroler Erzherzog Ferdinand erbautes, sternförmiges Lustschloß steht, von dem Věra mir gesagt hatte, daß es eines der liebsten Ausflugsziele Agátas und Maximilians gewesen sei. Mehrere Tage nacheinander habe ich auch in dem Prager Theaterarchiv in der Celetná die Bestände für die Jahre 1938 und 1939 durchsucht und bin dort, zwischen Briefen, Personalakten, Programmheften und vergilbten Zeitungsausschnitten, auf die unbeschriftete Photographie einer Schauspielerin gestoßen, die mit meiner verdunkelten Erinnerung an die Mutter übereinzustimmen schien, und in der Věra, die das von mir aus dem Theresienstädter Film herauskopierte Gesicht der Zuhörerin zuvor des längeren betrachtet und dann kopfschüttelnd beiseite gelegt hatte, sogleich und

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zweifelsfrei, wie sie sagte, Agáta erkannte, so wie sie damals gewesen war. – Über all dem hatten Auster-

litz und ich den Weg von dem Gräberfeld hinter dem St. Clement's Spital bis zur Liverpool Street zurückgelegt. Als wir uns vor dem Bahnhof verabschiedeten, überreichte mir Austerlitz in einem Couvert, das er bei sich getragen hatte, die Photographie aus dem Prager Theaterarchiv, zum Andenken, wie er sagte, denn er stehe nun, so sagte er, im Begriff, nach Paris zu gehen, um nach dem Verbleib des Vaters zu forschen und um sich zurückzuversetzen in die Zeit, in der er selbst dort gelebt hatte, einesteils befreit von seinem falschen englischen Leben, andererseits

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Figure 35 Photograph of Ema Destinnová, W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (München Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), p. 357.

It is not the eyes of Austerlitz's mother that the reader meets, but, peering out from the darkness of the photograph (and of time), it is someone who once existed, specifically Destinnová. Eyes in photographs have a particularly strong effect on the viewer. The feeling that eyes in portraits 'follow' the viewer is well known. Roland Barthes also insists on the power of subjects in photographs to look and to look him '*straight in the eye* [*droit dans les yeux*]'. He describes this look as 'an action of thought without thought, an aim without a target [un acte de pensée sans pensée, une visée sans cible]' and proceeds to establish 'this scandalous movement [mouvement scandaleux]' as producing 'the rarest qualities of an air [la plus rare qualité d'un air]' (i.e. soul).

[209] The look given by subjects in photographs is not directed at any particular object, as the object that the subject once saw, the camera, is gone, immaterial. This is why the look of a portrait cannot be called a gaze, since a gaze is concerned with an object. Jean-Luc Nancy explains how sight belongs to the domain of objects, whereas the look, by contrast, brings the subject to the fore: 'By looking, I look out for and guard (myself); I am related to the world, not to the object. Only thus can I say that I "am".'[210] The subject in a photograph looks at the viewer but does not see him or her; the look simply expresses the subject's subjectivity, a subjectivity that extends beyond the subject's own demise, connecting the dead with the living.

Austerlitz's discovery of a photograph of him as a child dressed up as a page boy (also reproduced on *Austerlitz*'s dust jacket), a costume made to compliment his mother's, who he learns was dressed up as a Rose Queen, prompts thoughts about the present and the past, the living and the dead:

> It does not seem to me, Austerlitz added, that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the rules of a higher form of stereometry, between which the living and the dead can move back and forth as they like, and the longer I think about it the more it seems to me that we who are still alive are unreal in the eyes of the dead, that only occasionally, in certain lights and atmospheric conditions, do we appear in their field of vision. As far back as I can remember, said Austerlitz, I have always felt as if I had no place in reality, as if I were not there at all, and I never had this impression more strongly than on that evening in the Šporkova when the eyes of the Rose Queen's page looked through me.[211]

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[209] Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 172; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 111. Italics Barthes.

[210] ['En regardant je veille et je (me) garde: je suis dans le rapport au monde, non pas à l'objet. Et c'est ainsi que je "suis"'] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le regard du portrait* (Paris: Galilée, 2000), p. 75; Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Look of the Portrait', in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, ed. by Simon Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 220-48 (p. 242-3).

[211] ['Es scheint mir nicht, sagte Austerlitz, daß wir die Gesetze verstehen, unter denen sich die Wiederkunft der Vergangenheit vollzieht, doch ist er mir immer mehr, als gäbe es überhaupt keine Zeit, sondern nur verschiedene, nach einer höheren Stereometrie ineinander verschachtelte Räume, zwischen denen die Lebendigen und die Toten, je nachdem es ihnen zumute ist, hin und her gehen können, und je länger ich es bedenke, desto mehr kommt mir vor, daß wir, die wir und noch am Leben befinden, in den Augen der Toten irreale und nur manchmal, unter bestimmten Lichtverhältnissen und atmosphärishschen Bedingungen sichtbar werdende Wesen sind. Sowit ich zurückblicken kann, sagte Austerlitz, habe ich mich immer gefühlt, als hätte ich keinen Platz in der Wirklichkeit, als sei ich gar nicht vorhanden, und nie ist dieses Gefühl starker in mir gewesen als an jenem Abend in der Šporkova, als mich der Blick des Pagen der Rosenkönigin durchdrang.'] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 265; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 261.

Austerlitz survives the fate he was allotted in a concentration camp by being sent to England, but he nonetheless does not feel he exists fully among the living, and the discovery of a photograph of him as a child confirms this feeling. On the verso of the original postcard located in Sebald's archive someone has written in a handwriting that is not Sebald's: 'Train bearer to the Rose Queen'.[212] To someone this boy was the Rose Queen's page. This image and the photograph of Destinnová do not depict Austerlitz and his mother, but as ghosts from the past they deserve to be seen and felt nonetheless. In 'Campo Santo', part of Sebald's Corsican project, which was only published after his death, the narrator deals with ghosts, whose presence like Austerlitz he constantly sees: 'They are still around, the dead, but there are times when I think that perhaps they will soon be gone.'[213] Communion with the dead can be harrowing and vertiginous, as is the case in *Vertigo*, but it is presented as necessary and imperative, especially if the subjects are in danger of disappearing completely.

Although identifying who the subjects are in some of Sebald's images establishes specific historical connections, the indexical relationship of the photographs to their subjects asserts the historical aspect of them all. A sense of authenticity can thus be extended to those images that the reader cannot identify. The photograph of a moth inserted into *Austerlitz*, for example, which Sebald's archive suggests is a photograph taken by Sebald, may depict the frail moth that the narrator retrieves from one of Austerlitz's Bakelite jars, but even if this is not the case, the image still saves the moth it depicts for perpetuity. The important thing is that the people or things depicted existed, the 'that-has-been [ça a été]' that for Barthes constitutes photography's claim on 'reality [réalité]'.[214] The indexical connection between a photograph and its subject gives the former a poignancy particularly when the latter perishes. This aspect also seems to have fascinated Sebald, who according to Clive Scott repeatedly used the word 'überdauern [to survive]' about photographs in his notes on photography.[215] The ability of photographs to outlive their subjects is also a theme in Sebald's works. Austerlitz describes the

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[212] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 4.
[213] W. G. Sebald, 'Campo Santo', in *Campo Santo*, pp. 16-36 (p. 34).
[214] Barthes, *La chambre claire*, pp. 126, 176; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 80, 113.
[215] Clive Scott, 'Sebald's Photographic Annotations', in *Saturn's Moons,* pp. 217-46 (pp. 225, 230).

black and white photographs that he gives to the narrator, some of which make their way into *Austerlitz*, as all that will be 'left of his life'.[216] In *The Emigrants*, the revelation that Max Ferber's father perished in the Dachau concentration camp is in stark contrast to the photograph of him embedded in the text, which is described as one of the few from his last years that 'survived'.[217] The indexical significance of these images is especially striking as Austerlitz and Ferber are invented names that comprise several people. Ferber, Sebald reveals in an interview, is 'based on two people', a famous artist and a Manchester landlord.[218] Austerlitz is also based on 'two real-life stories' that Sebald discloses to be those of a colleague of his, an architectural historian, whom he encountered by chance several times in the 1960s, and with whom he made more permanent contact in the 1990s, and Susi Bechhöfer, whose evacuation with the kindertransport from Munich and subsequent upbringing in Wales Sebald first learned about in a television documentary.[219] While Sebald can only incorporate historical material into his writing by describing and naming it, his images can showcase unidentified subject matter. Photographs can show lives of people who are not identified or who are misidentified, giving them a better chance of perpetuity than those who disappear completely, like the children from Kozara, who in their captivity during the Second World War were driven by hunger to eat their own cardboard identity tags, 'and thus in their extreme desperation [eradicating] their own names'.[220] The narrator in *The Rings of Saturn* reflects upon the impossibility of imagining the experience of the Battle of Solelay in 1672. The written accounts and painterly depictions, such as the painting by Willem van de Velde reproduced in the text, are all discounted in preference for the dead body of the Earl of Sandwich: 'All we know for certain is that his bloated body was washed up on the beach near Harwich a few weeks later.'[221] Material remains are considered the

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[216] ['die als einziges übrigbleiben würden von seinem Leben.'] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 410; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 408.
[217] ['geblieben sind'] Sebald, *Die Ausgewanderten*, p. 278; Sebald, *The Emigrants*, p. 186.
[218] Angier, 'Who is W. G. Sebald?', p. 10-4; Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', p. 110.
[219] Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', pp. 110-1; Wasserman, 'In this Distant Place', pp. 372-3.
[220] ['und somit in der äußersten Verzweiflung den eigenen Namen ausgelöscht.'] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p.126; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 98.
[221] ['Gewiß ist nur, daß seine aufgedunsene Leiche ein paar Wochen später bei Harwich an den Strand gespült wurde.'] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p. 100; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 77.

most credible testaments to lived experience. The images thus have special value, not primarily as reflections of reality (their resemblance), but as material remnants that deserve to be seen (their reference). The photographs have an indexical relationship to their subjects, even if those subjects are unknown. Viewing Sebald's images also encourages an awareness of other photographs that the reader may have access to: photographs that may be the only traces left of the people they portray, collected in the albums of family, friends, and neighbours.

Like his images, Sebald's writing also rescues past existences and experiences. His description of Johann Peter Hebel's style also fits to his own:

> As one thing follows another, so, very gradually, the narrative unfolds. Nevertheless, the language constantly checks itself, holding itself up in small loops and digressions and moulding itself to that which it describes, along the way recuperating as many earthly goods as it possibly can.[222]

Sebald also recuperates earthly goods with his erudite details and digressions. His archive reveals the priority historical anecdotes had for his writing process: he not only made lists of the images that he would include, but also lists of the historical topics that he would cover.[223] Sebald's comparison of his writing to the visual arts also includes this historical dimension. In the speech delivered in Stuttgart, Sebald cites an engraving by Tripp as a constant inspiration for his writing:

> Much of what I have written later derives from this engraving, even in my method of procedure: in adhering to an exact historical perspective, in patiently engraving and linking together apparently disparate things in the manner of a still life.[224]

Using his pen like an engraver's knife, Sebald carefully follows the lines of the historical material that he has put into contact with one another. The ability of writing to act as a trace is also a theme in Sebald's works. Deciphering entries in a logbook, the narrator in *The Rings of Saturn* is 'astounded that a trail that has long since vanished from the air or the water' remains

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[222] W. G. Sebald, 'A Comet in the Heavens', in *A Place in the Country,* trans. by Jo Catling (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2013), pp. 5-36 (p. 16).
[223] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ringe des Saturn, folder 3.
[224] Sebald, 'An Attempt at Restitution', p. 210.

visible on the paper.[225] *Austerlitz* concludes with an account of how Breendonk prisoners scratched their names, dates, and places of origin into the walls of the concentration camp.[226] Yet Sebald's writing cannot act as traces of the historical things he traces in the same way as his images can. Unlike the photographs, the plaster of Dembowski's hand, or Roger Casement's signature, an image of which *The Rings of Saturn* displays, Sebald's writing does not have an indexical relationship to his subjects. He may achieve great resemblance to his subjects with his text, but these likenesses do not refer to their subjects 'by virtue of being really affected' them.[227] It is thus of consequence that Sebald uses photographs to reproduce text, such as the 'AAAAAAA…' from Claude Simon's *Le Jardin de Plantes* (1997).[228] Photography as a medium secures this writing as a trace of the original (rather than an interpretation), just as photographs of paintings, for example, act as traces of those paintings.

Sebald also inserts potent traces of himself in the form of photographs. The reader may not be able to recognize most of the people in Sebald's images, but his figure will be familiar, particularly as most editions of his works include an author's photograph of him on their inside or back cover. Setting a precedent and a point of reference for all later works, Sebald's first work, *Vertigo*, includes a page from Sebald's passport, a trope of official identification. It appears at a point in the narrative when the narrator loses his passport and has a new one made, which suggests the passport is the narrator's. The passport page reproduced shows Sebald's photograph, his height, the colour of his eyes, his signature, and the date it was issued.[229] A photocopy in Sebald's archive also shows the adjacent page, which gives Sebald's name, birthplace, and birthdate.[230] *Vertigo* also contains a photograph of the narrator's childhood home, which is also Sebald's, where the reader can discern in a window a child and an older man, possibly the narrator and his grandfather, possibly Sebald and his grandfather. It is also

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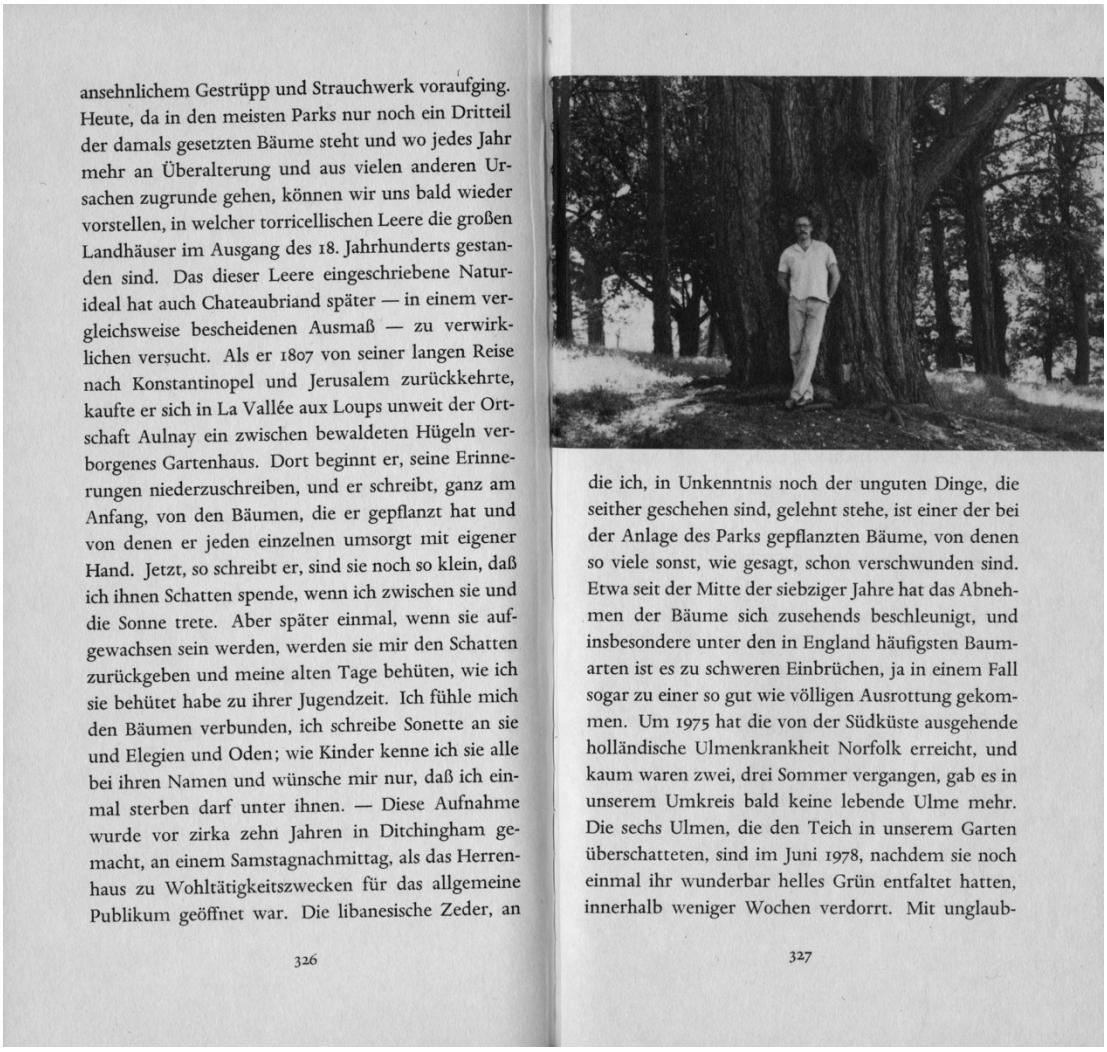
[225] ['Jedesmal, wenn ich eine dieser Aufzeichnungen entziffere, undere ich mich darüber, daß eine in der Luft ode rim Wasser längst erloschene Spur hier auf dem Papier nach wie vor sichtbar sein kann.'] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p. 120; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 93.
[226] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 417; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 415.
[227] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and others, 8 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-1967), II (1932), p. 143.
[228] DLA, MS Sebald, Austerlitz, folder 6.
[229] Sebald, *Schwindel. Gefühle*, p. 129; Sebald, *Vertigo*, p. 114.
[230] DLA, MS Sebald, Schwindel. Gefühle, folder 1.

possible to recognize Sebald, with his stature and high temples, in the grainy and dark image of the narrator in *The Emigrants*. With its wind-swept subject and towering waves, and the story attached to it of how the narrator's uncle snapped it on a beach in New Jersey, the photograph also makes a possible ekphrastic appearance in one of Sebald's poems. Here the lyric 'I' is the subject in the photograph: 'With the brown house-high waves/ in the background my uncle/ leaning forward into the wind/ snapped me again/ with his Polaroid'.[231] A very precise photograph of Sebald leaning against the impressive trunk of a tree with his hands behind him is placed near the end of *The Rings of Saturn* (Figure 36).



ansehnlichem Gestrüpp und Strauchwerk voraufging. Heute, da in den meisten Parks nur noch ein Dritteil der damals gesetzten Bäume steht und wo jedes Jahr mehr an Überalterung und aus vielen anderen Ursachen zugrunde gehen, können wir uns bald wieder vorstellen, in welcher torricellischen Leere die großen Landhäuser im Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts gestanden sind. Das dieser Leere eingeschriebene Naturideal hat auch Chateaubriand später — in einem vergleichsweise bescheidenen Ausmaß — zu verwirklichen versucht. Als er 1807 von seiner langen Reise nach Konstantinopel und Jerusalem zurückkehrte, kaufte er sich in La Vallée aux Loups unweit der Ortschaft Aulnay ein zwischen bewaldeten Hügeln verborgenes Gartenhaus. Dort beginnt er, seine Erinnerungen niederzuschreiben, und er schreibt, ganz am Anfang, von den Bäumen, die er gepflanzt hat und von denen er jeden einzelnen umsorgt mit eigener Hand. Jetzt, so schreibt er, sind sie noch so klein, daß ich ihnen Schatten spende, wenn ich zwischen sie und die Sonne trete. Aber später einmal, wenn sie aufgewachsen sein werden, werden sie mir den Schatten zurückgeben und meine alten Tage behüten, wie ich sie behütet habe zu ihrer Jugendzeit. Ich fühle mich den Bäumen verbunden, ich schreibe Sonette an sie und Elegien und Oden; wie Kinder kenne ich sie alle bei ihren Namen und wünsche mir nur, daß ich einmal sterben darf unter ihnen. — Diese Aufnahme wurde vor zirka zehn Jahren in Ditchingham gemacht, an einem Samstagnachmittag, als das Herrenhaus zu Wohltätigkeitszwecken für das allgemeine Publikum geöffnet war. Die libanesische Zeder, an

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die ich, in Unkenntnis noch der unguten Dinge, die seither geschehen sind, gelehnt stehe, ist einer der bei der Anlage des Parks gepflanzten Bäume, von denen so viele sonst, wie gesagt, schon verschwunden sind. Etwa seit der Mitte der siebziger Jahre hat das Abnehmen der Bäume sich zusehends beschleunigt, und insbesondere unter den in England häufigsten Baumarten ist es zu schweren Einbrüchen, ja in einem Fall sogar zu einer so gut wie völligen Ausrottung gekommen. Um 1975 hat die von der Südküste ausgehende holländische Ulmenkrankheit Norfolk erreicht, und kaum waren zwei, drei Sommer vergangen, gab es in unserem Umkreis bald keine lebende Ulme mehr. Die sechs Ulmen, die den Teich in unserem Garten überschatteten, sind im Juni 1978, nachdem sie noch einmal ihr wunderbar helles Grün entfaltet hatten, innerhalb weniger Wochen verdorrt. Mit unglaub-

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Figure 36 Photograph of Sebald, W. G. Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1995), p. 327.

[231] W. G. Sebald, 'New Jersey Journey', in *Across the Land and the Water*, *Selected Poems, 1964-2001*, trans. by Iain Galbraith (London, Penguin, 2012), pp. 96-9.

The text states when and where this photograph was taken (about ten years ago in Ditchingham) and designates the man leaning against the Labanese cedar as 'I [ich]'.[232] In *Austerlitz*, a photograph of a shop window shows Sebald's reflection, although it is not very noticeable.[233] *Austerlitz* also contains photographs that show a rucksack and a man walking, Sebaldian emblems recognizable from his oeuvre, where a rucksack and walking are fixed features of the itinerant narrator. Despite the works suggesting that the photographs of Sebald depict the narrator, the text never identifies the figure in the images nor the narrator as Sebald. The closest the text comes to doing so is in *The Rings of Saturn* when the narrator remembers visiting Nuremberg in order to see the sarcophagus of his patron saint, St Sebolt [Sand Sebolten], the sarcophagus displayed in an accompanying photograph.[234]

The photographs of Sebald implied to be images of the narrator act as traces of Sebald without identifying him as the narrator. The photographs do not identify Sebald as narrator, but they do establish a single point of reference. The images thus help construct the kind of narrator that Sebald considers ethical. Sebald describes his decisions regarding the construction of his narrator from the point of view of the reader:

> I want to know who I'm dealing with and I want to have the moral measure of the person who is telling me something. And you do get that when you talk to real persons because you can always derive from a person's demeanour an idea of what they are like inside. Whereas if you have a narrator who you see running around in a novel arranging everything but whose face you never see, whose inner thoughts you never hear anything about, then I for one find that problematic. And for that reason I tend to have a narrator who has some sort of presence in the text. We don't know exactly who he is but we get a reasonably good idea of what this person's emotional life might be like, and from there you can also then calculate the distance to the story that he tells, and it generally allows you to orientate yourself *vis-à-vis* the figures in the book.[235]

Not only do Sebald's images display the narrator's face, they also suggest a 'periscopic' narration, a narration with a singular and therefore limited perspective through which all is filtered and deflected.[236] A surprising number of images stem from secondary sources, but many of the images give the impression of being photographs taken by the narrator. Most obviously,

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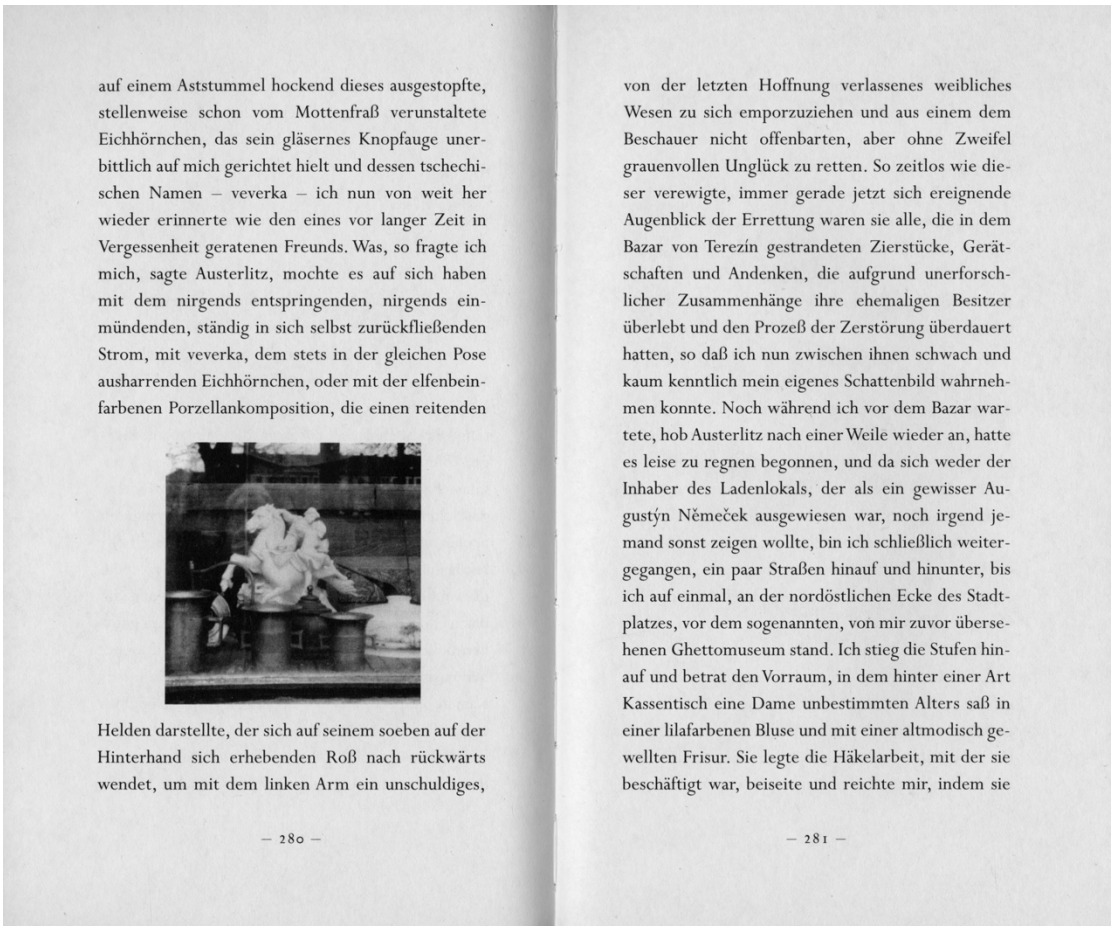
[232] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, pp. 326-7; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 264.
[233] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 280; Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, p. 276.
[234] 'Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p. 107-8; Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, pp. 86-7.
[235] Wasserman, 'In This Distant Place', pp. 374-5.
[236] de Moor, 'Echoes from the Past', p. 354.

the *Austerlitz* photograph of Sebald's reflection in a shop window suggests he is holding the camera (Figure 37).



auf einem Aststummel hockend dieses ausgestopfte, stellenweise schon vom Mottenfraß verunstaltete Eichhörnchen, das sein gläsernes Knopfauge unerbittlich auf mich gerichtet hielt und dessen tschechischen Namen – veverka – ich nun von weit her wieder erinnerte wie den eines vor langer Zeit in Vergessenheit geratenen Freunds. Was, so fragte ich mich, sagte Austerlitz, mochte es auf sich haben mit dem nirgends entspringenden, nirgends einmündenden, ständig in sich selbst zurückfließenden Strom, mit veverka, dem stets in der gleichen Pose ausharrenden Eichhörnchen, oder mit der elfenbeinfarbenen Porzellankomposition, die einen reitenden

Helden darstellte, der sich auf seinem soeben auf der Hinterhand sich erhebenden Roß nach rückwärts wendet, um mit dem linken Arm ein unschuldiges,

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von der letzten Hoffnung verlassenes weibliches Wesen zu sich emporzuziehen und aus einem dem Beschauer nicht offenbarten, aber ohne Zweifel grauenvollen Unglück zu retten. So zeitlos wie dieser verewigte, immer gerade jetzt sich ereignende Augenblick der Errettung waren sie alle, die in dem Bazar von Terezín gestrandeten Zierstücke, Gerätschaften und Andenken, die aufgrund unerforschlicher Zusammenhänge ihre ehemaligen Besitzer überlebt und den Prozeß der Zerstörung überdauert hatten, so daß ich nun zwischen ihnen schwach und kaum kenntlich mein eigenes Schattenbild wahrnehmen konnte. Noch während ich vor dem Bazar wartete, hob Austerlitz nach einer Weile wieder an, hatte es leise zu regnen begonnen, und da sich weder der Inhaber des Ladenlokals, der als ein gewisser Augustýn Němeček ausgewiesen war, noch irgend jemand sonst zeigen wollte, bin ich schließlich weitergegangen, ein paar Straßen hinauf und hinunter, bis ich auf einmal, an der nordöstlichen Ecke des Stadtplatzes, vor dem sogenannten, von mir zuvor übersehenen Ghettomuseum stand. Ich stieg die Stufen hinauf und betrat den Vorraum, in dem hinter einer Art Kassentisch eine Dame unbestimmten Alters saß in einer lilafarbenen Bluse und mit einer altmodisch gewellten Frisur. Sie legte die Häkelarbeit, mit der sie beschäftigt war, beiseite und reichte mir, indem sie

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Figure 37 Photograph of Sebald, W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (München Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2001), p. 280.

The amateur photographs of things that correspond to what the narrator encounters in the narrative also suggest they are taken by the narrator, as do the photographs of those small tokens of the narrator's trips: the tickets and receipts, many of which are collected in Sebald's archive.[237] Indeed, film strips and digitalized dates on photographs in Sebald's archive suggest that many of the images were taken at the same time or in succession, suggesting that Sebald took them on journeys, visits, and wonderings corresponding to those described in the narrative.[238] I estimate that about twenty-five percent of Sebald's images are photographs that he took of things, places, and people. These photographs gesture to a world independent of

[237] DLA, MS Sebald, Die Ausgewanderten, folders 6, 11, Schwindel. Gefühle, folder 1.
[238] DLA, MS Sebald, Vershiedenes Fotos, folders 5, 13, Die Ausgewanderten, folders 2, 15.

Sebald's works whilst suggesting a singular perspective: a subjective selection of motives and of images. Without identifying the author as the narrator, the photographs nonetheless indicate Sebald's involvement in the construction of the narrator, which in turn identifies him as the source for the works' fiction. In an interview discussion of *Vertigo*, Sebald justifies its imaginative aspects, including passages about Stendhal and Kafka, by referring to the impact upon identity of the imagination and literary experiences: 'Our lives are also shaped by our own imagination, by the imagination of others.'[239] In relation to the painter Matthias Grünewald (c.1470-1528), whom Sebald writes about in his poetry collection *Nach der Natur* (1988), he contends: 'if you only have a few scraps of information about a certain sixteenth-century painter, if you are sufficiently interested, it nevertheless allows you to be present in that life or to retrieve it into the present, as it were.'[240] In other words, autobiography validates imaginative biography, especially when facts are scarce.

By combining biography and autobiography Sebald achieves one of the aspirations that Woolf sets for life-writing in 'The New Biography'. She commends Nicolson for including autobiography in *Some People*, Nicolson laughing at himself as much as at his subjects. Woolf did not take this step in her own ventures in biography: she is absent in the narrative of *Flush*, and despite her close relationship to Roger Fry, she only mentions herself twice in the biography (as a recipient of a letter from Fry).[241] Although Woolf was one of Sackville-West's lovers, neither does she include a version of herself in *Orlando*. If *Orlando* is considered a love letter, then the relationship between the sender and the receiver of the love letter is remarkably absent. Woolf did, however, consider including an ironical reference to herself in *Orlando*. Her manuscript reveals that the narrator would claim that 'Volumnia Fox (her real name was V. Woolf)' was 'only remembered' because Arnold Bennett had 'demolished' this 'poor scribbler' in one of his 'brilliant articles'.[242] Sebald does not, like Nicolson or Woolf, 'laugh' at himself, but he does suggest the narrator's limited perspective, which acts as a kind of self-criticism.

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[239] de Moor, 'Echoes from the Past', p. 352.
[240] Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', p. 42.
[241] Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry* (London: Hogarth Press, 1940), pp. 238, 267.
[242] Woolf, *Orlando: The Holograph Draft*, p. 252. Woolf appears as Volumnia Fox in Marjorie Strachey's novel about Bloomsbury, *The Counterfeits* (1927).

Sebald uses autobiography to demonstrate that 'the valid organization of things remains unknown', the message that Kracauer believed films could achieve by combining 'parts and segments to create strange constructs'. Woolf and Sebald do not create films, but their works are nonetheless 'strange constructs' in that they with their montage 'stir up the elements of nature'.[243]

Despite the skepticism that surrounds his images, Sebald's use of autobiographical elements seems to incite hagiography. Tim Wright, for example, who we saw earlier calling Sebald's image of a tree a 'phoney', is intrigued by the possibility that their paths might have crossed. Although the Associates from the Institute of Cultural Inquiry conclude that Sebald's images do not refer to 'a world "out there"', their endeavor to locate the images concedes a biographical approach, or at least yearning. Sebald has become a cult figure or even a mystical figure. In Gee's documentary *Patience After Sebald*, for example, Jeremy Millar claims that the features of Sebald's face materialise in the smoke left by the firework he lit on the side of the road where Sebald died on 14 December 2001. The photographs encourage 'the hunger of readers for the autobiographical' that Lessing experienced in relation to *The Golden Notebook*, 'a need for the literal, facts, the exact'. In the words of Lessing, 'Woolf truly said that of a hundred readers of a novel, only one will really care about the imaginative work a writer has put in: they want to know if the writer has "put herself in", and is that a portrait of Freddy or Jane?'[244] In works of life-writing, however, photographs also suggest the author's perspective and thus heighten awareness of the subjective, imaginative work. Autobiographical readings of Sebald's works do not negate their critical potential. Not only does this kind of reading consider Sebald's limited perspective, but as Bürger has observed in relation to Joseph Beuys, autobiographical popularity need not compromise the avant-garde project: although Beuys 'abandoned' himself to the media, his works remained 'esoteric, inaccessible even to those who

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[243] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Die Photographie', in *Das Ornament der Masse*, by Siegfried Kracauer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 21-39 (p. 39); Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 47-63 (pp. 62-3).
[244] Doris Lessing, *Walking in the Shade* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 306-7.

attempted to follow the self-commentaries of the artist'.[245] Sebald's commentaries can act as appendages to his works, but neither these nor the identification of images make the works whole. The way photographs transcend the autonomy of artworks can stimulate a sometimes-prurient interest in autobiography and biography while at the same time promoting radical agendas.

The Strangeness of Woolf's and Sebald's Constructs

Like Benjamin, Hubert Damisch argues photography must be critical in order to be art, but his emphasis is on photography's means of representation rather than its subject matter. He sees photography as deceptive because it makes the viewer think it is objective, natural, and neutral, but when photographs unsettle these expectations, he argues, they can qualify as art:

> Photography aspires to art each time, in practice, it calls into question its essence and its historical roles, each time it uncovers the contingent character of these things, soliciting in us the producer rather than the consumer of images.[246]

Woolf's and Sebald's photographs are art in both Benjamin's and Damisch's interpretations: they raise questions both about their subject matter and their own representation. Woolf's images signal their own appropriated and manipulated condition and Sebald plants doubt about his images' 'authenticity'. The photographs do not present themselves as objective, natural, or neutral, but their indexical relationship to their subjects is nonetheless crucial for the works' critical engagement with life. Woolf augments her critique of the aristocracy with indexical references to Sackville-West, and the indexical connection of Sebald's images to their subjects underpins his directive to probe history. Like the rest of the authors in this study, they create art, not only for art's sake, but for the sake of life.

With their montage of text and images, and across these media, of referential and non-referential claims, Woolf's and Sebald's works are more successful than many films in creating what Kracauer calls 'strange constructs'. For although films are technically constructed with montage (photographs put into succession to make videos, videos assembled to make films), the

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[245] Bürger, 'Everydayness, Allegory and the Avant-garde', pp. 160-1.
[246] Hubert Damisch, 'Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image', *October*, 5 (1978), 70-2 (p. 72).

transitions are often done so smoothly that the works become enclosed, hermetic, holistic entities. A book, on the other hand, is, as Lev Manovich writes, 'the perfect random-access medium', supporting both 'narrative forms such as novels' and 'database forms such as photoalbums'.[247] All the works in this thesis provide a sort of interface where the narration of text can meet the non-linear and non-hierarchical data of photographs. Illustrated books thus offer an ideal format for combining parts without synthesizing them, and for allowing the recipients time to appreciate the incongruence of the parts. Not only can books combine different media, those media also engage with the world in different ways. While text cannot escape interpretation in its representation of the world, and thus to an extent fiction, photographs will always have an indexical relationship to their subjects, even when they engage with fiction. Yet this indexical information is dumb information, no more and no less than that something once existed. By interweaving what they present as biographical and anti-biographical information, Woolf's and Sebald's narratives cast doubt about the identity of the subjects in the photographs, and as the photographs cannot themselves identify their subjects, despite portraying them in an incontestable manner, they solicit the reader's involvement.

[247] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2001), p. 233.

Conclusion: Observing the Author

> Among the many kinds of artists, it may be that there are some who are hybrid. Some, that is to say, bore deeper and deeper into the stuff of their own art; others are always making raids into the lands of others.[1]

The authors in this study are hybrid artists: they combine autobiography, biography, photographs, and paintings with devices associated with the novel. As novelists, they 'bore' deeper into 'the stuff of their own art' with their fiction, but they do so in 'the lands of others': biography and autobiography. Vladimir Nabokov gives beautiful form to his memories; Doris Lessing explores unverifiable memories; Gertrude Stein invents Alice B. Toklas's perspective on her life; Norman Mailer gives voice to Marilyn Monroe's unspoken impulses; Virginia Woolf expands imaginatively on Vita Sackville-West's life; and W. G. Sebald compounds and tweaks several lives at once. The inserted photographs, however, signal that they are works not just of art, but that they have concrete bearing on the world. Nabokov gives an aesthetic, but assertive account of pre-Revolutionary Russia that counters contemporaneous reports; Lessing offers an imaginative portrait of her mother that reads like a case study; Stein and Mailer present themselves as geniuses above and beyond their works; Woolf challenges the institution of aristocracy; and Sebald urges a more profound engagement with the past. Cutting across modernist and postmodernist divides, the works in this study not only make 'raids' into the lands of different art-forms; their emphatic anti-formalism also encourages more piercing 'raids' into the land of the living, amplifying the works' material reach and scope.

By inserting photographs into their works, the authors achieve an indexicality for their works that they can only yearn for in their writing. In his autobiography, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, Roland Barthes imagines his writing as the ink of a cuttlefish: 'I am writing this day after day; it takes, it sets: the cuttlefish produces its ink'.[2] But Barthes is not a cuttlefish, his writing does not physically emanate from his body, just as Jacques Derrida's pen is not a syringe, a fantasy this critic develops in his autobiographical text, 'Circumfession':

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[1] Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (London: Hogarth Press, 1934), p. 28.
[2] ['J'écris ceci jour après jour; ça prend, ça prend: la seiche produit son encre'] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), p. 166; Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 162.

> I always dream of a pen that would be a syringe, a suction point rather than that very hard weapon with which one must inscribe, incise, choose, calculate, take ink before filtering the inscribable, playing the keyboard on the screen, whereas here, once the right vein has been found, no more toil, no responsibility, no risk of bad taste nor of violence, the blood delivers itself all alone, the inside gives itself up and you can do as you like with it, it's me but I'm no longer there, for nothing, for nobody.[3]

As a physical emanation of its subject, a photograph provides precisely what a pen cannot: it is me in the photograph although I am no longer there. The only way in which writing approximates an indexical relationship to its subject is in its handwritten aspect. This is the indexical dimension we saw in Mailer's analysis of Monroe's handwriting, Stein's photographic reproduction of her manuscript page, Sebald's reproduction of Roger Casement's signature, and the signatures in the passports of Véra Nabokov and Sebald himself (Barthes also inserts numerous photographs of his handwriting into *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*).[4] As a trace of its subject, however, handwriting pales in comparison to photographs. It is not a trace of its content, and what it reveals about the writer seems limited (unless one, like Mailer, believes in graphology). The reproductions of handwriting rather seem to reinforce the referential prowess of photography, as these samples of handwriting are photographically reproduced, and the inability of language to have an indexical relationship to either the written subject or the writing subject.

With their ability to act as traces of their subjects, however, photographs inserted into literature not only draw attention to the existence of the subjects that they portray, but the existence of the authors behind the works. As images of the world seen through the lens of a camera rather than the eyes of the author, photographs let the reader bypass the author, but they also gesture to the author as a mediating figure, an agent (not the narrator) who has compiled

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[3] Jacques Derrida, 'Circumfession', in *Jacques Derrida*, by Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), pp. 3-316 (pp.10-2).

[4] Derrida's 'Circumfession' also includes a photograph that displays handwriting. 'מילה' (Hebrew for both 'circumcision' and 'word') is written on what the caption informs the reader is the 'cover of the first of the notebooks preparatory to a book on circumcision', suggesting the penmanship is Derrida's. Like *Speak, Memory*, *Under My Skin*, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, 'Circumfession' also shows the author writing. A caption to one of the photographs informs the reader that it was taken 'during the preparation of these pictures--and of this book': in the photograph, Derrida sits in front of a computer, his hands on the keyboard. Another photograph shows a computer screen with an open document called 'Circumfession'. Derrida, 'Circumfession', pp. 11, 35, 89.

the book (selected, inserted, and engaged with the photographs) and created the fictions of the writing. In the works studied here we see an acknowledgement of fiction, but also the appearance of an author: the person who ties it all together, on whom the authenticity of the work hinges, requiring a leap of faith for the reader. We saw how photographs of Sebald gestured toward his involvement in the construction of the narrator, and therefore also the subjective perspective of the text. In their combination of dissimilar elements (photography, fiction, and life-writing), all the works in this study make the presence of the authors particularly strongly felt. In his foreword to *Time of Our Time* (1988), a selection of previous work, Mailer reveals an approach to writing that like Sebald's emphasises the role of the author as observer and equates this with fiction:

> Nearly everything I have written derives from my sense of the value of fiction. There is little in this book, even when it comes under the formal category of non-fiction or argument, that has not derived, then, from my understanding of how one writes fiction. It has always seemed to me that our best chance of improving those private charts of our own most complicated lives, our unadmitted maps of reality, our very comprehension, if you will, of the way existence works, seems to profit most if we can have some little idea, at least, of the warp of the observer who passes on the experience. Fiction, as I use the word, is a reality that does not cohere to received axes of fact but is breathed in through the swarm of our male and female movements about one another, a novelistic assumption, for we perceive the truth of a novel by way of the personality of the writer. We tend to know, in our unconscious at least, whether the author is to be trusted, and where we suspect he is more ignorant than ourselves. That is the flavor of fiction. We observe the observer. Maybe that is why there is less dead air in fiction, and usually more light. It is because we have the advantage of seeing around a corner, and that is aesthetically analogous to a photograph of a mountain when early evening offers its back-lighting to the contours. Be certain the journalistic flashbulb is better for recording the carnage of an auto crash. But little else.[5]

For Mailer, gender is particularly important to the 'warp' of the observer, and we saw how this played out in *Marilyn*. In all the works, however, no matter the kind of photographs inserted, we see them gesture towards the 'personality' of an author, a nodal point where the fictions also converge. The photographs do not deliver the personality of the author, but they make evident its existence and authority. The photographs indicate contours of the author, aiding the observance of the observer, giving an expansive, luminous feeling to the reading experience. Inserted photographs and self-proclaimed non-referential narratives help create a triangulation

[5] Norman Mailer, 'Foreword', in *Time of Our Time*, by Norman (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. ix-xii (pp. xi-ii).

in which the reader positions him or herself in relation to both the work and the author, as Mailer writes, giving a feeling of 'seeing around the corner'. An aesthetic justification for the presence of the author can thus be added to the ethical imperative that Sebald felt and followed. In an article on Nabokov, 'Traumtexturen', which I discovered displays a photograph also inserted into *Austerlitz* (a photograph by Arwed Messmer of butterflies in a St. Petersburg Museum), Sebald argues that writers, in observing their past, become ghosts among their once-loved ones.[6] We can add that the writers studied in this thesis not only have a ghostly presence in their past with their works, but in the future in their encounters with readers.

[6] W. G. Sebald, 'Traumtexturen', *DU: Die Zeitschrift der Kultur*, 56 (1996), 22-5 (pp. 22, 24).

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Appendix: Blogs and Websites Relevant for Sebald's Works

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