on THE BLANK

Photography, Writing, Drawing

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ABSTRACT:

On the Blank: Photography, Writing, Drawing.

My visual practice is concerned with an articulation of the 'left-out-thing', remnant or *blank,* produced by and embedded within technologies of representation; which themselves echo the mechanisms through which an identity is formed. As automatic, 'empty apparatus', technological devices threaten as well as construct this self image.

This thesis proposes a new theoretical interpretation for art practices that engage with this empty space, or 'shifter'; understood as a form of punctuation around which meaning revolves. Indexing an object both absent and 'has been', the kind of mark-making that falls into this category can be identified – like an hysterical symptom – as the reproduction of an *unrepresentable sign*.

It is through my practical work, which explores the link between the photograph, the body, and the written sentence, that my contribution to the field of fine art practice is primarily offered. The way in which an image is put together, or a sentence is organised, can be considered as an exemplary definition of subjectivity in operation. Yet, as Ann Banfield (1987) has argued, after the invention of the lens, novelistic writing began to index a 'world without a self'. My visual work, which frequently looks like writing, attempts to construct a similar 'grammatical' form: one in which the "I" is absent.

The aim of my work is to stage or record this empty place, understood as a disturbance, impediment or failure within speech; as the text's undertow; and equated with a photographic – or optical - 'unconscious'. This failure, this fault in language, detected in the lapses, gaps and silences within a body of writing or in an image – a gap upon which such language systems are nevertheless hinged - is, I suggest, both the place where technology and the non-self are linked and, paradoxically, the site where the "I" is constituted.

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PART ONE

'… I was reminded of something, an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever.' [i]

'Nothing tells memories from ordinary moments; only afterwards do they claim remembrance.' [ii]

i   Fitzgerald, F.S, (1990) *The Great Gatsby*, Penguin, London, p106

ii   From the English translation of the film *La Jetée*, (1962) directed by Chris Marker, Video from Argos Films

The Spider Web Incident

When I was between nine and ten years old, glancing at my father's newspaper, I stumbled across an image that shocked me. Since then, every time I am reminded of this incident, I experience a sort of panic. It is as if a piece of my self 'cuts out' - my mind goes completely *blank*. This evocation has echoed through the years; as a kind of recurrent forgetfulness, it is both event and figure on which my practice is based.

As an artist, I am interested in the link between a sudden remembered event and a coincident moment of self-obliteration or blanking, and the (im)possibility of making a mark in relation to, or at the same time as, this moment. My visual work aims at representing something connected to the appearance or disappearance of the self, or with what Proust refers to as the *"intermittence"* [1] of the self; where selfhood is understood as something that has already been written; that writes, as repetition, automatically, but which is intercut or interrupted by something else, connected to the body, that cannot be written, that appears to exceed or fall short of representation; something that flickers on and off, that is sometimes there and sometimes not. The images I make, in which something fluctuating appears to be being recorded, mapped out or traced, have a kind of diagrammatic character, but they also lean towards that which is meaningless, unintelligible or illegible: a scribble, or a coded sign or message, but one in which gaps, lapses and silences play a component part.

What I saw in the newspaper, all those years ago, were two photographs accompanying an article on the effects of 'drug-taking' on a spider. Two different photographs side by side, two different 'instances' of the creature: one before and one after it had eaten a fly laced with LSD. The spider itself was in neither image, represented instead – or, *defined*, perhaps – by her web: one perfect and the other (after the 'drug-taking') a chaotic shambles. However, apart from the purpose of the photographs (that of terrifying any potential drug user into 'just saying no'), the question for me still remains: what terrified me about the image itself?

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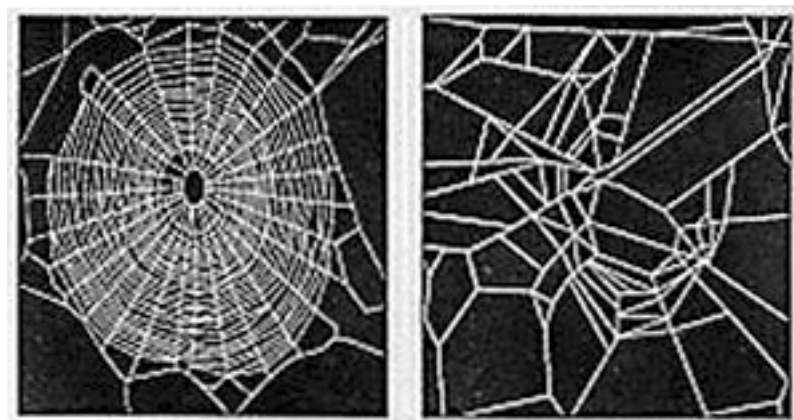
[1] "Les Intermittences du Coeur" was the original title for Proust's novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu,* in which he makes clear that the laws that define our sense of 'self', bound up with the 'intermittences of the heart', are linked to 'disturbances of memory', and connected to the body as well as to the emotions. Proust, M. (2002), *In Search of Lost Time, Volume IV: Sodom and Gomorrah,* Penguin, London, p159

What to call it? Fascination? No… what it produces in me is the very opposite of hebetude; something more like an internal agitation… the pressure of the unspeakable which wants to be spoken[2]

Clearly, I have been *marked* by this image.[3] And by that I mean something rather more complicated than the thought that I just 'can't forget it'. In fact, it seems to me as if there are two kinds of 'memory' at stake here. The first is of an everyday sort, narrative-based. Used in every attempt I make to describe an event, it is the memory I draw on in order to endlessly 'go on' about it. The second, which in fact precedes the first, is linked to the actual instance, the *moment* of remembering - and leaves me *lost for words*. Is the 'blanking' that occurs a remembering somehow co-joined to forgetting? Am I dealing with a memory that is simply out of reach – the problem being merely that I have a *bad* memory? Or is the experience connected to something radically different from anything that could have been memorised - committed to memory - in the first place? Is what occurs *beyond* memory? In other words, might there be an action, connected to ways in which I experience something past, that is not the same as a memory of it - an experience that, while resounding in the body, nevertheless remains cognitively inaccessible to me, and is thus *unrepresentable*?

In his book *Camera Lucida* (1980), Roland Barthes remarks that since the invention of photography one can 'see oneself (differently from in a mirror)', adding that he thinks it 'odd no one has thought of the disturbance (to civilisation) that this new action causes'[4]. Photography 'reproduces to infinity', as Barthes notes, 'what Lacan calls the Tuché, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real'.[5] As many commentators have pointed out, the photograph is an image that is also an imprint; an image that has been 'stamped out' through direct *contact* with reality – a reality which has, so to speak, been impressed upon it. It therefore, as Rosalind Krauss notes, belongs to that category of sign (established by C.S. Peirce)[6] as indexical. Photography's physical genesis 'seems to short circuit or disallow those processes of schematisation or symbolic intervention'[7] at work within other kinds of representations, such as paintings or drawings. In other words, photography disturbs civilisation because it evades or bypasses the artificial, culturally produced, representational systems that, for Lacan, are classified under the register of the Symbolic. Instead, as Barthes suggests, a photograph is *pinned* to the Real.[8]

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[2] Barthes, R. (2000), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p19
[3] I am deliberately echoing the opening sequence of Chris Markers film *La Jetée*. The film begins with the words 'This is a story of a man marked by an image from childhood.' The idea that one can be 'marked' by an image is explored more fully by Victor Burgin in his essay 'Marker Marked'. See Burgin, V. (2004), *The Remembered Film,* Reaktion Books, London.
[4] Barthes, R. (2000), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p12
[5] Ibid., p4
[6] Peirce, C.S. (1955), 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,' in *Philosophic Writings of Peirce*, Dover Publications, New York.
[7] Krauss, R. (1986), 'Notes on the Index' in *The Originality of the Avant Garde and other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, USA, p203
[8] The Real and the Symbolic registers, combined with that of the Imaginary, form Lacan's tri-partite system through which the subject experiences the world. The Symbolic order is that of language, communication and exchange and consists of an endless series of substitutable signifiers that slide along an associative chain. The Real is unsymbolisable, unrepresentable, unspeakable; it is everything

What is the relationship between something I keep remembering – yet cannot bring to mind - and these photographic records? Obviously, memory plays a part in all this, but not the kind of memory that Barthes describes as 'anamnesic'[9], out of which culture, history, and a sense of identity - 'selfhood' - is woven. Instead, as Barthes insists, what is encountered in the photograph is 'ecmnesic'[10] - outside of memory. 'Not only', he states, 'is photography never, in essence a memory […] but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter memory'.[11] Photography draws a blank. Yet it is also 'as certain as remembrance'[12], in the face of which 'words fail'.[13] If in describing the photographic affect as 'ecmnesic' Barthes is associating it with a kind of memory loss, it is one that can, however, be linked to its opposite: involuntary recollection.[14] Because, in fact, the ecmnesiac doesn't forget everything. Retaining a memory for events in the remote past, s/he suffers instead from a lack of a present. The past, as lack *in* the present, 'intrudes'[15]. Ecmnesia, then, can perhaps be thought of as a kind of selective forgetting; momentary blanks cause a breakdown of the unified 'self' that memory weaves together. As the novelist Debra Dean suggests, the experience could be thought of as 'like disappearing for a few moments at a time.'[16] Considered from this perspective, Barthes' photographic remembrance – which he opposes to culturally regulated memory or 'history' – is quite literally 'lost time'.

What links the operation of the photograph to that of 'remembrance', therefore, hinges on what photography points out about the constitution of the self - that it contains an element of something erratic or variable, something not entirely present. Put another way; the photographic process reproduces a situation where presence might be equated with absence. This is because, through the operation of the index, which, as remarked upon above,

outside the other two registers. The Imaginary register is connected to the self-image (i.e. to fantasy, to the imagination). In Lacanian theory, more on which below, identity resides in an image, established at the 'Mirror Stage', which is mediated by the (m)other through the Symbolic. So with regard to Barthes' assertion that photography has brought about a new way of seeing oneself - "differently than in a mirror": if, as Barthes implies, the photograph bypasses the Symbolic, then that which is 'civilised' within the image of the self is 'disturbed' by that which is reproduced by the photographic process.

[9] Barthes, R. (2000), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p65

[10] Ibid., p117

[11] Ibid., p90-91

[12] Ibid., p70

[13] Ibid., p109

[14] This 'remembrance' is memory that is always 'involuntary'. [Ibid., p70] In suggesting this Barthes is directly quoting Proust [See Proust, M. (2002), *In Search of Lost Time,* Volume IV: Sodom and Gomorrah*,* Penguin, London, p158].

[15] This idea comes from Elena Seymenliyska's review of *The Madonnas of Leningrad* by Debra Dean. [Guardian newspaper (01/-7/06)] The protagonist of Dean's novel is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, which effects memory in the here and now while often leaving memories of past events intact. In this way I am equating Barthes' ecmnesia with the affects of something like Alzheimer's; where the past (memory) is *lacking* in the present, and selfhood is replaced by pure consciousness, or 'being'. Indeed, as Freud argues, the two are incompatible: 'becoming conscious and leaving behind memory traces are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system… conscious arises *instead* of a memory trace.' [Freud, S. (1991) *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'*,* Penguin, London p296 (My emphasis)].

[16] Dean, D. (2006), *The Madonnas of Leningrad,* Fourth Estate, London, p5

bypasses any cultural (symbolic) system of language, physical presence is registered as 'meaninglessness' – or nothing.

I am suggesting that there is a relationship between the operation of the photograph and that of remembrance. Both bring about a loss of selfhood, an absence of self. In relation to my reaction to the spider web images, it seems, therefore, that it was precisely because these images were *photographs* rather than illustrations or drawings (as they perhaps could have been) that they had the capacity to disturb in the particular way that I have outlined above; a disturbance that Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, also registers. Yet again, although photographs, the images of the spider webs did have a kind of diagrammatic, illustrative, quality; the webs themselves were like automatic drawings, indexing a kind of *collapse* of 'spider-ness' (if you accept that the essence of a spider is her web). So was the disturbing quality of these images also connected in some way to their relation to the drawing, with this quality, combined with that which is intrinsic to the photograph (e.g. that it is an imprint) evoking the mark of something 'not made by the hand of man, *acheiropoietos*?'[17] The essence of the photograph[18] is that what you see in it has undeniably *been there*; the image, as Barthes insists, is 'extracted' by the action of light making contact with a chemically-treated surface, meaning that 'the thing of the past, by its immediate radiations… has really touched the surface which in its turn my gaze will touch.'[19]

And yet, it could be argued, it is this action, carried to a sort of (il)logical[20] conclusion, that was initially set in motion or cast (like the dice)[21] by the first mark. Michael Newman links the origin of drawing, which *traced* the object it sought to capture, to that of the first photographs, by suggesting that 'writing with light [photography] began by imitating drawing'.[22] If this is the case, as Newman suggests, drawing and photography might share the same 'condition', whereby the mark in or of the drawing stands for 'contact' with the thing represented - which

[17] Barthes, R. (2000), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p82. See also p80, where Barthes suggests that Photography presents us with a new 'experiential order of proof…a proof no longer induced: the proof-according-to-St.-Thomas-seeking-to-touch-the-resurrected-Christ.' Barthes describes the 'horror and fascination' that this proof evokes, and gives as an example a photograph of a slave market; 'I repeat: a photograph, not a drawing or engraving; [Barthes' reaction] came from this: that there was a *certainty* that such a thing had existed'. My own experience of horror and fascination was similarly a result of this photographic 'certainty'; although for me this certainty was combined with the terrifying presence of something (the spider) that, although still moving, was 'absent'.
[18] Certainly this photograph - taken in the late 1960's, early 70's - which would have been produced via a negative.
[19] Ibid., p81
[20] I call photography's 'conclusion' illogical, because by following (to the letter, perhaps) the desire to touch or to hold onto the Other (Butades daughter wanted to keep something of her lover for herself), the action of drawing with light ultimately pushes both self and other out of the picture altogether.
[21] Barthes will equate his concept of the 'Punctum' - a purely subjective event encountered in relation to a photograph - with a 'cast of the dice'. The encounter always occurs – like Proust's Remembrance or Lacan's Tuché - by accident or chance, to interrupt the normal flow of events. In the context of this thesis, the phrase 'cast of the dice' also evokes *Un Coup De Dés Jamais N'abolira Le Hasard*: a bookwork by Marcel Broodthaers, based on Stéphane Mallarme's poem of the same title, which influenced me in the making of my own artbook *On My nervous Illness,* which is documented in the final section of this piece of writing.
[22] Newman, A. (2003) (ed.), *The Stage of Drawing*, 'The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing' by Michael Newman, American Drawing Centre and Tate, London, p105

might not be the same thing as that which is being 'depicted'. Under these conditions - of being imprinted with that which it represents - the mark, like the photograph, might be in a position to challenge the category of representation itself; to exist, as Newman suggests (echoing Barthes), outside of it altogether, as a 'resemblance produced by *contact*, like a life cast or death mask, an image not made by human hands, a relic like the stain on a shroud.'[23]

Newman's essay takes as its starting point Pliny's claim that drawing "…began with tracing an outline round a man's shadow…"[24] In the shadow, cast on a wall by a lamp, the daughter of Butades recognized the essence of her lover and, at the same time, all that she would lose when he departed. It was this realization, as an encounter with that which is *already lost*, that precipitated the first mark; a mark that functioned, Newman suggests, 'like a memorial'.[25] So the lover's shadow, indexing the object of her desire (through her identification with it), was, as Butades' daughter gazed upon it, already a 'thing of the past'. Butades' daughter traces around her lover's shadow. She doesn't trace around her lover's body, she captures his *shadow*: his absence. 'If she could have', as Newman suggests, 'she might have taken a photograph'.[26] Instead she takes the place of the camera. Performing the same action, Butades' daughter produces an objective image 'that may act as a substitute'[27], out of that which is a mixture of the ephemeral, virtual, subjective and imaginary,[28] and that which has an indexical relation to that which caused it. This "photographic" process, as a methodology for creating an image, simultaneously establishes a chain in which all subsequent marks or traces might be linked, related by 'degrees of remoteness' from the original 'fleeting shadow'.[29] Hence, as Newman suggests, the mark - that which is both substitute and substitutable, like words in a language – also always contains something of the shadow; that which is irreducible, unintended, 'received from elsewhere'.[30] It is in this way that Newman envisages the possibility that the mark or drawing, in common with the photograph, 'names something inhuman'.[31]

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[23] Ibid., p105
[24] Michael Newman opens his discussion on the mark with a quote from Pliny's *Natural History*, which describes the story of Butades' daughter 'who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face, thrown by a lamp' See Newman, cited above: p93 and p106 *n2*). To return to Barthes' idea of 'touch', here the touch - or contact with - the body of the Other is also mediated by light. This is to suggest that, in an instance such as this, light itself becomes a sort of touch or mark that bypasses language.
[25] Newman, M, (2003), 'The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing' in *The Stage of Drawing*, American Drawing Centre and Tate, London, p93
[26] Ibid., p93
[27] Ibid., p93
[28] i.e. the shadow of her lover was bound up with her fantasy.
[29] Ibid., p96 Some of the themes that develop below are based on Lacan's ideas about language as something discontinuous, punctuated or *punctured* by gaps or blanks and set in motion, accidentally perhaps - like the first mark - by desire, by the anticipation of loss, which triggered a kind of chain reaction. In this way, words and sentences may also share the characteristics of marks that, as Michael Newman suggests, echo - or are in some way derived from - the original or 'first' mark (or signifier). This also implies that all marks have that which is inhuman embedded within them – as might the words in the chain of signifiers that a language consists of.
[30] Ibid., p93
[31] Ibid., p97

The art historian Geoffrey Batchen also makes links between the origins of photography and drawing by taking, however, the reverse point of view to that suggested by Newman.[32] Batchen suggests that it might be possible to read, in the way this origin is articulated in one of the earliest photographs - Hippolyte Bayard's *Le Noyé* (*Self Portrait of a Drowned Man*, 1840) - 'something of Derrida's commentary on representation in general, assumed to be a complicitous entanglement of sight and blindness, absence and presence, life and death, construction and ruin'.[33] For Derrida, the ruin is related to 'the opening where one cannot see':[34] the ruin coincides with blindness. (In photography, the place from which you cannot see - this blind*spot* - is precisely that which is occupied by the camera). And yet, as Martin Jay points out, for Derrida *all* representation – and particularly drawing - coincides with and indeed '*necessitates* a moment of non-seeing [blindness] in which the artist depicts the ruins of a previous vision. Or rather, there is no initial vision that is not already a ruin.'[35] This idea, Jay proposes, can be considered as 'a visual analogy' to Derrida's argument that nothing exists 'prior to its representation'; that which you cannot see is that which was there *before* language or representation. Interestingly, as Jay adds, 'the delay and temporalization produced by the memory of the earlier trace [as or *of* nothingness] also means that there is no specular identity, especially when the artist paints him - or her-self.' [36] What about the *photographic* self-portrait? These questions evoke Barthes' idea of a 'disturbance' to the 'mirror' (or self) image, brought about by the invention of the photograph; in bypassing representation or culture, photography bypasses the self. This is to suggest that the camera records the self as a 'nothing there' – a point that Bayard was making in his photographic self portrait, which showed him with his eyes closed, seemingly dead, but also unseen, passed over - he felt his part in photography's invention was being ignored. More importantly, which he in fact stated was its aim, Bayard's image appears to show him as a decaying corpse.[37] It seems possible to read in this image both that which for Derrida is a ruin *and* that which Barthes refers to as 'a temporal hallucination', where the object in the image is both absent and 'has been'.

In the case of photography, as Derrida notes, it is 'all about the return of the departed';[38] the photograph always contains a trace of the thing that was once there; a trace that, although irreducible, is only perceivable between, or at the intertwining of, vision and blindness. In

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[32] This is to suggest that the photographic process might be embedded with that which led to the origin of drawing rather the other way round, which counters Newman's suggestion that photography 'began by imitating drawing'.

[33] Batchen, G (1999), *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, USA, p172.

[34] Derrida's argument is more fully developed in the book produced to accompany an exhibition he had curated at the Louvre in 1990. When planning the theme of this exhibition he played with the name of the museum with the phrase *"L'ouvre ou on ne pas voir"*. See Derrida, J (1993) *Memoirs of the Blind, The Self Portrait and Other Ruins,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

[35] Jay, M, (1944) *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in 20th Century French Thought*, University of California, p522

[36] Ibid. [All the italics in this paragraph are mine.]

[37] Batchen, G (1999), *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, pp157- 173

[38] Derrida, J. (1988), "The Deaths of Roland Barthes' in Hugh J Silverman, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty*, p34

other words, for Derrida, the ruin is present in the photographic image as something that, in visual terms, is inconsistent; something that hesitates or flickers between the visible and the invisible; something that may or may not form into a tangible image or readable thing. This is to suggest that what we encounter in the kind of drawing that shares the condition of the photograph (or vice versa), is the imprint, trace or *shadow* of something from which we may be excluded, that we cannot properly access, cannot categorise, and therefore cannot 'see'.

Following this line of thought, Barthes' idea of *encounter* as indexical contact with 'the thing of the past' can be equated, via Derrida's evocation of the ruin, to blindness. It is this 'contact' that cuts out or eliminates vision, and therefore the self. Identification, based on seeing and naming, is made impossible – there is nothing there on which to base an identification. Thus, as Newman has suggested, is a challenge to representation brought about; through the photographic process (and that of certain kinds of mark making) a record is made of 'nothing there': something either isn't represented or doesn't represent, or remains outside of representation altogether, as absence or ruin.[39]

This is interesting to me in relation to the feeling I have that my own practice is based on an original encounter with something I cannot quite remember and which, probably, I didn't actually 'see'. To what extent, for instance, did the photographic images of the spider webs actually contain (or reflect) *in themselves* the blindness and memory loss – as ruin of the self – that I experienced in relation to them? Entirely missing the message "drugs wreck your brain", did I register instead something intrinsic to the photograph that echoed something within - as a component of - the self? If so, what is this thing in any representation – directly related to my 'self' - that is missed, passed over, unseen or invisible? What is it that might be present as an absence; both constantly resolving (being 'made' or appearing) and dissolving, collapsing into ruin? In the case of photography, as Derrida notes, it is 'all about the return of the departed';[40] the photograph always contains a trace of the thing that was once there; a trace that, although irreducible, is only perceivable between, or at the intertwining of, vision and blindness. In other words, for Derrida, the ruin is present in the photographic image as something that, in visual terms, is inconsistent; something that hesitates or flickers between the visible and the invisible; something that may or may not form into a tangible image or readable thing. This is to suggest that what we encounter in the kind of drawing that shares the condition of the photograph (or vice versa), is the imprint, trace or *shadow* of something from which we may be excluded, that we cannot properly access, cannot categorise, and therefore cannot 'see'. It is to this place - to the trace as 'flicker' - that I am drawn as an artist; and to the two distinct types of drawing style that occur there: the mark and the scribble.

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[39] Compare Bayard's action with that of Butades' daughter. In Bayard's case he photographs *himself* as shadow – a ghost or shade – and in doing so erases himself. (His self-portrait is as a drowned – and therefore absent - man.)
[40] Derrida, J. (1988), "The Deaths of Roland Barthes' in Hugh J Silverman, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty*, p34

By *mark* I mean both that which is indexically linked to something inhuman, outside the range of words in a language, but also that which, in contrast, *marks out*, maps and structures space, the mark as diagram, as the 'variations of the subjectifying structure'[41] that point to - or speak of - our position in language. The scribble - perhaps closer to the shadow - is everything that falls short of this kind of articulation; where something else, some kind of refusal or inability to speak, some *fault* in speech, is being registered.[42] The photograph, as sign that can be classified as both indexical and symbolic[43], may be the site at which these two 'drawing' styles meet. Indeed, as Susan Sontag has noted, there are occasions when the photograph can more appropriately be classified as a scribble; in the novels of W. G. Sebald for instance. His use of uncaptioned photographic images function, Sontag suggests, 'like the squiggles in Tristram Shandy … [as] …insolent challenge to the sufficiency of the verbal.'[44] It seems to me that the "before and after" photographs of the spider webs also demonstrate, perhaps even act out, these two positions; one of speech, of the speaking subject, the other of something outside of that, something that hovers on the threshold of that which cannot register; that is inexpressible, unrepresentable or invisible. This is because, on top of what the photograph itself may or may not have pointed out to me about the nature of 'selfhood' (and its potential absence) the 'image' still remained. Did I see the marks in the photograph, particularly in the image of the unmade or ruined web, as some sort of 'print out' of the spider's loss of memory; as (in linking memory with selfhood) an indisputable record of its *non*-being? If so, what during the activity of spinning had remained of the spider? What was still there, still moving, as empty echo of the 'web builder'? Perhaps what shocked me, evidenced by the photograph of what the spider had 'drawn', was the realisation that something that I might have assumed had at least some basic level of 'consciousness', could carry on automatically; weaving, writing, drawing - even after it had 'lost its head'.

The spider draws the thread from her body. Her movements are compulsive (she knows not what she does) and through these movements she weaves a net; also mnemonic device. The net is a trap - she consumes all she catches there. The spider's web is both her habitation and the mark, trace or notation[45] of her being; through it she can be identified. The web is also therefore her self-portrait - a mirror of her presence.[46] And while it is difficult to

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[41] Lacan, J. (1994), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, London, p109
[42] Andrew Brown links the scribble to the psychoanalytic concept of trauma and suggests that both are 'figures of writing', in which the illegible and inexpressible are somehow preserved. [Brown, A, (2002) *Roland Barthes: The Figures of Writing,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, p278]
[43] Peirce, C.S. (1955) *Philosophic Writings of Peirce*, Dover Publications, New York, p106
[44] Sontag, S. (2000), *A Mind in Mourning*, The Times Literary Supplement, February 25th 2000, p3 For Sterne himself, as Paul Goring has remarked, 'the legibility of the body and the body's reliability as an index of [that which escapes or exceeds linguistic description or utterance;] meaning/character/soul', was a recurrent subject.' Examples of this would include the heart rate or pulse, the blush or stammer etc. [Goring's notes for *A Sentimental Journey* by Lawrence Sterne, Penguin Classics, p126]
[45] These three terms are more clearly differentiated in Michael Newman's essay *The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing*, cited above. Although I am grouping them together in a more general way, I still want to retain Newman's idea of something 'inhuman' embedded within them; ie that these 'marks… ' etc. might contain or be linked to something unintended, 'received from elsewhere'.
[46] Continuing along the lines of the previous footnote, this implies that the spider's 'presence', as mirror image or self portrait, also contains something 'received from elsewhere'. As I will discuss in more detail

work out what the scientists performing these experiments thought a spider might have in common with a human, for the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, it is more straightforward. Memory has its laws – Remembrance, on the other hand, is characterised by its law*less*ness, its status as something 'out of bounds'. Thus, like the marks which 'rain' from the painters brush, what falls from the spider is not the result of a set of decisions, based on knowledge it has acquired 'culturally'; the web is formed, not out of *choice*, but from what Lacan insists is 'something *else... If a bird were to paint', he suggests, 'would it not be by letting fall its feathers, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting fall its leaves?'[47] What the spider does is completely natural - the movement has no relation to any 'human' activity.

Note: James Joyce used to do a little dance he called 'the spider' whenever he was suffering from writer's block.

And so, although they appear to be the opposite of cultural production (of representations or artifice) it might be worth considering the spider web images in relation to the practice of art - to consider them, perhaps, *as* art. Indeed, this depiction or trace[48] of something like 'subjective absence', this demonstration of loss of control or 'crisis' of the subject (or of just being plain 'out of it') would not necessarily look out of place in something like George Bataille's philosophical/ anthropological journal *Documents*,[49] which included reproductions of artworks as well as commentary upon them, or in the Surrealist publication *Minotaure*, where Roger Caillois published his famous essay on the Praying Mantis (an insect that can continue to perform life-like acts, including the sex act, even after decapitation)[50] and where Lacan published his early study on psychosis, citing the example of the infamous Papin sisters, who tore out their employers' eyes.[51] In other words, this newspaper image of the spider webs raises questions about the way in which photography is particularly suited, not just for the capturing of events (or 'being') *as absence*, but to the staging of them also. Why is this? Why (arguably) would this 'idea' not work quite so well as a painting? The answer, as I have suggested above, has something to do with the fact that the photograph contains something *in addition* to that which can be classified as an image. The photograph is at once a representation and an indexical mark. At once a readable, meaningful, image and therefore a part of culture – that which is human - the photograph also contains something that evades all

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in the second section – under the subheading *"I am here" as Photographic Noeme* - this applies to any attempt at the representation of (self) presence (which is further complicated by the temporal delay hinted at by Martin Jay, above)

[47] Lacan, J. (1994), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, London, p114 (My emphasis).

[48] The spider's web is not a representation, it is the thing itself. Yet it also 'depicts', so it may be quite appropriate to consider it in relation to art practice, to the production of images. Furthermore, although it seems at first that it cannot be classified as a 'trace', spider webs do follow or duplicate a pattern; the design has, so to speak, already been written. The web is automatically reproduced (drawn) according to some innate rule that precedes the individual spider. In this way the spider copies or traces its web.

[49] This publication - which ran for 15 issues - and the method it used of juxataposing disparate cultural production, was the basis for the exhibition Undercover Surrealism, Hayward Gallery, London, 2006.

[50] Le Minotaure 5 (1934)

[51] Le Minotaure 3-4 (1933)

that: the photograph traps or is imprinted with that which is inhuman. Flickering between the visible and the invisible, the photograph confronts us with that *within* the image itself that is unsymbolisable or absent; where an unrepresentable reality, beyond words, co-exists alongside that which is recognisable as an image.

Epilogue: Curious to see if this insistent memory was false or real, I recently visited a newspaper archive and, after a little detective work, found the original article on microfiche, which also gave me the date of the newspaper in which it appeared: October 4th 1971. Once I had this information I could buy a copy of the paper from one of the many companies that stock old newspapers for sale as souvenir or gift. It currently lies on my desk. Here, now, is the thing that triggered something then. It is almost a relief to have it at last (for myself). And while it is no longer the thing it was, it is all that remains of it. When I look at it I know that something of it, something from it (yet other to it) triggered something which echoes within me now; something that I claim to remember, indeed cannot forget, even though I cannot bring to mind exactly what it was (or is). The newspaper functions merely as evidence, but nothing else – it no longer causes any anxiety.[52] I have the article before me but it does not – or it does no longer – catch me out. However, what still interests me about it, and as a theme explored in my practice, revolves around the question of how this event, or indeed any event, can or cannot be recalled or retold, can or cannot be brought into (spoken, written, pictorial) language. What is the relation between this kind of 'speechlessness' and photography? Photography, as the above discussion indicates, shows us something about the limits of representation. Perhaps what photography points to - by replicating this state of affairs - is that certain things, even those tied up with something as seemingly real as one's own personal history, remain beyond representation, resist integration into language. If so, in what way can an artist – especially one whose practice is based (as I claim mine is) on the staging *or writing* of an autobiography - respond to this situation?[53]

Recall: Ruin

The original event; 'my' event - of encountering the photographs of the spider webs - is in the past, its expression is in the past 'perfect' tense. 'The past is past' as Jean-Luc Nancy announces[54]. But what of its echo? The past, as Nancy continues, is 'available to memory only on the understanding that memory itself constantly collapses into an immemorial from

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[52] To do this, as Barthes notes, the 'evidential' needs to be combined with the 'exclamatory…"Ah! This!"', where "This" is equated with 'void'. See *Camera Lucida*, cited above, p6 and p113.
[53] Since writing the above a further footnote is required: I decided to frame the front page of the newspaper for my PhD examination, which followed the submission of the written thesis, but felt that I could perhaps manage to find another copy in a slightly better condition. This I indeed managed to do, but when it arrived in the post I discovered – or remembered - that in the 1970's The Guardian newspaper had two versions for each day; the London and the Manchester editions. Each were laid out differently, using different headlines or in some instances completely different stories. Now I was torn – I had no way of knowing which version was the one I had seen. Either *Spiders Take a Tangled Trip* or *Oh What a Tangled Web they Weave*. I framed both – side by side. Somewhere in the gap between these two front pages lies the 'truth' – importantly, however, the photographs were the same.
[54] Nancy, JL (2003) 'The Taciturn Eternal Return' in *Tacita Dean: Essays*, Steidle, Germany.

which nothing returns, ever.'[55] Is there is no response? Nothing left-over? As Nancy implies, what is gone is gone. But what about the use of remembrance – for example in Proust - in order to generate a work of art? Is what happens in remembrance *beyond* memory – somehow outside of memory – and also therefore outside of the self, beyond language? The past perfect – by which tense I must recall an event that occurred thirty years ago – rightly represents, as Nancy insists, 'what has been done, executed, with no possibility of addition or extension'. Yet, as Nancy continues, 'it also refers to the irremediable loss whose disappearance *continues to resonate* like the sound of a key dropped into a bottomless well'. The essence of this past 'continues unuttered, remains unspoken, which means both that it has been passed over in silence (implied? unheard? mute? this goes unsaid) and that it consists precisely in staying unspoken.[56]' If outside of speech, yet nevertheless now, here, present, what form can its expression take? Perhaps the remembering of it, as *remembrance*, requires a different tense?

'The past is past.' Of course, as Nancy continues, 'there is such a thing as recall, but "recall" itself is a call that clearly has no addressee, that is deprived of a destination.' For Nancy, 'the recall of the past always opens, irresistibly, onto an endless distance and onto an abyss'. Here, 'two simultaneous testimonies' are offered: 'on the one hand, there was this presence there; on the other, there is here, now, only the past of the "there was".'[57] The context for Jean-Luc Nancy's remarks, above, which evoke Proust's Remembrance as well as Roland Barthes' meditations on the photograph, is a commentary on the artist Tacita Dean. Dean utilises the medium of film and photography to project relics of the past – ruined buildings, a lost boat, some ancient trees – into the present tense.[58] Indeed, the presence of something that is at once past yet insistently here now – with this, surely, a contradiction - something that perhaps counters speech - is, as Barthes insists, 'the very essence' of the photograph[59]. The past of the photograph occurs as a disturbance in the present; through, as Barthes observes, a 'superimposition'. As a layering over and possible disfiguring or marking of one thing by another, the past coexists with and is, as it were, seared by 'reality' which has, it seems, a complicated relation to the present; is the 'not past' bit of the photograph. [I]n

[55] Curators of the exhibition *Stalking with Stories* (apexart, New York, 2007) Antonia Majaca and Ivana Bago draw on the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's essay *Idea of Prose* for their definition of the immemorial 'as that which "skips from memory to memory without itself ever coming to mind [and which] is, properly speaking, the unforgettable." This immemorial, or unforgettable' is, as the curators suggest, 'an unconscious element that infiltrates the conscious memory and creates an involuntary memory. As Agamben further explains, "The memory that brings back to us the thing forgotten is itself forgetful of it… [it is] from this that its burden of longing comes: an elegiac note vibrates so enduringly in the depth of every human memory that, at the limit, a memory that recalls nothing is the strongest memory." Located in the space between remembrance and forgetfulness, the conscious and unconscious, the immemorial brings to mind another concept, that of modernist nostalgia – a future oriented longing for something that never existed.' (From exhibition notes, apexart, ISBN 1-933347-21-X.) I would place this idea of a 'future oriented longing' alongside Nancy's 'return.'
[56] Ibid (no page numbers). [My emphasis.]
[57] Ibid., (no page numbers).
[58] Dean's film *The Green Ray* demonstrates the staging of something – as a record – that may or may not actually be (or have been) there.
[59] Barthes, R. (1972) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Jonathan Cape, London, p76

Photography', as Barthes writes, 'I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. And this thing, from which the image is cast, is, as Barthes insists, both 'irrefutably present, and yet already deferred'. As a real thing combined with a temporal delay; 'photography can be expressed', reduced to, the "That-has-'been." Barthes designates a word for this unit of language; it is Photography's *noeme*; a term that evokes 'name' but evades it also.[60]

The past is past. Yet the photograph problematises this perfect, simple, 'past-ness'. As 'irrefutable record' of something that *was* there, nevertheless the photograph cannot remain in the past. As 'reality in the past state [it is] at once the past and the real.'[61] In addition, as Barthes claims, the photograph has the capacity to puncture the experience of looking with something immediate, something that prevents it from being consigned to history, something outside or in excess of that which is channelled through social, cultural, discourse: a 'detail', simultaneously 'detonator', 'explosion', 'the passage of a void'. This private, subjective encounter that is untranslatable (neither transformable nor transferable), that is a confrontation with a 'partial object', linked to the self-image,[62] Barthes labels the Punctum. The Punctum, Barthes suggests, is close to 'what Lacan calls the Tuche, the occasion, the Encounter'[63]; it captures something real in a contingent detail. It also, as I will discuss in more depth later, punctuates that which would otherwise be meaningless or, rather, outside of meaning altogether; it hints at an intimate, private grammar that directs meaning away from any shared discourse and towards something that is aimed at the individual - like an arrow. In Barthes analysis, the Punctum of the photograph is outside history, beyond that which cultural. It is also in some way outside of vision - 'once there is a Punctum, a blind field is created'[64] - as well as unavailable to speech: 'words fail'.[65]

As 'the return of what cannot come again'[66], might Jean-Luc Nancy's 'recall' be equated with Barthes' Punctum; with the contingent detail of a photographic moment? Both 'recall' and Punctum combine a temporal paradox (Barthes' simultaneity of the past and the real, Nancy's 'here, now, there is only the past of the there was') with a difficulty of representation, a failure of language. Writing on the subject of remembering, and basing their discussions around a confrontation with the photographic medium, both Nancy and Barthes evoke a kind of infinite repetition or emptiness; Nancy describes it as 'an echo without sound'; Barthes as a 'floating flash [that] cries out in silence.' Is this problematisation of remembrance bound up, therefore, with the idea that it has something *in common* with the operation of the photograph? That remembrance is itself in some way 'photographic'? If so, might the common factor be, as

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[60] Ibid., p76
[61] Ibid., p82
[62] Ibid., p 43: 'To give examples of the Punctum is …*to give myself up'*. In the Punctum, Barthes implies, he finds – or loses - a piece of himself.
[63] Ibid., p4
[64] Ibid., p57
[65] Ibid., p109
[66] Nancy, JL, 2003, 'The Taciturn Eternal Return' in Tacita Dean: *Essays*, Steidle, Germany. Pages unnumbered.

Nancy asserts, that the recalled event cannot be spoken? Is there a relation - a fundamental incompatibility - between the photographic and speech? 'The photograph does not call up the past', Barthes states, and adds, in parenthesis, that there is 'nothing Proustian in a photograph[67]'. However, it triggers remembrance, 'just as Proust experienced it one day in an involuntary and complete memory.'[68] This apparent contradiction underpins the distinction that Barthes is making between remembrance and memory, a distinction which echoes that drawn between the photograph as 'Studium'[69] (everything that is learnt, received, from culture) and the photographic Punctum - everything outside of that. It also hints at another opposition, that between modes of remembering and forms of forgetting.[70]

The Camera: Language and Photography's "Disturbance"

The difference between memory, bound up with selfhood - with one's self image and the identity you have constructed for yourself - and remembrance (which, as I will argue, is connected to the individual but outside of any culturally processed narrative, is in fact outside any mode of representation at all) can be considered in relation to the tripartite structure through which, in Lacanian terms, the subject experiences the world; through the opposition that Lacan makes between the Symbolic and Imaginary registers and that of the Real. Essential to being, the Real is nevertheless inassimilable to any system of representation or expression and is therefore beyond the realm of the other two registers. Interestingly, in the section headed 'The Topic of the Imaginary'[71], from *Seminar One*, Lacan proposes the camera as a model for understanding the Symbolic system. The way a camera works and the objects (images) it produces could be considered as equivalent to the system of language, to the way that language generates meaningful things – in the form of words, for example. In this seminar Lacan stresses the importance of the Symbolic in allowing something imaginary to appear 'in the world'. As he points out, the difference between an objective thing and a subjective image is not always obvious. He reminds us of the sight of a rainbow, which differs from a photograph of a rainbow. A rainbow is not a tangible thing, it is just an illusion, a virtual image; there is nothing to which the rainbow corresponds in reality. However, the camera reads it as something objective, it converts it into a thing. Like the camera, language also leads to the creation of apparently objective images. Language, like the camera, can make an 'object' out of something that exists only as an idea, a subjective image, concept or fantasy.

[67] Barthes, R. (1972) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Jonathan Cape, London p82 See also page 45 however, where, in a-round-about way, Barthes asserts that it is the Punctum that is 'Proustian', (although even that also has something 'less Proustian' about it!)
[68] Ibid., p70
[69] Ibid., p26
[70] Barthes' use of the terms memory/ remembering/ remembrance/ etc. is a bit inconsistent; he never ties things down on one side or the other. I focus instead on the distinction he makes between the terms anamnesis and ecmnesia, where remembrance is 'ecmnesic' (p117), aligned with the Punctum, the Real, and anamnesis (p65) is the operation of memory, aligned with the Studium; that which is learnt or inherited from culture and is therefore part of the Symbolic system.
[71] Lacan, J. (1991) The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book One: Freud's Papers on Technique, Norton, London.

In order to demonstrate the importance of the Symbolic position for the Subject, Lacan introduces the experiment 'of the inverted bouquet'.
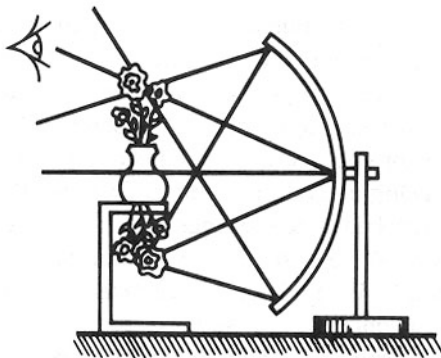
The experiment of the inverted bouquet

As he explains: 'A spherical mirror produces a real image. To each point of a light ray emanating from any point on an object placed at a certain distance, preferably in the plane of the sphere's centre, there corresponds, in the same plane, through the convergence of the rays reflected on the surface of the sphere, another luminous point - which yields a real image of the object.'[72] Bearing this in mind, Lacan asks his students to imagine that they have in front of them a box, hollow on one side, placed on a stand, at the centre of the mirrored half-sphere. 'On the box', suggests Lacan, 'you will place a vase, a real one. Beneath it, there is a bouquet of flowers. So, what is happening? The bouquet is reflected in the spherical surface, meeting at the symmetrical point of luminosity. Consequently, a real image is formed';[73] an image consisting of the reflection of the bouquet of flowers that, *combined* with the real vase, appears as a bunch of flowers in a vase. But this image can only seen from the correct viewing position, where the rays of light from the mirror converge. Lacan uses this experiment to explain the conjunction of the Real and the Imaginary; to get an image, you need to include something of the Real within it – and the eye needs to be in a certain position from which to see this image. In terms of language, meaning, this position corresponds to that provided by the Symbolic, by the subject's entry into language and, subsequently, the world of speech.

In Lacan's model, an image consists of the Real and the Imaginary *plus* the Symbolic, which puts the eye into the correct position to see it. Indeed, the experiment offers an analogy for the way that - although it is never directly accessible - we can form an image of the Real. The Imaginary is understood as the container for the Real and vice versa, with an image - an identifiable signifying thing - only possible when the subject takes up a certain position. The eye in the diagram above can therefore be substituted for the 'I' in language; the Subject that

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[72] Ibid., p77
[73] Ibid., p77-78

has taken up a position in the Symbolic order. If you don't have this position, then you are not a Subject. The ability to adopt a Symbolic position, to take a place in language, means "I've got an image", and the chaotic impulses - the stuff from the Real - beyond our control or access, can be contained by this image and mastered. The Real – as the cause of desire at the heart of language - can never be symbolised. If we encountered it directly it would be deadly; annihilating our self image, it would put us back into an undifferentiated world. As Lacan suggests, 'for there to be an illusion, for there to be a world constituted, in front of the eye looking, in which the Imaginary can include the Real and, by the same token, fashion it, in which the Real also can include and, by the same token, locate the Imaginary, one condition must be fulfilled - as I have said, the eye must be in a specific position, it must be inside the cone [the rays of light that converge to form the image]. If it is outside this cone, it will no longer see what is imaginary, for the simple reason that nothing from the cone of emission will happen to strike it. It will see things in their real state, entirely naked, that is to say, inside the mechanism, a sad, empty pot, or some lonesome flowers, depending on the case.'[74]

The optical image, as real thing created by the lens, parallels the 'real thing' created by language such as a name or word. The naming of things, this division of the world into separate identifiable things simultaneously creates a relation to the subject of an Other, who is recognised as such. I will return later to the relation that language has to the 'call' to the Other, however the comments above lead to a consideration of the ways in which a human being can perhaps *fail* to take up the 'correct' position in the Symbolic order, and also to the suggestion that this position - the only one from which to speak - is not always an ideal or a comfortable one. Finally, we should also note that Lacan's experiment doesn't describe the photograph, the photographic print. As Barthes couldn't stop noticing, the photograph is not 'just' an image – it is also an imprint of a real thing. Some sort of residue, or stain. What you see in the photograph, he argues, is not a mirror image (it has not been mediated through the Symbolic, or at least not entirely). The photograph reveals something to us, but what it points to is nothing other than a mode of looking that is empty. The camera's 'look' is a look that doesn't see. In this way, photography causes a rupture of selfhood, between the image of the self and its imprint (by doubling, not mirroring) which can threaten or overwhelm the subject. Indeed it is only since the photograph that we glimpse this double as it appears 'entirely naked'; unfiltered by the Symbolic.

Anxiety

Roland Barthes published *Camera Lucida* in 1980. (Shortly after it appeared in the bookshops he was killed in a car accident.) Written in the aftermath of his mother's death in 1977, the book, as Graham Allen suggests, could perhaps be regarded as 'a wholly personal discourse of mourning'[75] with this over and above its role as a text on which to reliably build a theory of

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[74] Ibid., p80
[75] Allen as quoted in James Elkins response to Michael Fried. Elkins, J. (2005) 'What Do We Want

photography. However, it is important to note that the book was also written in the wake of Barthes' 1977-78 seminar, *The Neutral,* and would have taken shape within the time frame of his following seminar, *Preparation of the Novel.* The 'Neutral', as Rosalind Krauss asserts, was not a new concept for Barthes but a return to what she proposes as his fundamental 'fantasy' (located, perhaps, in his search for a "third language"); to which his teaching had 'held steady' from its beginnings; in a 'trajectory that took him from *Writing Degree Zero,* with the zero degree an early version of "*le neutre*", through all the rest of his books.'[76] In *Preparation…* Barthes expressed a desire to make the transition from 'notation' to 'novel'[77] laying bare his desire in a lecture delivered at the College de France in October 1978, the title of which 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure', directly quotes the opening sentence of Proust's *A La Recherché Du Temps Perdue.* Situated in these contexts, *Camera Lucida* could therefore be regarded as a textual synthesis of the desire to write novelistically (to write fiction) and the desire to produce a new ('Third') form (which would itself have some critical currency). As I will argue, however, Barthes was also looking for a form that would somehow echo the operation of the photograph. Indeed the book, as he maintains from the start, is triggered by a feeling that, for him, the as yet unidentified 'essential feature' that distinguishes photography from any other type of image - yet which also makes it 'unclassifiable' - *corresponded* to a discomfort he had 'always suffered' in regard to his position within language; the place from which he felt able to speak. Perhaps the position (as a writer) that he had found himself in when he came to write *Camera Lucida* conflicted with the 'fantasy' hinted at by Krauss; a conflict that, as he himself confesses early on in the text, he experiences as an 'uneasiness… of being torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical.'[78] Barthes identifies something within the photograph (within the operation of photography) that echoes this discomfort, this impediment to *free speech* – a speech that, in the ideal world, might *combine* the two languages and enable him to speak with both; to speak with two voices *simultaneously*; the general, shared, voice of culture, from which his criticism emerges or is formed, and the singular expressive voice, something that resists the already spoken aspect of culture that causes his unease.[79] That, for Barthes, the essential feature of the photograph can be linked to something connected to the self; to the fantasy, suggests that *Camera Lucida* has a third component; one that consists of a theory of the subject while being also a performance *of* subjectivity; of being trapped in language. Indeed,

Photography to Be? A Response to Michael Fried' *Critical Inquiry, Vol 31.*
[76] Barthes, R, (2005), *The Neutral*, Columbia University Press, New York, pxiii trans Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (From the translators' preface).
[77] Compagnon, A, (2005) *Roland Barthes' Novel*, October, 112, Spring 2005, MIT Press, p 27
[78] Barthes, R, (2000) *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London p 3-8. As a writer he nevertheless introduces speech; 'The one sure thing that was in me… a desperate resistance to any reductive system.' When whatever language he is using began to harden or tend towards reduction 'I began to speak differently.'
[79] As a hint of the 'third term' that this combination might produce, Barthes declares (in relation to the photograph) that 'it was as if I was looking for a verb with no infinitive, only tense and mode' (p76) which might imply that he would have no action in it, that there would be no participation, no inhabiting. So is this a linguistic expression that excludes the self? A return to the inanimate, or neutralising of selfhood?

as Beryl Schlossman suggests, in Barthes' writing, 'the luxury (and the artifice) of language coincides with a theatre of subjectivity and the staging of desire.'[80]

Another context for Barthes book on photography is the psychoanalytic-based theory of Jacques Lacan of which Barthes makes extensive use, quoting directly from Lacan's 1964 seminar (XI) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.[81] Barthes was a regular attendee of Lacan's seminars and, again in the opening pages of *Camera Lucida*, he aligns his reaction to photography as 'Encounter' with the Lacanian concept of the Real.[82] However, although this lies outside the scope of this thesis, it seems to me that *Camera Lucida* could be very productively read through Lacan's preceding Seminar (X), on *Anxiety*, and read *as* an anxious text, as the writing *of* anxiety, and this is because of the particular things that Barthes has to say in relation to his self image which appears to undergo a crisis after his mothers death. This crisis is made all the more apparent to Barthes when he confronts a photograph: (almost) any photograph. Something intrinsic to the photograph means that his questions about loss become questions about the photograph (and vice versa) and thereby bring his book into being. His mother's death led him to think about photography, her death was the 'thread' which drew him to a consideration of the photograph.[83] This crisis also precipitates a change in Barthes' use of the first person. Denis Hollier has pointed out that Barthes initially started to use the "I" from 'the safe ground of linguistic theory' (influenced by Jakobson and Benveniste). Barthes started to speak from the autobiographical first person precisely, Hollier argues, 'because there was no risk of succeeding at it.' Barthes strategy of aligning 'the articulation of autobiography with the dialectic of games and rules' was, as Hollier continues, 'to ensure …that the "I" would keep its linguistic status as empty sign… as if linguistics could perform a quasi-surgical clearing of the first person of any psychological mucus and substitute the semantic emptiness of the shifter (not dissimilar to the neutral emptiness of Robbe–Grillet's world) for the imaginary fullness of the person.' [84] But having abandoned his position as a 'Semiologist' and having himself been abandoned through the death of someone on whom, as becomes apparent after reading the book, his self image greatly depended, the ground on which *Camera Lucida* was written seems more shaky. This change of usage becomes clear when it is compared with the performance of the 'I' in Barthes' *A Lovers Discourse.* At the start of this book he states that he is writing in the first person, 'in

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[80] Schlossman, B (1997) 'The Descent of Orpheus: On Reading Barthes and Proust' in *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p146. As she adds 'Under the double sign of psychoanalysis and literature, Lacan and Proust, Barthes constructs [an] infinitely plural subject.'
[81] Seminar XI was published in 1973
[82] For an extended discussion of this see Iversen, M (1994) 'What is a Photograph?' *Art History*, Vol.17 no. 3, September 1994, pp 450-464. See also footnotes 129 and 290, below.
[83] Barthes, R, (2000) *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London p 73 'The Winter Garden Photograph [of his mother] was my Ariadne, not because it would help me discover a secret thing… but because it would tell me what constituted that thread which drew me towards Photography.' This thread, as becomes clear by the end of Barthes book, connects him to his own death, which again evokes Chris Marker's film *La Jetée*.
[84] Hollier, D. (2005) 'Notes (on the Index Card)', in *October 112, Spring 2005,* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

order to stage an utterance': to simulate, not simply describe, 'the site of someone speaking.'[85] This is a 'structural' portrait – Barthes interest is in *how* something, rather than *what*, is expressed - in this case by the lover when, 'within himself, *amorously*' he is 'confronting the Other (the loved object), who does not speak.'[86] Three years later, in the shadow of the *lost* object - after his mother's death - he comes to write his book on photography. The 'I' is still there but, clearly mirroring the photographic object - itself no more than a 'weightless transparent envelope'[87] - the first person has become the site of a collapse. What has caused this emptiness, this collapse? This is the question that Barthes explores in his book, and clearly it is related to the loss, to the absence, of the other. 'An identification', Lacan suggests, 'takes place in the subject when he assumes an image',[88] but it is in relation to the Other that the image of the self, and therefore the self 'itself', is housed. The anxiety photography produces is connected to the way in which a photograph exposes us to an unfiltered reality from which the Other, and therefore the self, is absent. This opens up the question as to who we are, as with no Other we are nothing.

The final comment to make in relation to *Camera Lucida* (as I will be drawing on this text throughout this piece of writing) is that Barthes also saturates this book with quotes from, as well as commentary upon, Proust. *Camera Lucida* is most widely known as the book in which Barthes formulates his concept or idea of the Punctum, defined above, with which he opposes the Studium, 'which doesn't mean, at least not immediately, "study", but application to a thing… a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment'[89] to something. However, as mentioned above, due to the fact that the Punctum can not be reduced to any one particular, citable, definition but on the contrary, as James Elkins points out, marks that which is 'idiosyncratic, unpredictable, or essentially incommunicable'[90], the viability of the Punctum as a basis for theory is arguable[91]. Yet there is something (which is also of relevance to my practice) to which the idea of the Punctum is inextricably tied and that may be more productively built upon. This is Barthes' particular discourse on memory in relation to selfhood. For Barthes, both memory and the 'self' contain an element of that which is unpredictable and incommunicable. By exploring his use of the Proustian term anamnesis, which Barthes opposes with ecmnesia,[92] I believe that it is possible to map out a field that synthesises Proust's 'remembrance' and Lacan's Real and locates subjectivity as intermittent: a fluctuation between absence and presence, between a coherent, if alienating, self image that is underpinned, held in place, by the other and nothing. Here might also reside the idea

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[85] As its title implies, the '*Lovers…* book is a discourse - the other is implied, however intermittent, is locatable in relation to the fragmentary self, and on which this self depends.
[86] Barthes, R, (2002) *A Lover's Discourse*, Vintage, London, p3
[87] Barthes, R, (2000) *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, p5
[88] Lacan, J, (2002) *Ecrits*, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function', Norton, New York, p4
[89] Ibid., p26
[90] Elkins, J. (2005) 'What Do We Want Photography to Be? A Response to Michael Fried' *Critical Inquiry, Vol 31*.
[91] See Shawcross, Fried, etc. This quoting from Elkins's 'response'.
[92] It is important to note, however, that Barthes uses the term 'ecmnesic' only once, at the very end of the book, at the bottom of page 117

of a possible 'between state' (as 'blank', 'neutral', or 'degree zero') that is neither self nor other yet, as threshold, boundary, mark or limit, is that on which the self is hinged and at which artists might direct their practice.

Towards the end of *Camera Lucida* Barthes describes the photographic affect as 'ecmnesic', thereby associating the encounter, as Punctum, with a kind of memory loss and one that, as argued above, is linked to its opposite: involuntary recollection. Barthes seems to make the link between involuntary recollection and selective forgetting in relation to the famous (never reproduced) "Winter Garden" photograph of his mother; the one that offers him the 'truth of the face I had loved'[93]. For once, he writes, 'photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance', that is - he adds - memory that is always 'involuntary'.[94] As a kind of ecmnesia, then, involuntary memory, as Barthes (following Proust) asserts, can be equated with a loss of selfhood, and with the *blank* at which this thesis is aimed. Barthes' Punctum – as something to which this blank might have an affinity - is, as he insists, not a memory. It is in fact opposed to memory, or at least to a mnemonics. For Barthes (maintaining a connection between the photographic affect and memory loss) it is the difference between an anamnesis and that which is ecmnesic, as discussed above. One of these terms designates a form of remembering, the other a mode of forgetting. An anamnesis is concerned with memory, not remembrance. Its task, that of memorising, usually takes the form of a spoken account linked to the subject's self-image. An anamnesis is the story the subject tells him or herself, an oral narrative that, like a list of symptoms, describes how s/he came to 'be'. An anamnesis seeks coherence. Tied up with ritual, it can be taught and recited, played out, acted or staged. An anamnesis makes the body stick together as an image, it maps us out, gives us our relative position in the world, tells us our history. Through this memorisation, grounded in speech, we construct our self-image. Remembrance punctures this story while remaining outside it - it 'blocks memory', obscures vision, 'quickly becomes a counter memory'.[95] Out of bounds, remembrance is fragmentary, disordered. It triggers something in the body that displaces or subtracts from selfhood. Simultaneously, however (through the Punctum for example) it points to something that is in *excess* of it. Remembrance splits, shatters, the self image, but it leaves a remainder. It takes away from memory (after looking at some photographs Barthes says he has no memories left) but also, by blocking cultural assimilation (the photograph cannot be transformed, sublimated), it points towards something else, something outside and in addition to the self. What is recognised in the photographic Punctum, as Barthes suggests, is 'a kind of intractable *supplement* of identity'. This has something to do with the tense of remembrance, which differs from that of memory. As Jean-Luc Nancy has suggested, 'the remembrance of things past is a loss of time that will never be compensated'[96]. In the instant of remembrance, then, time drops away. What lacks in the

[93] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p 67
[94] Ibid., p70
[95] Ibid., p90
[96] Nancy, JL, 2003, 'The Taciturn Eternal Return' in Tacita Dean: *Essays*, Steidle, Germany.

present is the past. What I am trying to suggest here is that the photographic operation of remembrance, as lack in the present, coincides with a blanking out, a brief disappearance of the self – without memories - into pure presence.

Consciousness

In her book *Unspeakable Sentences,*[97] the writer Ann Banfield draws our attention to an interesting fact. She argues that the invention of the lens brought about the realisation that there were moments or places within which one could, as Proust affirms, become witness, 'a spectator… of one's own absence'.[98] Banfield identifies the tracing of this in concurrent literature, especially the novel; with this paradoxical situation being of particular interest to the novelist Virginia Woolf. In Woolf's novel *The Waves*, one question is repeatedly formulated: 'how describe the world seen without a self?'[99], It is this question – prompted, as Banfield argues, by the encounter with the photograph – that produced a new kind of sentence construction; one in which the 'I' is absent.[100] This is to suggest that Woolf's written, novelistic, sentence echoes the operation of photography.[101]

I will return to this below. However, in her discourse on sentences that are *'unspeakable'* – i.e. possible only in writing - Ann Banfield also comments, through Barthes, on the relation between the photograph and involuntary recollection - what she terms 'unremembered memory'. This is also equated with something that resides outside conventionalised meaning; as something inassimilable to the subject. 'The link *Camera Lucida* makes between death and the contingency of the observer', she writes, 'has a literary precedent, "The Intermittences of the Heart" in *Cities of the Plain,* in whose dream sequence the dead return.'[102] 'The properties Barthes finds in the photograph can be glossed by those Proust finds in the return of the past in the form of involuntary memory… [and] "Involuntary"', as Banfield insists, 'means what escapes the control of the subject's desire and is in that sense unintended... Thus, involuntary memory is as much independent of the conscious mind as the photographic image. This independence', Banfied continues, 'can be seen as equivalent to the forgetfulness that surrounds the memories only brought back involuntarily, creating an unremembered past

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[97] Banfield. A. (1982), *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in The Language Of Fiction*, Routledge, London.
[98] Proust, M. (2002), *In Search of Lost Time, Volume III: The Guermantes Way*, Penguin, London, p137
[99] Woolf, V. (2000), *The Waves,* Penguin, London, p221, and at other points throughout the novel.
[100] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (eds.) (1987*), The Linguistics of Writing*, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre' by Ann Banfield, Manchester University Press, UK, p277
[101] A similar observation can be made about the writing of Roger Caillois, which, as Denis Hollier observes, reflects 'the ego's fascination for a world from which it will be absent, for a world in which there would be no place for it, in which it would be out of place.' Caillois, R. (1990), *The Necessity of the Mind*, 'Afterword: Fear and Trembling in the Age of Surrealism', by Denis Hollier, Lapis Press, Venice, CA , p159. This 'fascination' was connected to technology. Caillois argued that the represented spaces of modern science 'inevitably undermined . . . one's sense of personality'. He correlated them with Minkowski's psychiatric definition of schizophrenia, of '*dark space*, where the subject feels permeable to his surroundings… *"I know where I am, but I don't feel that I am where I a*m".' See: Frank, C (2003) (ed.) *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, p90
[102] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina. P81

outside of the 'I' 's present memory. The "intermittences" of the heart in question are governed by this independence of certain memories from the mind'. [103] 'The precondition to the separateness of these experiences, Banfield argues, 'is the forgetting of them; nothing can return as involuntary memory that has not first been forgotten… [that] inhabit(s) a region where there are no conscious human nervous systems to experience it, whether that region is in the unconscious or in a pile of photographs in a drawer.' [104]

Yet this kind of forgetting, as something never remembered in the first place and which coincides with a loss of selfhood, is also a moment of pure consciousness – of *being*. This is what Barthes is trying to describe in relation to his encounter with the photograph. Furthermore, this intermittence between 'being' (i.e. forgetting) and 'remembering' echoes Freud's observation that 'becoming conscious and leaving behind memory traces are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system… conscious arises *instead* of a memory trace.'[105] In other words, you can't have both operations going on at the same time. All memory traces are afterthoughts – there is no symbolisation in the present tense. An illustration of the incompatibility between consciousness and remembering which also demonstrates how selfhood – an identity - depends on a memory of the past, can be found in Deborah Wearing's recent account of her husband's tragic illness, which had resulted in profound brain damage and almost total memory loss.[106] While her husband has a general idea who he (and his wife) is, he is unable to memorise events as they happen, although he undoubtedly experiences them for extremely short periods of time (usually no more than a few seconds). Because of this, Wearing describes her husband as living entirely in the present. Yet this is a state that he struggles against. What particularly interested me about this story was the fact that Clive Wearing started to write a diary in which, against the time slots allocated in the diary each day, he records an endless series of identical statements that repeatedly assert that he is alive, awake, for the first time "NOW!". But each moment is immediately forgotten, as evidenced by each statement that follows the last, its predecessor becoming only ever *then*, a location or tense – i.e. the past – that is inaccessible to him. These moments of being are traced by their endless replacement, in their unstoppable sequence, by the next 'now' that is, or already has been, forgotten immediately. Clive Wearing's diary entries index the failure of his memory; no new, permanent, memories are recorded - either there or in the brain. In fact his day to day experience is neither remembered nor forgotten - there is simply no memory at all;. This connects to something that Barthes has noticed about the photograph; it 'mechanically reproduces to infinity [what] has occurred only once'. This is a mechanical repetition 'that could never be repeated existentially'; an action that he links, at the end of his book, to a kind of madness – or death.

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[103] Ibid., p83
[104] Ibid., p83
[105] Freud, S. (1991) 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'*, On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, London p296 (My emphasis).
[106] Wearing, D. (2005) *Forever Today,* Corgi Books, London

In comparison, the fictional character in Debra Deans' novel, mentioned above in relation to my argument about the character of ecmnesia, is an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimer's. She is departing from life in a 'wrenching series of separations', or 'blanks', when memory and therefore her self – who she is – falls away, evaporates. Yet where she goes in her imagination is not 'nowhere', but to the empty galleries of the Hermitage where she worked as a guide when she was a young woman. Once all the works had been transported to safety at the start of the second world war, Maria spent the Siege of Leningrad piecing together her former route through the collection; in other words, in that empty space, she built a memory theatre. This now comes back to her in her illness. Here, in the present, her reality is constructed out of absences from the past; it is based on what she put into the empty spaces in the Hermitage that had been left behind once the pictures had been removed and which, in relation to the confusing, fragmentary, details of the here and now, trigger epiphanies - moments of pure being. She experiences only the present but is not 'there' in relation to anybody else (or even her self). Since she has lost her memory, she 'exists' only as a receiver of sensations - not as a recording device. What the author of this novel is describing is an (albeit fictional) depiction of pure consciousness. As her illness progresses, what the character in Dean's novel becomes increasingly absorbed by are the things that she sees in the present but does not assign to language; things she does not give a place or name to, that she does not locate in relation to other things and that float in fact in a kind of word*less*ness. She merely stares at whatever catches her eye, such as dust floating in a ray of light. In relation to these thoughts, it is interesting to return to the observations of Ann Banfield, who discusses the relation between a sort of unseeing recording eye in the novel – which she defines as an *unoccupied subject position* - and the 'impersonal subjectivity' reflected in the photograph. This, she states, 'Lacan saw as well [in Seminar Two], and if the mirror is for him the model of the imaginary, its reflecting surface is in no way dependent on the existence of an observer.'[107]

Imagine that all mankind has disappeared from the earth. I say mankind, given the high value placed upon consciousness… What remains in the mirror? But let us go so far as to imagine all living beings have vanished. …The reflection in the mirror, the reflection in the lake – do they still exist? It is plain that they still exist. And for this very simple reason – at the advanced stage of civilization to which we have arrived, which much surpasses our illusions about consciousness, we have built machines which we can without the least implausibility imagine complicated enough to develop film by themselves… Every living creature having vanished, the camera can still record the reflection of the mountain in the lake or that of the Café de Flore crumbling into dust in total solitude.[108]

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[107] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina. p72
[108] Lacan, J. (1991) The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book Two: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955, Norton, London, p62.

The Mark

In her essay on the art 'of erasing art', Bianca Theisen suggests that because of its arbitrary, subjective and contingent nature, alongside the fact that it 'reappears' in the present (it is recognised by the viewer), Barthes' Punctum can be linked to the retroactive temporality of the traumatic moment. It therefore, 'does not refer to something that was actually there'.[109] According to Freud's theory of belatedness, Trauma has not actually happened but has instead been constructed - after the 'fact' - through an incident in the present that gives an earlier one a traumatic character. Similarly, Theisen argues, reference in the photographic Punctum [that which the viewer recognises] 'is constructed …it is contingent on observation'.[110] As encounter with 'the *This* ...what Lacan calls the Tuche, the occasion, the Encounter, the Real,' Barthes' Punctum is equated with 'void'[111]. Outside of culture, the experience of the Punctum coincides with a (temporary) blindness. The Punctum is therefore *un*observable; it is, as Theisen argues, photography's wordless, 'unrepresentable blind spot to which photography, as a language of deixis and indexicalisation, can only refer as to its own operation of reference.' [112] In this way, Theisen re-iterates that what I am identifying as the photographic operation of remembrance (ie something like Barthes' Punctum) is opposed to memory. It 'cannot be a form of memory', she argues, because its detail, 'linked to the temporality of the trauma', refers to something that is not really there.

On the side of culture, Barthes sees memory as 'outside of individual time', and as the 'substitute for life.'[113] For Barthes memory regulates "being"'. In front of a photograph, however, we are offered something else. Instead of taking the well worn, 'nostalgic path' of memory, we could, he argues, plunge for that of 'certainty'; an identification with the thing in the image that has *not* been there, that cannot be shared or processed culturally. In this way remembrance approaches madness; by taking this route you are identifying or merging with an absence, yet, for Barthes it is an ecmnesic madness 'as a *guarantee* of Being'[114] – essential to it. Contemporary anxiety, triggered by an apparent increase in diseases such as Alzheimer's, focuses on the capacity of the subject to remember; on the problem of forgetfulness. This is an anxiety which may be directly related to, possibly even triggered by, the realisation that there is something at fault with all recording devices (including sound, video and film as well as photography, but also digital devices that produce images or print outs). This, despite the pervasive use of these systems for the documentation of events and the collection of evidence (including a subject's personal history) as well as in virtually all

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[109] Theisen, B (2006) 'The Art of Erasing Art. Thomas Bernhard', in *MLN* 121, John Hopkins University Press, pp557 – 558 'With this temporal structure [that of the trauma, as retroactive affect] Barthes redefines photographic reference. The photograph does not refer to something that was actually there.'
[110] Ibid., pp557 – 558
[111] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p4 'In order to designate reality, Buddhism says sunya, the void.'
[112] Theisen, B (2006) 'The Art of Erasing Art. Thomas Bernhard', in *MLN* 121, John Hopkins University Press, p558
[113] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p93
[114] Ibid., p113

contemporary systems of communication and surveillance. This is not because these devices don't capture it 'all' but because they point out – as we look at them - that there is something *else* in the image generated, something *beyond,* in visual terms, what has been recorded, i.e. beyond what the data purports to show. As the artists and writers that I am interested in repeatedly confirm (and I will discuss some examples below), what the photographic apparatus appears to 'show' is in fact contingent on individual interpretation which generates multiple and mutable perspectives, endlessly variable and conflicting versions of events, endless 'observations of observations'[115] as *mise-en-abymes* with seemingly no single, authentic, point of origin.[116] It seems that some other method or technique might be needed in order to record or gain access to the truth. Strange, then, that – as Barthes sees it - it is only through the Punctum, the contradictory "This", where "This" is equated with void;[117] with emptiness, with the thing *not* there, that the individual subject comes face to face with his or her only certainty; one that is also *forgotten*.

And so it seems that what I remember - *photographically* - of the spider web images is actually something imaginary or phantasmagoric that has nothing to do with the actual image, which I can easily bring to mind. Years ago, I encountered, through remembrance, something that was missing – and always was - from the actual image. What I encounter *now* was never there *then*, and what I encountered then was not actually there when I first saw it. In these terms, to have a 'photographic' memory (as compared to a normal one, perhaps) does not simply mean that in the event of an 'encounter' you have the ability to automatically record everything there in front of you, but that, in doing so, you add a little bit of your own to the scene.[118] It is this extra, imaginary[119], bit that you encounter through remembrance; indeed that triggers remembrance. To have a photographic memory means to go beyond memory, and with this addition, as Barthes, through Lacan, has suggested, the subject brushes against the Real. Furthermore, through this direct contact with this something that is *not* there*,* yet that appears to relate to a past experience, the subject is, retroactively, marked. I marked (noticed, recognised) the spider's web and that image instantly and ever afterwards marked me. Indeed, my subjectivity hangs upon it.[120] As Andrew Brown has pointed out, 'the effect of

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[115] Theisen, B (2006) 'The Art of Erasing Art. Thomas Bernhard', in *MLN* 121, John Hopkins University Press, p 559

[116] This fracturing of the image comes about through different, subjective, responses to it whereas, as Barthes maintains (above) what the photograph actually 'reproduces to infinity' is that which can only occur once and which resists any subjective, symbolic interpretation.

[117] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, pp4-5

[118] Ibid., p45 Barthes describes the Punctum 'as "thinking eye" which makes me add something to the photograph….[as an] additional vision which is in a sense the gift, the grace of the Punctum.' Note that the term 'grace' is also of importance to Michael Fried, but he does not link it to the Lacanian Real, as Barthes does.

[119] Barthes argues that what the photograph presents is not an illusion, but closer to an hallucination. However, as I point out in the next section, he dedicates his book to the 'imagination', which links the *Punctum* to the fantasy. So, the photo 'partakes' of the Imaginary and the Real, while bypassing the Symbolic.

[120] I am thinking about Freud's use of the photographic apparatus as analogous to his models of psychic functioning and his metaphor of the mind as a camera, which I discuss below. (See footnote 32). These descriptions suggest a 'mind' that might be equated with an imprintable, photographic surface, with the

Barthes' "detail" 'is to pierce; Barthes talks of it as a "seductive wound".'[121] The event, as photographic encounter, then, is also a form of self-wounding; it rends. By a process of addition a small part of you is cut (as in deleted). It slips out of sight. This is what comes back from the image, returns to, or *haunts,* the image. Both surplus and remainder, it is what is left over by the image and what can be equated, perhaps, with what Jean-Luc Nancy offers as the stubborn, tacit operation of the past's eternal echo.[122] It is also why, echoing the opening sequence of Chris Markers film *La Jetée*, I state that I was 'marked' by the spider web images. To be marked means to be picked out, differentiated; but also to be doomed. To be a marked man could mean that you were being watched or hunted, that before long – like the trauma - something would catch up with you. To be marked might therefore mean that your time was already 'up'. The idea that I was marked by these images, and thereby shaped by them, could also imply that what drives my practice is a compulsion to repeatedly restage the event, perhaps in order to get a proper look 'this time'. Something of the image or event might be branded into me, might be a component of my identity, yet while this may be essential to my idea of self, it is also, as in the trauma, inassimilable to it. Encountered through remembrance, it is a mark that that the self has no memory of. How I might think about this mark, how I might try to explore it or 'use' it in my own practice perhaps, is a question to which I will return below.

The Cry

Photography states Barthes, is 'never distinguished from its referent'[123]. What it indexes is unrepresentable and leaves us lost for words. Equated with the hallucination, this is the presence of something uncanny; the presence of an absence. As Barthes suggests, we know that the photograph is not an illusion but - as in our worst nightmares - its opposite. The thing in the photographic image has been there and is back now. In this way, remembrance, as a moment when one forgets oneself, is therefore also linked with death. For Barthes, 'death is the *eidos*'[124] of the photograph that he is looking for. An eidolon, then, is what he wants; a photograph that delivers a spectre, a phantom - but also an *idealised* image. Barthes does not want one of those photographs 'before which one recalls less of [the beloved] than by merely thinking of him or her'[125] Barthes' choice of words here is significant. An eidetic image can refer to a (*recollected*) mental image that has unusual vividness and detail, as if it was actually visible, present. This links the phenomenon of a lack in the present - the presence of something that is not actually there - to that of the hallucination or double. To return to Theisen's argument that the Punctum 'redefines photographic reference' so that the referent

subject constructed by or hanging upon a randomly ordered series of "photographs", each as mark of an event.
[121] Brown, A, (2002) *Roland Barthes: The Figures of Writing,* Clarendon Press, Oxford ,p278
[122] Nancy, JL, 2003, 'The Taciturn Eternal Return' in Tacita Dean: *Essays*, Steidle, Germany. Pages unnumbered.
[123] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p15
[124] Ibid., p 15
[125] Ibid., p 63 (Barthes is again quoting Proust.)

is the thing that *isn't* there,[126] the logical response would be to ask what is. What is there instead? Might something be evoked to take its place? For Barthes it is the undead. Remembrance, like the Punctum - considered *as* Punctum - is a kind of 'temporal hallucination'[127], an eidolon, therefore, coming from without. Like the trauma, it is both certain and wounding. Most important for me is the sense this idea gives of something connected to a wordless pre-history from which, as subjects, we are both excluded (it is in the past) and haunted by (in the present). It seems as if that what Barthes has noticed, which my experience in front of the spider web photographs bares out, is that photographic images can terrify in ways that differ from reactions triggered by other forms of representation. So is there something *lacking* in the photograph, some necessary thing that might protect or shield us from - provide a veil against - naked reality? Actually, Barthes argues that there is *too much* in the photograph. 'This very special image [Barthes refers to photography's '*Totality-of-Image*'] gives itself out as complete, *integral*… The photographic image is full, crammed: no room, nothing can be added to it.'[128] Now, it seems, there is no lack.[129] There is even something of a disorder for Barthes - perhaps related to its "too full-ness" - a 'profound madness' that is at the core of this 'photography',[130] which he, like those who first encountered it, cannot name, cannot classify, cannot *put away*. The photograph 'evades' definition. Photography's *disturbance* – ie that it *is* disturbed – lies in the way that it doesn't conform; it cannot be satisfactorily filed under one category or another. Yet it copies perfectly that which it 'takes' – so what is *wrong*? Perhaps it is a question of the too perfect replica? Perhaps photography, fatally, lacks a *flaw*.

In the case of Barthes' own photograph (the photographic image of himself) the 'distortion between certainty and oblivion' gives him 'vertigo'; a kind of 'anguish'[131] Anxiety, bound up with the double, the alienating self as other, is the flip side of remembrance. Through this misrecognition, the self is threatened. In the Winter Garden photograph the 'certainty' of recognition is important for Barthes because it confirms his self image. What he must see in

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[126] Theisen, B. (2006) 'The Art of Erasing Art. Thomas Bernhard', in *MLN* 121, John Hopkins University Press, p558
[127] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p115
[128] Ibid., p89
[129] Lacan suggests that there are two kinds of lack that concern the subject. One is a straightforward 'piece missing', which drives desire, equated with selfhood. This is a by-product of language, the (artificial) symbolic system; it is the effect of a system that requires its chain of signifiers to be endlessly substitutable, not irreducible. The other lack is a problem: that which should lack doesn't. The lack of a lack brings about anxiety. [e.g. see Dylan Evans (1996) p12. As Margaret Iversen has argued [see footnote 82, above] the Punctum could be equated with *object small a*, the piece missing from the subject once s/he enters language. However if you think of the photograph as lacking a lack – i.e. as being too full – it becomes something that thereby triggers anxiety. In this way it seems that you need a Punctum, if only to keep moving, to keep desiring.
[130] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p13
[131] Ibid., p85. This statement evokes the anguish of the detective Scotty in Hitchcock's film *Vertigo*. The self image is formed through the image or look of the other, the recognition by the other. Scotty demands that 'Judy' must look (at him) like 'Madeleine' did, and this in order that he know himself. (Or to know for himself, what he - as a detective and not a lover - already knows; that Madeleine/Judy is not dead, and that someone else is instead. In other words, what Scotty needs to uncover is both that 'Madeleine' has not returned - because she was always already dead – but also that, if a lousy lover, he is still a good detective. With this truth he loses his fear of heights.

the image of his mother, recognise in her, is what she saw in him. He needs to see the look she gave him, by which he knows he exists. Barthes' experience is similar to the fictional one in Proust[132] where the narrator discovers, faced with a photograph of his grandmother, 'a perspective on a world which continues in his absence' As Ann Banfield suggests, 'in the blankness of [his grandmother's look in the photograph] all necessity of his existence in her eyes vanishes.'[133] What is important about the Winter Garden photograph is that Barthes (re)discovers his mother's *expression*, her 'unique'[134] mode of *being*. He needs this as testimony of her love for him – of her *look* for him – as without this 'nothing will remain but an indifferent nature'.[135] Yet it is this look that, as Barthes also asserts, has been altered by photography. Photography's 'disturbance (to civilisation)', is that, since this 'new action' one can 'see oneself (*differently from in a mirror*)[136]. Photography disrupts the image of self, it heralds 'the advent of myself as other' (but with no other to confirm your self image, to name the bits that are 'you'[137]). Bound up with the look, it is this hallucinatory nature that, for Barthes, is at the root of photography's danger, photography's 'madness'.[138]

There is a difference, however, between what Barthes finds uncanny or 'mad', and what Lacan posits as an essential operation in becoming human. The 'advent of the self as other' is, for Lacan, fundamental in the constitution of the ego, to the subject's point of entry into the symbolic system that is language. As discussed above, in Seminar One (1953-54)*[139]* Lacan describes how the subject moves out of reality, 'the original chaos', into the Imaginary; a move which corresponds to the 'birth of the ego' or self. Lacan had initially outlined this process in his (1936) paper on the 'Mirror Stage', where he first put forward the theory that identity resides in an image: to have a body you need an image of the body. In Seminar One Lacan develops these ideas, insisting also on the importance of the Symbolic in giving the subject his or her position in language. Without a system of symbols nothing in the Imaginary would have any meaning (ie one's own mirror image would just be an un-nameable, meaningless 'presence'). Drawing on Freud's suggestion that we 'picture the instrument that carries out our mental functions as resembling a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus',[140] Lacan demonstrates how the subject, at around 18 months of age, is able to produce an image of him or her self that gives him or her the illusion of physiological mastery. 'This is the original adventure through which man, for the first time, has the experience of

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[132]Although consider Barthes assertion that his own writing (in Camera Lucida) *'must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel',* plus the widespread speculation that the Winter Garden photograph may never have actually existed - i.e. that this key images is itself is a fictional device.
[133] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p82
[134] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, pp69 -71
[135] Ibid., p94
[136] Ibid., p12 (My italics) I take this question further in the second section.
[137] The capacity to differentiate between a 'me' and a 'you' is essential to selfhood, as will be explored in the second section of this writing (in relation to Krauss's ideas on the index).
[138] Ibid., p12-13
[139] Lacan, J. (1991) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book One: Freud's Papers on Technique*, 'The Topic of the Imaginary', Norton, London.
[140] Freud, S, (1986) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Penguin, London, p684

seeing himself, of reflecting on himself and of conceiving of himself as other than he is – an essential dimension of the human'.[141] The 'constitution of the world' results, Lacan argues, from the relation of the Imaginary to the Real, but with everything depending on the position of the subject. This position, he states, 'is essentially characterised by [the subject's] place in a Symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech' The world is 'set in motion… the imaginary and the real begin to be structured' and the variety of human, nameable, objects are delineated at the moment when speech begins. Speech formulates a 'fundamental structure', which 'humanises man… [T]he external world - what we call the real world, which is only humanised, symbolised world, the work of transcendence introduced by the symbol into the primitive reality - can only be constituted when a series of encounters have occurred in the right place': when the subject has a place from which to speak.[142] The example that Lacan uses in this seminar comes from one of Melanie Klein's case histories, that of a little boy, "Dick", who 'has no system of substitution'. In other words, 'he cannot say this is *like* that' or that, or that… the boy, as Lacan argues, has 'no substitutes, no equivalences'.[143] In this way he is indifferent to everything that surrounds him (which he ignores), until he begins to conceptualise absence - to perceive the difference between, and therefore separation from, himself and the world. This anticipation of loss is marked, Lacan notes, by a cry - a 'call' which, Lacan suggests, comes from 'beneath language.[144,]

The photographic Punctum, like remembrance, appears to bypass speech, to leave us speechless. And yet Barthes, at some point, and when faced with a certain photograph, makes a cry. What is this cry? If it is, as he asserts, the 'end of all language'[145] is it, at the same time, the death of the subject? Some kind of self-resurrection?[146] What Barthes had been looking for, while searching through the pile of photographs after the death of his mother is a photograph that would *speak.*[147]But the photograph that he finds, 'outside of "likeness"',[148] 'beyond simple resemblance',[149] triggers in Barthes 'a sudden awakening... a Satori [a coming into 'Being': pure consciousness] in which words fail'[150]. And yet there is still the cry. What 'discourse' is this? And what of the cry - as a *beneath* of language - made by the little boy in the case from Seminar One? Is it the same? The cry in the case cited by Lacan brought about the entry into language. With this condition of subjectivity came the beginning of an ego; the realisation, for the boy, of his own name. So it seems there are two forms of anxiety at play here, both triggered by an absence. The one that threatens the

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[141] Lacan, J, (1991) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book One*, Norton, London p79
[142] Ibid., p87
[143] Language forms 'equivalents' to diffuse anxiety, in this way a world of objects becomes created. Yet for symbol formation to take place sufficient anxiety is important, along with a capacity of the ego to tolerate this anxiety. You need to be a Subject – to have taken a symbolic position - for this to happen.
[144] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p 84
[145] Ibid., p109
[146] Ibid., p82
[147] Ibid., p64
[148] Ibid., p109
[149] Ibid., p107
[150] Ibid., p109

subject, brings about a downfall (the Winter Garden photograph was, for Barthes, 'like the last music Schumann wrote before collapsing');[151] and the other, that brings the subject into existence. (The boy, Dick, was alerted to the other, and therefore his 'self', by the sudden realisation that he is part of a system that loss is also a part of.) Is the 'cry', then, located at the knife's edge *between* the two states, marking, perhaps, the point between life (love) or death (as an ecstatic kind of madness)? Occurring in a blinding 'flash', the cry marks a return of something, an absence for which there are no words. It can perhaps be equated with Jean-Luc Nancy's 'call' which, he claims, is both outside of memory and has 'no addressee'. In this case, I believe, it is the cry itself that functions as mark (or hinge): the cry can be considered as the echo in the body of the loss that the subject undergoes when s/he enters language, or the ecstasy when s/he leaves it.[152] The idea of a mark as pure unmediated presence; of something that functions as a hinge, threshold, or knife's edge between presence and absence and that might take form simply as a 'cry' (a call that pierces the symbolic from the real), seems almost impossible to transform from theory into practice. How can an artist make a mark that is not a mark, that is instead a presence (as the return of an absence), of something that was never actually there? How to stage – as mark - this photographic remembrance that hovers, suspended - as a kind of speech defect - between language and nothingness?[153]

The Use Of Remembrance to Make a Work

Tacita Dean's tri-part film *Boots* (2003), records the performance of something akin to a memory theatre. The speaking character of the film's name, 'Boots' takes a journey around an old house with which he appears to be familiar. Seemingly oblivious of the camera, he weaves about the building and spins a story about his relationship to the place, his memories of someone who used to live there: an ex lover, perhaps. Yet he doesn't seem to stick to any particular script and instead departs, wonders, heads off, on his own. Stumbling along, Boots 'limps', as Jean-Luc Nancy has commented, 'through the cloisters, passages and temples of the vast memory *without memories*'.[154] This is a mnemonics that, as memory 'block', stages a new set of possibilities for the (mute, silent or stuttering) expression of something that remains beyond or outside of any cultural mediation; something that, as a kind of trace, points to that which is unspeakable, unrepresentable, unobservable. 'Boots' throws off memory for involuntary recollection; for an encounter with the Real in the here and now - framed by the

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[151] Ibid., p70

[152] Is the cry a kind of echo of the mark or the mark itself – ie that which separates the human from that which is inhuman? Or can this 'mark' only be an echo (or shadow) anyway?

[153] It is precisely the anticipation of loss that brings about language (that which is always substitution) and which, as argued above, also triggered the first mark - representing that which, perhaps, is excluded from speech. As I will discuss in the next section, it is only through the mark or the photograph, or within a certain kind of novelistic writing, that the combination of tenses that enable the announcement of loss, as unspeakable sentence, or memorial, to be made: i.e. 'This spot here is where [my lover's] shadow fell then'. Newman, M, (2003), 'The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing' in *The Stage of Drawing*, American Drawing Centre and Tate, London, p93.

[154] Nancy, JL (2003) 'The Taciturn Eternal Return' in *Tacita Dean: Essays*, Steidle, Germany. (No page numbers.) [My Italics]

Imaginary. He moves from place to place on three separate interlocking routes (each narrated in a different tongue; German, French or English) but where is he? What time? What place? Hinged on the words he uses, perhaps he is somewhere between certain – possibly true, possibly false - memories and the actual building itself, which guides him, and to which he spontaneously responds. However, he makes this movement, his performance, half blind. Why? Because he doesn't know in advance either what he is going to say or where he is going. In this route he is guided by remembrance, not memory; remembrance is at play, not a mnemonics. This takes him through a set of spatial co-ordinates as yet unwritten and which, in the aftermath of the many separate journeys, accumulates as a spidery trace, a wake that is closer to a scribble or an illegible diagram that, left behind, indexes something.[155] Recorded in the flickering, hallucinatory and ephemeral medium of film, which nevertheless has the deictic, indexical, attributes of the photograph, what is pieced together refuses memory or attachment to place and does so as a demand for *life*. The rooms, full of mirrors and windows, cannot frame nor contain the voice that echoes within them, which offers up something unrecitable, illegible; full of hesitations, reversals, garbled profanities and (quite possibly) lies; an evasive autobiography as 'pointless stories,'[156] which only form themselves within an artwork that brings all the threads together as (echoing Walter Benjamin's commentary on Proust) a 'Penelope work' of remembrance. *Boots* is an anti-narrative of being, which becomes apparent to the viewer only somewhere *between* the viewing of the three separately housed films. In them Boots tells us pointless stories that stretch to infinity.

The author Thomas Bernhard's literary project also presents a kind of alternate or *disturbing* kind of mnemonics (i.e. his project explores a photographic rather than a culturally conformist memory). Bernhard's texts take the form of what Barbara Theisen has identified as 'self-erasing' narratives, established through his technique of quoting and re-quoting, listing and indexing, as well as in the way that he restates and contradicts his ideas, his thoughts and feelings, through repeating the same thing over and over again in different ways, or through 'speaking' from many different viewpoints (all of which, however, might derive from the same character). The obdurate blocking of self narration, of self positioning, the refusal of anything like sublimation, of the absorption of *being* into history or culture is achieved, Theisen suggests, 'through a technique of perspectivation and, one could almost say, of reproductive multiplication. [Bernhard] thus opens up [the mnemonic process] to a counter memory which

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[155] Obviously, I am thinking here of the spiders web, again, but for me this work also evokes an invisible version of Duchamp's 'Mile of String' (1942, Exhibition of Surrealist Art, New York)

[156] Benjamin, W. (1977) 'The Image of Proust' from *Illuminations,* Fontana, London, pp203 -204
Writing on Proust, Benjamin states that '…the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection. Or should one call it rather a Penelope work of forgetting? Is not the involuntary recollection, Proust's *memoire involuntaire*, much closer to forgetting that what is usually called memory?' As Benjamin continues, Proust's 'work of spontaneous recollection, in which remembrance is the woof and forgetting the warf… [weaves] the tapestry of *lived life as loomed for us by forgetting*…' In this way [producing work that was] without plot, unity of characters, the flow of narration…. [through] boredom… [and] pointless stories…Proust transforms existence [into remembrance]'.

reconstructs, but only reconstructs observations of observations.'[157] This is a technique used extensively in his novel *Ausloschung* (Extinction). Like the photograph, Bernhard's text dismantles a coherent 'inner' self and at the same time pulls to pieces everything external to the self on which a self might be grounded. He 'obliterates the realm of cultural memory';[158] reduces it (as Dean's character *Boots* does) to a scribble, to a meaningless catalogue. Through this textual unravelling that is also a tangling, a dense, impenetrable, unstoppable stream of exaggerations and understatement pores forth, unbroken by paragraphs or chapter headings. This is a form of story telling where what is remembered – the point of the story - is clouded with doubt; it is this doubt that clogs up the works. Yet ironically what the story seeks, what it is aimed at, are the facts – that always lie out of reach. The narrator, who has just lost his parents and brother in a car accident, makes of the book a record of his life, yet this record, this documentary, never establishes anything as truth. We don't know (because he doesn't know) how he feels, who these people are, where he has come from. This process of remembrance, as Theisen points out, 'unfolds as a description of three photographs [which the narrator] had taken of his family, the only photographs he has kept and which he now, having just received the telegram [informing him of their deaths] takes from his desk' The photographic image, Theisen suggests, is the 'matrix from which the narrative process of *Ausloschung* infolds… Through a self-referential oscillation between positing and negating his considerations, the narrator uses photography to build up a representational paradox which he effaces in his very representation of.'[159] But the narrative *itself* echoes the operation of the photograph; these photograph tell him nothing, they are accurate representations, but of what? In order to write about that which is impossible to retrieve, Bernhard bases his remembering on that which *isn't* in the photographs (or anywhere else). He does this in order to (instead) erase his history – and to replace it with this new (barely readable) writing. Through this device, as Theisen suggests, Bernhard's book *Ausloschung* also works against its own literary legacy: 'Effacing itself in a mere title *Ausloschung* indexes its own form'; the book itself, through this methodology, traces the extinction of autobiographical writing - either as an art form or as any other credible practice. Through the sentence construction itself which, at the end of the very long book, never actually reflects or defines a single coherent subjective position, the writing 'traces or marks its own erasure'[160] as well as that of the subject of the narration. And as Theisen also suggests, this particular sentence construction, containing something – containing nothing – can be compared to the photographic detail which similarly represents something that isn't there, that is unobservable, unrepresentable; thereby indicating the failure of both writing and photography to adequately describe or contain, to record or write, the truth of an experience or event. Even so, in trying to erase both his own 'self' and writing *it*self, the author makes something unique. A trace of something hangs in the air after the reader puts the book away, something that lingers, like an echo - or

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[157]Theisen, B. (2006) 'The Art of Erasing Art. Thomas Bernhard', in *MLN* 121, John Hopkins University Press, p559
[158] Ibid., p561
[159] Ibid., pp554-555
[160] Ibid., p562

smoke. This might be understood as the remains of an existence recorded, not by one who is remembering, but by one who tries to register that which occurs in the here and now - at the cost to selfhood.

Apparently in contrast to Bernhard's fictional character, Barthes, while researching his book on photography, tells of a sudden awakening. The imprint, mark or wound that he encounters in the photographic image is also that to which he is attracted. This attraction is adventitious[161]; it comes from without, seems accidental, yet it also has a compulsive aspect to it; it *animates*[162] him, creating an 'adventure'. Yet Barthes is fully aware that what this jolting to life actually connects with is a 'stilled centre, an erotic or lacerating value buried in myself.' He discovers 'a sort of link (or knot) between Photography, madness, and something else whose name I did not know'[163] but which is also a part of him; connected to his being. Recognising this signal - the automatic and insistent nature of this force or value - Barthes commits himself to a deeper investigation than the 'hedonistic project' his research into photography had so far been (regulated by the 'imperfect mediator' of that which simply 'pleasured' him). To do this, however, as Barthes states, he must make a 'recantation': 'my palinode'[164]. A palinode is a piece of writing (usually a poem) that undoes any previous writing. He must, in other words, go back on himself, perform a kind of erasure, a rubbing out. Breaking with everything he has said before, Barthes proposes a dismantling in order to create a new form; something produced under the influence, the direction, of remembrance, of that beyond the pleasure principle. So Barthes' text *Camera Lucida* becomes not so much a piece of writing about photography but a text that itself operates photographically, that traces something both irretrievable and unrepresentable and where remembrance, as Theisen argues in relation to Bernhard's novelistic style, operates as a counter memory, as a kind of self effacement, or erasure. As an experiment in the "third form" – between essay and novel – the text of *Camera Lucida*, described by Graham Allen as 'impossible', is in fact simply 'undevelopable',[165] like the haiku; in other words it is a text that structurally is closer to – as ecstatic equivalent of - the photograph.

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[161] Barthes, R, (2000) *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, p19, 'The attraction certain photographs exerted upon me was *advenience* or even *adventure*.'
[162] Ibid., p20
[163] Ibid., p116
[164] Ibid., p60
[165] Ibid., p49

PART TWO

'*…to see a landscape as it is when I am not there…*'[166]

'*… how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words.*'[167]

Identity is itself a 'masquerade'; a failure to achieve a stable identity produces neurosis. [168]

'And hysteria is what? *Failed* masquerade.'[169]

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[166] Weil, S. (1997) *Gravity and Grace*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, p195
[167] Woolf, V. (2000) *The Waves,* Penguin, London, p221
[168] Burgin, V., Donald, J. and Kaplan, K. (Eds) (1986) *Formations of Fantasy*, Methuen, & Co., London
[169] Ibid., p51 The quote comes from Stephen Heath's essay 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade'.

'*…to see a landscape as it is when I am not there…*'[166]

Smoke without Fire

I would align my practice with the work of artists and writers who either utilise the photographic medium, or apply what Rosalind Krauss terms the 'conditions of photography'[170] to other media, and do so in order to explore or problematise the 'I'. In this way what might be described, or traced, is something like an estrangement from or within language, and where speech, particularly ones 'own', operates uneasily - in 'quotation marks'. I am interested in the relationship between contemporary subjectivity and technology, and in artworks that, using a methodology that involves photography in some way or another, mark, draw out, or perform the action of the self. In what follows I will suggest that this element of photography – of something intrinsic to the photograph - introduces a component of emptiness.

In the previous section I identified a kind of remembrance that, co-joined to forgetting, brings about a loss of selfhood: a blank that nevertheless is intrinsic to being[171]. I suggested that this operation of remembrance was connected in some way to that of the photograph, and that this had something to do with the peculiar 'tense' of remembrance. The sensation of something – as a "This", both 'evidential and exclamatory' - that was here and is back now, echoes the *noeme* of photography "That-has-been" (as defined by Roland Barthes in Camera Lucida), and evokes the retroactive temporality of the trauma, to which the photograph is also linked. I discussed how these thoughts were triggered by some photographs I had seen as a child that had shocked - or *marked* – me, and how my current practice has, so to speak, evolved out of this initial encounter. I also raised the question as to why it is that the photographic medium is particularly suited for presenting as, paradoxically, a kind of indexical trace of it, the loss of selfhood that I had observed in these images; a spider's web as 'automatic drawing'. Finally, I suggested that this 'photographic remembrance' or blank, as (by)product of the mechanism through which subjectivity is constituted and identity formed (a process that has some similarities with the way in which, via a lens, the photographic apparatus produces an image) can be used to generate a work, giving as examples (in addition to that of Proust's novel *A la recherché du temps perdue*) the work of Tacita Dean, Thomas Bernhard, and Barthes' own text on photography. This section, in contrast, raises questions around a remembering, or a reminiscing, that stops forgetting. What might be remembered; 'stuck' or imprinted in the memory (rather than being connected to something 'ecmnesic', outside of memory) is, however, equally unrepresentable. As I will argue, the difference between remembrance and reminiscing is the appearance of a sign - which could be a spoken narrative - as substitution for that which is unrepresentable.

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[170] Krauss, R. (1986) 'Notes on the Index', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p210
[171] The (culturally constructed) ego 'disappears'. In its place, one is faced, as moment of blindness, with pure consciousness – from which you are rescued by the Punctum. This can perhaps be equated with Lacan's concept of a quilting point, the presence of which ensues that we adhere to - or are hooked onto - the signifying chain. This point also has the function of *punctuating* language.

Hysterics, according to Freud, 'suffer mainly from reminiscences'; the problem is that they can't forget. Yet what the hysteric remembers is avoided at all costs. The hysteric will go out of his or her way to avoid having anything to do with what it is that he or she cannot forget, which is 'usually concerned with a wish or a psychosexual desire about which [they] do not want to know and against which they vigorously defend themselves with symptoms'.[172] These diversionary tactics, as a glossing over of the true state of affairs, and which Freud had first noticed in the phenomenon of 'negative hallucination' are in fact, as Darian Leader points out, 'the basic characteristic of the ego at all times. As with the ego of the mirror phase, [the task of this ego] is to maintain a false appearance of coherence and completeness'.[173] This may frequently involve taking a particular route to blank out what you know but don't want to face. Hysterics, in particular, are very preoccupied by what they don't want to know, yet suffer from a kind of nagging doubt about it, where the thing that is being glossed over (perhaps because it doesn't fit in with their own idea of themselves) keeps coming to the surface, demanding representation. Ulrich Baer[174] defines hysteria as being produced by 'the double bind of a cultural imperative to have no memory of one's physical experiences [or, I would add, physical desire] and, at the same time to be defined by a body that betrays such a memory', a body that is *imprinted* by memory. However, as I will argue below, what the hysteric remembers is an outcome of desire, so that memory, in this case, might be equated with desire. Hysterics avoid what they *want*, while continuously returning to it. Always on their minds, the repressed thought looks for different ways of representing itself.

Hysteria indexes something that escapes categorisation or naming, and that rests at the borderline between language and that of which it is impossible to speak. Awakened by the operation of language's symbolic cut, hysteria is a desire 'to retrieve what is lost and to annihilate the lack';[175] it is something that is trying to get (back) into language that which can never 'be' there, because it is connected to, as reminder of, the object extracted from the subject by the process of symbolisation - language - in the first place. This fixation with the impossible was, as Michael Finn argues, key to the Proustian narrative, where a certain kind of 'wordless, bodily copying of gesture and event is revealed to be at the heart of [Proust's] writing technique.' Finn labels Proust a language hysteric[176] and argues that both the Proustian narrative and its style is 'conditioned by hysteria'. Also writing on Proust, Benjamin notes that Proust's 'work of spontaneous recollection … [weaves] the tapestry of lived life as loomed for us by forgetting.'[177] This forgetting - this remembrance - is related to the body. As Benjamin adds, 'Proust's syntax rhythmically and step by step reproduces his fear of

[172] Loose, R. (2002) *The Subject of Addiction,* Karnac Books, London, p10
[173] Leader, D. and Groves, J. (1995) *Lacan for Beginners,* Icon Books, Cambridge
[174] Baer, U (2002), *Spectral Evidence: The photography of Trauma*, MIT,
[175] Nobus, D. (2000), *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, p28
[176] Finn, M. (1999), *Proust, the Body and Literary Form*, Cambridge University Press, p2 Note that he may also have been suffering from hypochondria, a term *meaning* "illness without a specific cause," which evolved to be the male counterpart to female hysteria.
[177] Benjamin, W. (1977), 'The Image of Proust' from *Illuminations,* Fontana, London, p204

suffocating.'[178] We see this 'writing of the body' at work in another kind of autobiography; Barthes' own *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,* a text punctuated with photographs, scribbles or 'doodling' ('the signifier without the signified')[179], that 'can recount nothing' but which takes his body 'elsewhere, far from my imaginary person [the self, the ego] towards a kind of *memoryless speech*.'[180] Writing with his desire',[181] equated with and drawn from the body, Barthes attempts to represent something that cannot be represented; 'neither the skin, nor the muscles, nor the bones, nor the nerves, but the rest: an awkward, fibrous, shaggy, ravelled thing, a clown's coat';[182] Barthes suggests the blood in this passage which, put differently, points to the heart: *desire*. The 'discourse of the hysteric', as Parveen Adams has suggested, boils down to the endlessly repeated question "Who am I?"; translatable as "What is my desire?". This question is asked 'a thousand exasperating ways', Adams observes, and most typically 'to the medical man.'[183] In other words, it is concerned with the body. Yet this question is also in fact aimed at that which *resists* interpretation; at that which doesn't get symbolised; the gap which coincides with that in the signifying chain, which triggers desire. This gap in knowledge is filled only with the bodies' undecipherable, unsymbolisable, signs or traces; the 'cause' of all these endlessly repeated and unanswerable questions.

Around 1887, Freud was beginning to realize that there was something that the hysteric was unwilling to speak about. And yet, as Lacan points out, Freud formulated his theory through listening to speech. 'Through this door', Lacan writes, 'Freud entered what was, in reality, the relations of desire to language', where language is placed 'in opposition' to desire, desire remaining outside of, inassimilable to, language.[184] Symptoms are made up of words and, mirroring the way that language produces meaning, they take the form of a contiguous series of displacements, which might be thought of as that which is frozen out of speech. Freud realised, as Jacqueline Rose suggests, that 'the unconscious is the only defence against a language frozen into pure, fixed, or institutionalised meaning, [and that] what we call sexuality, in its capacity to unsettle the subject is a break against the intolerable limits of common sense… That there is another scene to the language through which we most normatively identify and recognise our self is the basic tenet of Freudian psychoanalysis.'[185] This discovery, states Lacan, was the true point of departure for psychoanalysis. Stumbling 'upon the impossible desire of the hysteric', Freud discovered that 'the object which causes this desire' - that which is given up by the subject as the price of his entry into language – 'is an object that is lost forever… From that point on, hysteria was no longer determined by some mysterious trauma, but by an inarticulable desire that, like meaning itself, kept on being

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[178] Ibid., p216
[179] Barthes, R. (1995), *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,* Papermac, London, p187
[180] Ibid., p4.[My Emphasis]
[181] Ibid., p188
[182] Ibid., p180
[183] Adams, P. (1996), *The Emptiness of the Image*, Routledge, London, p75
[184] Lacan, J. (1994) The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Penguin, London.
[185] Rose, J (2005) *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Verso, London p. 34 (My Italics)

displaced.'[186] In a letter to colleague Wilheim Fleiss Freud made a point fundamental to his studies: "longing is the main character-trait of hysteria"'.[187]

As Juliet Mitchell suggests, the condition of hysteria still exists, although in different forms, today. Supremely mimetic, hysteria migrates into whatever culturally available mode of expression suits or is available for its purpose: that of refusing or protesting against the very culture it has sprung from.[188] This means that it can't be defined solely by a list of symptoms, which are anyway ever mutating and socio-culturally specific. Instead, the definition of the psychoanalytic category of Hysteria, evolving out of the writings of Freud and developed by Lacan, should be understood structurally; it is a psychic position, perhaps understood as the way in which the "I" writes itself, and is one of a number of ways in which a subject locates him or her self in relation to the lost object, or hole, knocked out of the Real upon his or her entry into language. There is no 'normal condition' in relation to this lack; every subject relates in different ways to the fundamental separation opened up by our entry into the symbolic. Language produces desire; the subject of language is a subject who lacks. However, as Dylan Evans states, '[T]he structure of desire, as desire for the other [is] shown more clearly in hysteria than in any other clinical structure; the hysteric is precisely someone who appropriates another's desire by identifying with them.' Hysteria, in other words, epitomises desire; hysteria is desire taken to extremes.

Much of what follows hinges on Barthes' statement regarding photography's 'disturbance (to civilisation)'. Through the photograph, as he argues, you are presented with the opportunity 'to see oneself (differently than in a mirror)'[189] The disturbance (linked to that of the hysteric, perhaps?)[190] is to the social order. What photography presents us with contains an element of something unregulated; what 'occurs' in it operates outside the taming effect of culture. As outlined in the previous section, seeing oneself as other is, in Lacanian terms, the necessary action that constitutes the ego, but it is the difference between Lacan's illusory self, mediated by the Other, and the self that is other to the one located in a mirror that presents a problem, as disturbance to selfhood, which photography reminds us of; confronting us perhaps, with a potential problem in the identificatory process, a fault in the construction of the self. Photography reveals what the ego strives to conceal; that the 'self' is embodied in an

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[186] Loose, R. (2002) *The Subject of Addiction,* Karnac Books, London, p29
[187] Ibid., p10
[188] Mitchell, J. (2000) *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effects of Sibling Relations on the Human Condition.* Penguin, London. Examples of current day hysteria might include the diagnoses of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as well as various eating disorders.
[189] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p12
[190] See Stephen Heath on Flaubert's character Emma Bovary as 'threatening disturbance': '
'Freud…related the hysteria of his patients to the history of their sexual identity, of how they came to be women; or did not, since hysteria represents a failure in achieving stable identity, with the individual then caught in an unresolved and contradictory position, identified as woman and man…[Here] lies disorder, trouble, the scandal [which Emma Bovary's hysteria] also represents and increasingly threatens' ie Hysteria is understood as lack of control, as the breakdown of boundaries, the challenge to law and order. Heath, S. (1992) *Flaubert: Madame Bovary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p101

alienating image – the self is both illusory, false, and outside the subject – and that, in addition, it contains an inaccessible, 'uncivilised' component. In this way, Walter Benjamin's claim that technological advances in photography would mean that appearances would soon be recorded 'as faithfully as any mirror'[191] would of course be refuted by Barthes – it is precisely in the difference between the mirror image and the photographic image that the disturbance resides. However, and preceding Barthes, Benjamin does suggest that the photographic instrument was, unintentionally, the origin of a 'succession of subsequent discoveries' – one of which, perhaps uncovered by Charcot through his practice of photographing the inmates of the Salpétrière asylum at the end of the 19th century, was that there exists in the subject, as in the photographic image, a piece that is incomprehensible, non-communicable, and out of sight[192].

This discovery is why, as Didi-Huberman claims, it is possible to suggest that Charcot 'invented' hysteria,[193] or at least the version of it that has passed down to us through his photographic archive, the "Iconography" (praised by Breton as the "greatest poetic discovery of the late nineteenth century"). The camera was the ideal apparatus for reproducing the unrepresentable. Although the phenomenon of hysteria may have been uncovered by Charcot, however, the question as to what was actually seen by him is disputable. As Ulrich Baer observes,[194] Charcot's photographs '*depict* mental disturbances.'[195] Yet it is not simply their photographic reproduction that 'allows these pictures to be regarded as illustrations of the "disturbance to civilisation" that Barthes had noted. 'Instead of constituting purely visual evidence,' claims Baer, a few of the photographs make readable… the structural similarities between hysteria and photography.'*[196]* This is in regard to the status of the referent. Baer argues that Charcot's photographs become readable 'by putting into question the status of the referent as purely visual.' Similarly, the questions Benjamin puts to photography revolve around the 'something new and strange' with which photography has imprinted the image, a something that 'remains', lingering outside or beyond issues of technical achievement or aesthetic value. Interestingly, Benjamin describes the 'senseless', incommunicable thing that he is made aware of in the photograph - that is present in the image - as being like 'smoke without fire'[197]. The importance of this description to me is connected to the fact that smoke is

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[191] Benjamin, W. (1997) A Short History of Photography, *One Way Street*, Verso, London.
[192] This comes from Ulrich Baer's reading of Benjamin.
[193] I refer the reader to Georges Didi-Huberman's book, *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpetriere*
[194] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism vol 7 number 1 Spring 1994
[195] Ibid., p41 [My emphasis] Again these representations of mental disturbances simply conform to the concurrent idea of how 'disturbance' should be expressed or portrayed – in this case the performances were very *a la mode* – perfectly reflecting, as mirror image of, the theatricality of the belle époque.
[196] Baer argues that this is the case in relation to the effects of the flash which, he claims, makes the link between pathology and technology. For Baer, the hysterics' frozen bodies 'allegorise the photographic process itself' (Baer, 1994, p53),This in turn echoes the freezing out of language of desire… the hysterics, then, could be considered, in striking a pose as if in freeze frame, as being imprinted with desire.
[197] Which can be compared to Lacan's rainbow, from Seminar One, or Dean's film *The Green Ray*.

one of the categories of signs that, since C.S. Pierce,[198] is termed indexical. Rosalind Krauss notes that 'As distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relation to their referents. They are the marks or traces of a particular cause and that cause is the thing to which they refer' Krauss gives 'footprints' as a familiar example of an indexical sign… and also, 'medical symptoms'.[199] However, as Benjamin points out, the particular sign that he is confronted with in the photograph has no cause. The thing to which it 'refers' does not exist. This links hysteria to photography. Perhaps it is not accidental that, as Baer notes, photography was used 'to diagnose the disease that defied anatomy'. I mean this with reference to the 'hysterical' claim that something is there in the body that cannot be traced to any particular physical part. Photography also contains this missing bit. As presence of an absence, Baer suggests, 'both hysteria and photography develop out of events that recur as absent originals'[200]

There is a 'privileged relation between the structure of desire and the structure of hysteria',[201] which, as Baer argues, echoes that of photography.[202] The meeting place between the three might have occurred in Charcot's photography studio, with the medical man exploiting what was then still an emergent technology. And in fact, perhaps Freud kept Charcot in mind when, in developing his theory of the unconscious,[203] he suggested that 'we picture the mind as a photographic plate (or apparatus)'.[204] I mentioned this analogy in section one as the basis for Lacan's model through which he illustrates subjective experience - as dependent on the relation between the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real - but it is important to note that in this context Lacan sticks to pure optics, thus grounding his discussion in an analogy of how the world, as an imaginary, symbolic world, is created and perceived in the here and now. In the context of a discussion of the unconscious however, Freud's analogy presupposes that the images in the mind – like the photographic print - have a retroactive temporality. As Baer points out, '… [through Freud] the dissociation of self and body which Charcot thought to have encountered in hysteria came to be understood in temporal terms. It is Freud and Breuer's emphasis on temporal dissociation that renders their insights particularly useful for an

[198] I am drawing on Rosalind Krauss's reference to Pierce, from her essay *Notes on the Index*, which I discuss in more detail below.

[199] Krauss, R. (1986) Notes on the Index, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. p198

[200] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism vol 7 number 1 Spring 1994, p60

[201] Evans, D. (1996) An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis Routledge, London, p79

[202] In his book *Burning With Desire*, Geoffrey Batchen argues that photography itself was born out of, as a kind of by-product, the mechanism of desire.

[203] Didi-Huberman's argument is that, having had 'an eyeful', these images, and of the way in which they had been put together (as collaborations between Charcot and the inmates of the Salpetriere), they were on Freud's mind as he developed his theory of hysteria. The 'scopophilia' of both Charcot and Freud is investigated in John Ireland's essay, cited below. Ireland argues that both clinicians, either through photography (the lens and the imprint) or through text (Freud's case histories, which read like 'short stories') were attempting to look at, to see, represent or expose, to bring forth in evidential form – or more precisely to inscribe or 'fix' hysteria.

[204] Freud, S, (1986)*The Interpretation of Dreams*, Penguin, London, p684

understanding between hysteria and photography.'[205] Baer notes Freud's observation that the strongest compulsive influence arises from impressions made at a time 'when [the child's] psychical apparatus…[is] not yet completely receptive.' In other words when they do not know what they are looking at, when for various reasons they do not 'see'. Baer suggests that these are experiences that would have passed through those who experienced them (the subjects who were there 'at the time') 'as something Real that does not coalesce into memories; as an 'inexperienced experience'[206] (which would, nevertheless, have marked them). Similarly, the photograph can exclude both the viewer as well as the original photographer and the subjects in the photograph – none of whom can see what is/was happening at the moment the shutter is pressed. As Jakki Spicer observes, '[T]he photo testifies to the theft of experience, to the non seeing that structures [both] trauma [and hysteria]'.[207] In this way hysteria can be considered as 'both blindness and out of time-ness. It is a retroactive knowledge that knows neither what nor when.' Like the photograph, Baer writes, trauma and hysteria 'index a crisis of representation.'[208]

Baer's argument, which centres on the case of the Holocaust[209], examines the problem of how events that have actually happened[210] to individuals, can nevertheless remain impossible to represent or, even at the time, be experienced. This is where, drawing on Barthes, he makes the link between the structure of the trauma and the operation of photography; 'Because trauma blocks routine mental processes from converting an experience into memory', Baer writes, the trauma 'parallels the defining structure of photography, which also traps an event during its occurrence while blocking its transformation into memory.'[211] Baer is using the analogy with the photographic process in order to construct a theory of trauma within which a real or actual event is embedded – his concern lies within the problem of experiencing actual events, whereas I am more interested in thinking (and working) in relation to a theory of desire (and its extreme form hysteria); this as a psychic structure within which the subject circles around a non-existent, always already lost, object. Now, as Freud asserts,

[205] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism vol 7 number 1 Spring 1994 p60
[206] Ibid., p17
[207] Spicer, J. (2004) Review of Baer's book *Spectral Evidence,* Cultural Critique 57, Spring 2004, p 188. Note – in his book Baer refers to trauma, but the original essay of 1994, which appears first in his book, does link photography with *hysteria*. I believe that in each instance of the essay Baer is trying to say the same thing – he's just changed the emphasis of his argument for the purpose of its new context in relation to the holocaust.
[208] Spicer, J. (2004) Review of Baer's book *Spectral Evidence,* Cultural Critique 57, Spring 2004, p190
[209] As Baer argues, the fact of having been there (at the scene of the holocaust) and even of taking photographs such as those taken during the liberation of the camps does not guarantee that the subject actually sees it, although s/he may be subsequently haunted by it 'The enigma that is constituted by the flashback's absolutely accurate reproduction of an earlier event *in the absence of memory…* is reproduced in and by the black box of the camera.' Baer, U (2002), *Spectral Evidence: The photography of Trauma*, MIT, p22. Baer adds, quoting Judith Lewis Herman, that the flashback can be considered as 'the haunting remainder of an unassimilated past event that imposes itself in and on the present. The flashback [is] always in the form of an image, never mediated by language.' (Baer (1994) p75
[210] Although as Dany Nobus suggests, (Nobus, 2000, p26) 'no event is inherently traumatic; it acquires this epithet "after the fact", when it becomes meaningful through the intervention of a symbolic system.' The event is recognized as 'traumatic', however, it remains unsymbolisable.
[211] Baer, U (2002), *Spectral Evidence: The photography of Trauma*, MIT, p9

the core of a hysterical attack is a memory.[212]   However, although Freud started off by believing that the women who came to him had suffered some sort of (usually sexual) abuse, he came to realise that their symptoms, like mimed gestures, were pointing to something more probably related to a fantasy, itself a product, as compromise, of the way that language shuts desire out. So it is desire - the fantasy - that, in Baer's phrase, 'usurps the place of memory, invading the body with a symptom that is neither integrated into consciousness nor describable as an "experience"'. What is 'remembered' in hysteria, indexes desire; in this way desire can be equated with Benjamin's 'smoke without fire'.

Hysteria then, is a strange kind of sign – a referent-less index – marking the place where the 'spark' of something inassimilable to language has, as Benjamin puts it, 'seared the subject';[213] where this 'spark' might be equated with an idea (a fantasy) that cannot be put into words. Hysteria indexes something that escapes categorisation or naming and that rests at the borderline between language and that of which it is impossible to speak. This desire, awakened by the operation of language's symbolic cut; is a desire 'to retrieve what is lost and to annihilate the lack', [214]it is a something that is trying to get (back) into language that can never 'be' there, where this something is connected to, as reminder of, the lost object, rather than a particular event. In relation to hysteria, Didi-Huberman notes this 'strange operation of memory' [215] Memory is at fault in hysteria, although in fact there is no memory, other than that of an indefinable 'before'. Hysterics are preoccupied by being trapped in language. The frozen poses 'struck' by the hysterics could be thought of as a kind of inhabiting of - or of being trapped within - a fixed or ready made phrase. As a response that echoes in the body – where an echo can be considered as another example of an indexical sign without a referent[216] - desire is 'a restless objectless yearning, a relentless striving to obtain nothing.'[217] The photograph refers to a moment that never entered consciousness. As Barthes suggests, it 'mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially'[218] echoing, in this way, desire, which can also never enter language - as well as echoing the cause of desire.

The invention of the photograph introduced civilisation to an object within which time had been fixed; apparent in what Jeff Wall has described as 'the blurred elements of Daguerre's first street scenes. And yet, for me, the interest in Daguerre's picture is not in the blur – there is no blur. The photograph has been marked, instead, with the imprint of stillness. Everything in the street vanishes, but for one figure with which the image has (so to speak) been branded. This figure, a silhouette, is a testimony of presence but, because of the literal

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[212] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism vol 7 number 1 Spring 1994 p62
[213] Benjamin, W (1931), *One Way Street and Other Writings,* 'A Small History of Photography' trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, London, 1979, p243
[214] Nobus, D. (2000) *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, p28
[215] Didi-Huberman, G. (2003) *Invention of Hysteria,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, p154
[216] The echo can be considered as a 'reply', which differentiates it from the original 'call'
[217] Nobus, D. (2000) Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis, Routledge, p76
[218] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p4

incorporation - absorption even – of it by time, so that the image becomes a kind of notation, or score, of a particular duration, it is also simultaneously a testimony of absence. A cut out. Time has burnt into the image, which records the subsequent evaporation of the subject.[219] This photograph records the disappearance of the individual into generic 'type'; into the 'other', and reveals a Paris that no one, including Daguerre, had ever seen prior to that photograph's existence. From its origins, suggests Wall, photography 'pushes towards a discovery of qualities apparently intrinsic to the medium'. Even at a stage when photography had barely made its mark, what emerges, like a shadow, is an unpredictable, 'invisible' trace, which is also a kind of erasure of the subject. This 'freezing out', as mortification of the subject, the photographic 'stop' to exchange and mobility, mirrors the subject's trapping in language, copied in the frozen poses of the Salpétrière women. Hysteria is another kind of 'stilling', a 'stilled voice', where the subject is lost for words. And rather than words 'failing' as they did for Barthes, for the hysteric 'there are no words'. Here it may be possible to make a comparison between the ideas around the 'representation of the un-representable' as discussed in the previous section, and the hysteric's meaningless signs. In this case what is inassimilable is desire itself, the 'kernel of nonsense', at the heart of the subject. Hysteria is not unrepresentable – it just doesn't have any end point. Words are not enough - the hysteric wants to go beyond. Hysteria is a never ending attempt to inscribe that which is invisible, unrepresentable; that which constantly escapes, evades definition, categorisation, naming (and therefore 'cure' – an end point). Hysteria cannot be 'disappeared', it cannot be erased, as it is only ever traced through its facsimile or copy (that which it duplicates); through the mark it makes as mirror, index, echo, cast of itself. The desire of the hysteric endlessly slides into whatever is 'other', outside, unregulated, uncontrolled. Hysteria 'itself' is not there; it 'does not exist.'

Mimesis is the hysterical symptom *par excellence*. In his essay on photography, Walter Benjamin hints at an identification between the subject of the photograph and the early photographic apparatus, with the subject's 'rigidity' betraying 'the impotence of that generation in the face of technical [cultural/social] progress'[220] Similarly, the nineteenth century's portrayal or performance of hysteria could be considered as 'an imitation of the [then concurrent modes of the] photographic process'.[221] As Didi-Huberman argues, at the Salpetriere, in the concomitant development of photography, 'hysteria constructed an image of and for itself'. Photography was an appropriate medium, or *conduit*, for the hysterics as well as for the medical profession, although ultimately it failed to satisfy either; neither the medical profession's impulse to categorise, name and thereby limit this

[219] 'Remain in Light' James Roberts *Frieze Magazine*, issue no. 40 p56 'The almost total absence of human life in Daguerre's image was caused by the extraordinarily long exposure times required by his photographic process - only a single stationary figure (having his shoes shined) survived from the bustle of a teeming Parisian street over the duration of the 30 minute shot.'
[220] Benjamin, W. (1997) *One Way Street*, Verso, London, p248
[221] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism, vol 7 number 1 p66

disorder nor the women their who had something to say that - as a gesture indexing the desire of the body - had to remain untranslatable; an enigma. Yet it is possible to suggest that, at the Salpetriere, hysteria made a temporary pact with photography, assisted or enabled by Charcot. This might explain why the "hystero-epilepsy" he had made famous 'existed only at the Salpetriere'[222] - home of his new photographic studio. Photography mirrored the hysterics' own condition, which they returned as echo, through their staged, photographic, performances, their frozen poses the physical manifestation or *indexical traces* of a state of mind, of something inexpressible or outside of language. This photographic mimicry went both ways, with the hysterics striking poses selected from, co-ordinated to and corresponding with, the photographic catalogue they themselves had 'written'. As Ulrich Baer writes, 'the hysterical body was from the beginning a site of reproduction, and by shifting the origin of hysteria from body to brain (the psyche), Charcot understood the body as an independent agent, indeed a "medium" yielding *signs*… Insofar as the hysterical body is the site of this "hallucinatory reliving", which occurs without conscious control, it was possible for Charcot to think of his patient as an "homme-machine"… a mechanical contraption void of any cognitive dimension.'[223]

Hysteria is a relation to the other's desire. The hysteric copies (the other) exactly, photographically; the result, as in the photograph, is that the "I" is absent. The hysterical body, *as duplicating machine*, leaves the self out. The photograph cannot speak of what it has copied, and it is this condition to which the hysteric responds. Everything is there in the image she creates, except her self, who is 'on hold'. Like a camera, the hysterical body reproduces signs that are unrepresentable; like Barthes' photographic 'hallucination' they are are both absent and 'has been'; the site of *ruin*. Hysteria recognised and, at the Salpetriere, utilised and exhibited the disturbance to the look that, as Barthes suggested the 'new action of photography' brought to civilisation.[224] The frozen poses of the hysterics were compatible with those of the photographic print, which pointed to something outside of culture – what Barthes objects to as civilising and therefore 'taming'[225] - to something limitless, closer to desire itself. Prior to photography there were drawings, depictions, illustrations etc. of woman, but these were never 'collusions', collaborative efforts, on which the *condition* of being a woman was imprinted. The Salpetriere women, arguably, had conscious understanding of the photographic; they could have performed anywhere. Charcot, as Didi-Huberman might suggest, just pressed a particular button.[226]

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[222] Ireland, J, (1998) A Speculum in the Text: Freud's "Katherina" and Maupassant's "Le Signe", MLN 113: 1089, John Hopkins University Press, p1094
[223] Baer, U, (1994) Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash, Yale Journal of Criticism, vol 7 number 1 p62.
[224] Barthes, R. (2000) Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, Vintage, London, p12
[225] Ibid., p119
[226] Which is where some actual abuse may have began.

The Reproduction of an Unrepresentable Sign

John Ireland[227] makes a connection between Maupassant's short story "Le Signe" and the basis upon which Freud develops his theory of hysteria and in doing so suggests an alternative influence on Freud to the problems of his supposed 'scopophilia' that dominate Didi-Huberman's argument. Ireland's essay focuses instead on the mode of communication, the *form* that this 19th century version of hysteria adopted; which is connected to the photographic operation of the index. Hysteria, like photography, is a sign that is a copy, a sign that has a direct relation to its cause, even although as argued above, the hysterical sign has no tangible cause, or referent. Hysteria as a structure, then, is imprinted on the Salpetriere images, not hysteria as a certain set of gestures or a particular pose (these secondary attributes, as suggested above, being derived from the *fin de siecle* cultural model of 'woman'). Hysteria mirrors its environment; it is a case where the normal psychic processes of identification have strayed too far outside their boundaries. In this way hysteria is also the 'advent of the self as other' in the particular way that photography is. Now, in Maupassant's story "Le Signe", the Baronne de Grangerie, who is not only from the highest strata of society but is also a respectable – i.e. married - woman, sits at her window watching a prostitute, 'a vilaine fille', who sitting in *her* window is, in more ways than one, on the opposite side of the street. This woman, as Ireland tells the story, is at this very moment engaged in the process of plying her trade. The Baronne is 'fascinated by the ease with which [the prostitute] makes contact with prospective clients in the street below. Yet there seems to be no overt communication. Picking up her opera glasses for closer scrutiny, the Baronne is able to discern the little movement of the head with which the prostitute makes her offer… Leaving her window seat, the Baronne moves to a mirror to see if she can reproduce the sign. When she discovers, with some excitement, that she can, the temptation to try it once on her own account proves overwhelming…'[228] This 'reproduction' of a sign, as described in Maupassant's story, 'so slight, so discreet', was used by Freud, as Ireland suggests, as 'evidence to support a reading of a neurosis he was struggling to elucidate',[229] a neurosis that seemed to be characterised by 'the uncontrollable impulse to imitate',[230] through a sign, a fixed gesture or 'still' - such as that of the prostitute that the Baronne copies. It was this realisation that led Freud to separate physical symptoms from physical causes; the problems of the hysteric - acted out in the body – come from 'elsewhere'. And it is significant to this discussion that the Baronne imitates the other while in front of a mirror, which, instead of re-affirming her self image, her imaginary

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[227] Ireland, J, (1998) 'A Speculum in the Text: Freud's "Katherina" and Maupassant's "Le Signe" ', in *MLN 113 (1998): 1089-1110*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, p1094
[228] Ibid., p1090
[229] Ibid., p 1090. Ireland is quoting from Freud's correspondence with William Fliess. See also ftnote 2, p1108 of Ireland's essay
[230] Ireland, J, (1998) 'A Speculum in the Text: Freud's "Katherina" and Maupassant's "Le Signe" ', in *MLN 113 (1998): 1089-1110*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, p1098

'whole', in this case operates like a photograph; the Baronne comes to occupy (the desired position of) the other.

Hysteria combines the photograph's indexically-based power of certification with its illegibility; the origin of hysteria is invisible, unrecordable, unrecoverable, represented by an untranslatable sign, a mark or trace of the something within the subject that is outside the boundaries of a self; that is absent or 'ruined'.[231] To summarise the above, hysteria can be defined as a particular mode of recording or rejecting the experience of 'being' in language. Like the photograph, hysteria has a specific temporal structure; that of the 'after effect'. Memory is involved, but what is remembered, as a kind of nostalgic 'reminiscence', is something that was never possible in language, instead, as 'strange operation of memory', hysteria indexes desire; like smoke without fire, it has no detectable physical cause. As 'disturbance to civilisation', to identity and selfhood, hysteria is unspeakable. In short, what Freud may have discovered is that Hysteria operates, like photography, as the reproduction – or index - of an un-representable sign. This links the 'index' to the 'blind spot' outlined in the first section.

In what follows I will be exploring the ways in which the relation of the subject to photography can take this 'hysterical' form, as manifested in certain types of artwork and writing. Articulated as a crisis of representation, which by extension is reflected in ways in which the self is constructed, Hysteria can be considered as a world without a self. I will also be looking at ways in which the fantasy can be represented - as embedded in an artwork – and will do this by drawing on Rosalind Krauss's essay *Notes on the Index*. Any unit of language and of course individual words themselves, as Bruce Fink points out, can only ever be 'representations of representations'; artists work with this knowledge, they work on it. Artworks perhaps come out of attempts to trace this unrepresentable hole or empty centre, the unthinkable, unnameable, unspeakable. In his book *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* Fink discusses this condition of language, which we all share. Through Lacan, he argues that the referent is always absent or missing, un-presented. It can be, however, pointed to – indexed – by the representative of that referent. Lack is represented but never presented. Void of meaning – but not without it - artworks of interest to this thesis are occupied with 'the empty thing around which meaning circulates.'

One such example comes from the photographic work of artist Anna Mossman. It is the index that is important in Mossman's work because with it she traces an "I" in which the fantasy - of what an "I" might be – remains. As the artist, the maker of these marks, Mossman no doubt identifies with and is identified by the set of otherwise meaningless marks on the graph paper,

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[231] Interestingly, in the mainstream novels concurrent with Charcot's experiments, 'ruined' also referred to the condition of a woman who – if she is no longer a virgin – is unmarriageable.

yet the presence of the index allows her to 'say no more' than that. The piece contains a set of (non) decisions but does not explain them. Furthermore, by refusing to follow normal photographic procedure and print the photograph - which begins as a negative - onto positive paper, Mossman prints it as it is, *in* negative. In other words she refuses to re-instate the missing object that is there in all photography, she refuses to cover up its 'absence'. This is interesting because, while being more 'true' to photography, the resulting image – as ghost of the missing object - looks less like a conventional photograph. It also reminds you that the *real* thing (the original object) is missing. Mossman's photographic works do not let you forget what is the case for all photographs: that what you are looking at is not the thing itself, yet once you have been reminded of its absence by the presence of its negative, you want to know what is missing, you want to fill the thing in, and do so by asking yourself what the 'opposite' of the thing in front of you might be. However, because of the nature of language – as a set of endlessly substitutable symbols - there is no one possible answer. All you have is the endlessly repeatable question: *what was* – or is - *there*?

Mossman photographs her own drawings that, completed according to a set of rules or simple criteria, often take a considerable length of time to finish. In this way she makes integral to the work something that doesn't necessarily need to be there; ie why not show the drawings themselves (they are certainly beautiful and accomplished enough)? Yet in Mossman's work, photography insists upon itself. It points out how she has inscribed something contingent, subjective and therefore unrepresentable into the image and reinforced this inscription through the operation of the index. Without the photograph this point would be lost. Through the addition of the index, the 'inhuman' mark in photography, a kind of erasure occurs; a blind field is created. Mossman offers to the visual field that which is unsee-able. Yet the index is already there in the drawing, which traces the response of her body to the rules she has proscribed for the work. In this way Mossman traces something that doubly evades symbolisation. Furthermore, the time spent on the drawing (which can be up to 18 months) and the events that directed - or 'coloured' - the mark-making processes, are swallowed up in the instant of the photograph, in the photographic event, which obliterates them but only to put something closer to those original events in their place. By being the index of an index (like the photo of the spider webs) Mossman's work pulls the mark or trace (as signifier) back towards the abyss, back towards nothingness, meaninglessness; the presence of the unrepresentable. This strategy indicates, despite the rules used to generate the work, that what the resulting images veer towards is return to dis-order or chaos, to an event that either preceeds or exceeds that which structures language, that which instigates the symbolic order. The process of photographing the drawings takes the mark back to that which is inhuman, closer to the illegibility and incomprehensibility of the stain. Yet the works also perform something analogous to memory's 'evasive path', which might get interrupted at various points by 'remembrance'; in other words that which, according to Barthes, 'blocks' memory, forcing it to reroute, take another path.

My interest in Anna Mossman's work is obvious; it is because what it reaches for has resonance with that which I am aiming at in my own practice. In contrast to Mossman's work, which I would align with the photographic operation of desire, the artist Thomas Demand's photographs are, as Parveen Adams has suggested, 'in a world of their own.'[232] This is to suggest that what might be being staged is – as close as might be possible – the index alone, without any supplementary discourse or punctuation. 'Objects', as Adams has written in relation to Demand's work, 'are usually shot through with fantasy, in that they hold out some promise of desire fulfilled. Such are the objects that we recognise. Such are the objects [that we either] desire to have or avoid…Demand's objects are not like this. He presents the object as it is, or at least as near to itself as it is possible to be. In Demand an object is just an object. It does not promise anything and it does not hide anything. Neither is it a substitute for another object. The paper [in the works] is 'blank' and allows, as Demand himself points out, for the complete isomorphism of the signifier and the signified. For a sheet of paper is indeed where signifier and signified meet. It is a sheet of paper and it is made of paper. Demand's object…does not stand in for something else. This object stands and it isn't the referent of representation.' [233] So what is it then?

A World without a Self

The earliest recorded photograph is documented as 1832[234] – although both this date and the object of the claim is open to some debate. However, by the time Freud had arrived at the Salpetriere in 1886, to see for himself Charcot's 'performers', photography had been on the scene for quite a while. By this time, also, Gustave Flaubert had written *Madame Bovary* (the novel was published in the Revue de Paris in 1856), drawing, for his definition of hysteria, on the lengthy entry in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Medicales*, (1812-22): 'dizzy spells, nervous attacks, anxiety, feelings of suffocation, irritability, melancholia, boredom, torpor, feverish volubility, palpitations, vacancy, fog in the head…'[235] Hysteria, it was felt, had its laws[236]. Emma Bovary was loyal to the script. However, it is the way these performances are narrated by Flaubert as flat and empty description, precisely modelled and with complete objectivity that hysteria is actually *inscribed*, rather than in Emma's theatrics. In other words the text *itself* can be regarded as a mirror of them. Flaubert writes hysterically. He writes, as Stephen Heath states in his commentary on *Madame Bovary*, with 'unnerving flatness', suggesting that what Flaubert was aiming at with his novel was an equivalence with the photographic apparatus. The writing is objective, repetitive. *Madame Bovary* is a book that, in Flaubert's own words, had to be 'about nothing'. It was to be a book that would articulate

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[232] Adams, P. (2001) 'Demand without Desire: The Work of Thomas Demand', *Portfolio Catalogue,* Edinburgh, UK, Issue 38
[233] Ibid.
[234] It is "Niepce's table: according to Barthes Camera Lucida p86
[235] I recently discovered an almost identical set of symptoms listed as diagnoses for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.
[236] Interestingly Charcot's actual quote in regard to the diagnoses of hysteria's was: "It is not a novel, Hysteria has its laws." (Also, see Ireland p 1094)

nothingness, that would pivot on nothing - the empty space or void at the heart of meaning, from which desire spins its web.[237] Aimed at the emptiness of the society that it was written within, it also *mirrored* this society 'through its language, its clichés.'[238] Flaubert adopted 'a strategy of imitation involving an assembly of stereotypes, a dictionary of received ideas: "there would not be a single word of mine in the whole book", he boasted, promising to create a mode of writing, "that will be totally elusive, un-decidable, leaving no firm hold for the reader…[a writing] constrained to the monochrome flatness of the social world, observed and recorded like a photograph".'[239] With Flaubert you have something of the truth of language, and the relation of the unconscious to it. In a letter to a friend Flaubert declared that he was writing '…a book dependent on nothing external, which would hold up on its own by the internal strength of its style…a book which would have almost no subject, or at least in which the subject would be almost invisible.' [240]

Flaubert's contemporary, the novelist Edmund Duranty, while declaring a commitment in his writing to 'an exact, complete and sincere reproduction of the social milieu, and the epoch in which one lives'[241] criticised *Madame Bovary* as the work of 'an arithmetician'. 'Everything is held at the same level, with people equalised in their relentless ordinariness and their similar treatment …[described] without love, without any preference, solely because the material objects are there, because the photographic apparatus has been set up and everything must be reproduced.'[242] Yet: '…I wanted…to reproduce *types*' declared Flaubert[243], as Charcot might have done. Indeed, *Madame Bovary* was written with such exactitude - such scientific precision – that it might be mistaken for a case history. *Madame Bovary* is a study of desire in language, complete with a reference book – a 'dictionary of received ideas' – that is actually embedded within its narrative, arguably a series of monologues, in which the empty, stock expressions are marked as components of a restrictive and suffocating identity. Freud had realised, having abandoned the work he had started in response to Charcot, that it wasn't the womb but language itself that was imprisoning his hysterics; it was, as outlined above, language that they were both entombed within and estranged from. But how then were these hysterics, mainly women, to speak? Flaubert wrote about this imprisonment by using nothing other than the ready-made expressions and phrases through which these lives were lived. Within this rigidity of performance it is possible to mark the place of a refusal. Hysteria is an encounter with the fault, that place wherein a fundamental incompatibility lies, yet this point of refusal is simultaneously an event – a mark. 'Before

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[237] …the silent spider boredom wove its web in the shadows in every corner of her heart'. Here Flaubert demonstrates that he knows something about the way desire insists, is automatic.
[238] Heath, S. (1992) *Flaubert*: *Madame Bovary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p 19
[239] Ibid., p 27
[240] Ibid., p 6-7
[241] Ibid., p 30
[242] Ibid., p 51-52
[243] Ibid., p 32-33

Charcot,' as Stephen Heath suggests, 'before Freud, at the beginning of all the medical-psychological work around "the woman question", Flaubert …moves hysteria from sickness and pathology to critique and writing.'[244] Some forty years after *Madame Bovary*, having turned decisively away from Charcot's choreographical methodologies, Freud wrote his *Studies on Hysteria*. When he had finished the book he apparently expressed surprise that the case histories contained therein read *like novels*.[245]

Flaubert's writing technique consisted of collage-ing together, as if in a list, a series of linguistic repetitions; phrases that he had noticed people using and being limited by, stock phrases that shut out the individual out of the creative side of language, from saying anything other than that which was standardised by the social norms. Yet Flaubert is caught too in this *on dit,* held, like everyone else, to the given language and all its compulsions of meaning. The whole book should be in italics, suggests Heath, 'which is the very project of the *Dictionnaire des idées recues,* but also of *Madame Bovary* in its impersonality of free indirect style, with Flaubert not owning any of the words and phrases he thereby *quotes,* puts into silent italics…' As Heath suggests, the writer in free indirect style moves into discourses without assuming any one as his… but without the assumption either, of some narrative metalanguage.[246] In this way Flaubert creates an identity for himself as copy – he is not different from the world in which he lives, which creates – writes - him rather than the other way round. Interestingly, Michel Foucault comments on two of Flaubert's other characters, the 'kindred sprits' Bouvard and Pecuchet, who occupy themselves 'by copying books, copying their own books, copying every book… and who do so because 'to copy is to do nothing; it is to be the books being copied'[247].

Like the hysteric, Flaubert points out – by copying it – that which is disturbing *in* civilisation, that which denies us our individuality and forces us to conform to the standardised 'other'. He does this by adopting the point of view of the photographer. Using a photographic mode of address, Flaubert constructs his sentences, so to speak, as if he were a camera. It is, as Heath suggests, Flaubert's own strategy of copying that 'provides an answer to the question of how one is to write without oneself being caught in the given discourses, gripped by the existing stereotypes, held to this or that position.' In *Madame Bovary*, 'discourses are copied out, simply set down…but no particular discursive position is taken, no one discourse assumed; the writing remains impersonal, uncommitted',[248] the aim of this strategy being to recreate an image of the world in the objectivity of the work, which would be 'complete in itself', 'independent of its producer.

[244] Heath, S. (1992) *Flaubert*: *Madame Bovary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p 141
[245] Freud's perplexity is echoed in John Ireland's essay.
[246] Heath, S. (1992) *Flaubert*: *Madame Bovary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p 124
[247] Introduction, by Michel Foucault, to *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* Random House, p xliv
[248] Ibid., p 102

'Suspended in the infinite'…'the artist must manage in such a way as to have posterity believe he did not live.'[249]

Compare this aspiration with the aim of the early pioneers of photography, where absence of subject position was, as Geoffrey Batchen proposes, an almost universal aim shared by the inventors of around 1839. 'Almost all spoke of wanting to devise a means by which nature …could be made to represent itself automatically'.[250] The image these inventors sought to capture, and fix, needed to be of the order of something that had been written without any subjective, cultural, intervention, as Talbot's 'carefully considered wording of his invention - "*The Process by Which Natural Objects May Be Made to Delineate Themselves without the Aid of the Artist's Pencil*" - indicated.'[251] Thus linguist Ann Banfield, in her recent work, outlines the connection between the invention of the telescopic lens, leading to the development of the photographic image, and the emergence of a particular kind of 'novelistic' sentence. Banfield traces the advent of a way of thinking - a kind of consciousness coincident with the development of lens technology - that can be summed up as a 'thinking oneself out of the picture'. As she argues, the conjunction of photography and writing (when writing – like hysteria - *itself* adopts a photographic mode) *preserves* the unspeakable, resists the reduction of experience into facts, history etc.[252] 'The advent of modern science', suggests Banfield, has 'opened up…spaces in which instruments – the telescope, the microscope – allow the viewing subject to see, to witness, places where he is not, indeed, where no subject is present. He thereby directly observes… the appearance of things in his absence, and that absence itself – his own – which scientific inference had already allowed him to conceive of and predict.'[253] The realisation for the subject confronted with a photograph, as Banfield implies, is of a world of continuousness, a world that carries on, regardless of whether s/he is there or not. As Banfield stresses, 'the photograph records the contingency of the subject as such; this is the nature of death in it… [and it] does this by conjuring away the subject who observes, whether photographer or viewer.'[254] This realisation, Banfield argues, 'is not co-extensive with speech or communication'. Instead it can only be expressed 'in a specific linguistic style, uniquely written and literary, the style that constitutes narrative fiction' which permits, within its novelistic language, 'a subjectivity reduced to nothing else but what the instrument can record'.[255] Banfield identifies a descriptive sentence, which she claims gives

[249] Ibid., p 105
[250] Batchen, G. (1999) *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*, MIT Press, Cambridge,
[251] Ibid., p56
[252] I was thinking that the 'novel' could be a suggested route towards the creation of what Alain Badiou, in a recent lecture at the Tate gallery, London, describes as 'a description without place', which obviously echoes the 'smoke without fire' or the 'referent-less index', of desire or the Punctum that I have been discussing.
[253] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p265
[254] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p78
[255] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University, p266

'grammatical representation to the appearance of things not necessarily observed', and which she equates with the operation of the photograph. To do this she turns to Barthes, taking as her point of departure his photographic 'noeme', "*This-has-been"*. However, in order to demonstrate that this unit of language does have an equivalence in writing, she argues that it should be 're-written'[256], and proposes instead a "*This was now here*". In this way a particular type of sentence is produced that, as she argues, is structurally the same as the photograph. Following the argument above, this might imply that these sentences are hysterical; that in some way they stage desire.

'Produced by a machine, by a scientific instrument, by a mechanical process, the recorded image is no longer anyone's sensation' yet, Banfield suggests, 'in a precise and restricted way it remains subjective[257]. This is the way in which the photograph differs from any other image. As Barthes notes, the photograph is 'not made by the hand of man',[258] nor is it the product of his mind. Photography, he writes 'does not invent',[259] it simply records; so what is this neutral, impersonal, subjectivity'[260] identified in the photograph? As Banfield points out, this unoccupied or subject-less subjectivity 'defines a complex of language as well. The term which contemporary linguistics assigns this complex is "deixis"',[261] which, as Banfield notes, is a term also of interest to Barthes, who insists, in *Camera Lucida,* that 'the Photograph 'is never anything but an antiphon[262] of "Look", "See", "Here it is"; it points a finger at a certain vis-à-vis and cannot escape this pure deictic language.'[263] But it is Barthes' choice of the term "This", with which he chooses to describe 'what the Photograph reproduces to infinity',[264] that is of particular interest to Banfield, enabling her to equate the deictic "This" in linguistics with Barthes' 'referent' in photography. Furthermore, Banfield concurs that the referent of the photograph, the "This" 'is not an object but a sensation'.[265] In linguistics, Banfield notes, the dualism of "This" 'is state-able without reference to an 'I'.' The deictic system, she argues, can be 'internally divided between those terms which represent the (personal) subject – *I* in

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[256] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p77
[257] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p73
[258] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p82
[259] Ibid., p87
[260] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p72
[261] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p268
[262] Barthes' choice of word evokes the 'empty' echo discussed in hysteria – ie as response or reply from no body, the photograph is the un-symbolisable counterpoint to "Look", and in itself, it cannot be transformed (spoken). *Camera Lucida*, p5
[263] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p4-5
[264] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p277
[265] 'A case in which the referent is specifically a sensation, a sensed object, is not without precedent. Language contains a specific category of reference whose referent is always a sensation: deixis, in particular, the demonstrative pronouns or adjectives – this, that, these, those, here, deictic there, now – those terms which can be said to point to something in a sensible field.' Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," Camera Obscura 24, Sept 1990, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p67

speech, *he, she* or a human *they* in the writing of the novel – and those which represent only a subjective centre – the deictic adverbials of time and place.'[266] With "This", a thing is being indexed, but although there is (which it's deictic function implies) a place from which to see it, that place is not necessarily occupied by a subject, 'for a perspective may be unoccupied, its events grouped around an empty centre.'[267] In the photograph, the "I" (or she, he or they) that might normally be witnessing the scene depicted, is replaced by the 'photographic plate',[268] or camera. 'This', as Banfield adds, 'Lacan saw as well, and if the mirror is for him the model for the imaginary, its reflecting surface is in no way dependent on the existence of an observer[269]

The constructed sentence that Banfield proposes, as a re-working of Barthes' *noeme*, is one that also requires the addition of a "Now". Banfield argues that sentences with a now-in-the-past, 'ie a past tense co-temporal with present time deictics'[270], may represent an empty special and temporal centre, an impersonal subjectivity, where, in the place of a subject there is a subjective but unoccupied centre, an 'observation without an observer.'[271] Here and Now name a private time and place 'which need not be occupied by a subject represented by a first or third person pronoun or other syntactically definable subjective elements.' This is a sentence that, Banfield argues, represents the unobserved.[272] It does this by leaving the "I", ego or self, out. As Banfield states, 'For the *Cogito*, the sentence which names a subjectivity which is obligatorily first person and present tense, a "this is here and now being recorded" is substituted, or rather, to avoid any confusion with a sentence of speech containing a non-explicit first person, "this was now being recorded"… or "*The sun had now sunk lower in the sky*"[273], or simply, "this was now here". This 'complex of language', Banfield argues, is the equivalent of Barthes' photographic 'ca a ete' (that-has-been).[274] Re-written in the imperfect of the now-in-the-past it stands, she suggests, for Barthes' "emanation of past reality".'[275] It

[266] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, p274

[267] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p72

[268] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p277

[269] In other words it needs to be combined with the Symbolic and Real registers to be experienced by a subject. In relation to this comment, Banfield quotes in full the description of 'the Café de Flore crumbling into dust in total solitude', from Seminar II *Le Moi*… that I have used in the first part of this thesis. I was directed to this quote by Ann Banfield, in her essay L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass, *Camera Obscura* 24, p. 72

[270] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University, p 269

[271] Ibid., p271

[272] Ibid., p278

[273] Banfield is quoting Virginia Woolf; Woolf, V. (2000) *The Waves,* Penguin, London p139

[274] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p276-277

[275] Banfield, A. (1990) L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass," *Camera Obscura* 24, *Sept 1990,* Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, p77. (Barthes' quote is from p88 of Camera Lucida.)

also, Banfield suggests, 'coincides with an exclusively novelistic sentence'.[276] The sentence with this, here or now, 'the localisation in language of a potentially impersonal subjectivity, but no subject, which represents in language the image externalised from a subject and recorded by the instrument, can only be realised in the writing of a novel. Out of this possibility', Banfield suggests, 'proceeds an entire productive category: novelistic description, whose special properties Flaubert was the first to exploit and the first …to thematise as the existence of the unobserved, of an infinite number of perspectives, not necessarily occupied by any human subject… this (is a style that) seeks to capture, to arrest within the moment, the appearances of things independent of the observer and his or her thoughts. And, insists Banfield, 'it is the novelists and novelist-theorists who have registered this… as if encountering in the very language of the novel a real and empirically determinable possibility, the disturbing presence of something impersonal, inhuman, past and in that sense, distant, "the this was now here".[277] This is a type of narrative sentence or grammatical construction that can be used, as Virginia Woolf suggests, to describe 'the world seen without a self"'[278]

For Woolf, the problem of the unobserved 'becomes an explicit and central structuring principle of the novel's thematic form'.[279] In Woolf's novel *The Waves*, the question "How to describe the world seen without a self?" is repeatedly formulated, indeed, as Banfield suggests, it is 'presented as a problem for art.'[280] The fact that one of the book's characters answers this question with "There are no words" is, she suggests, 'an indication of the centrality of this problem…and [of] its representation.'[281] In the sentences from Woolf's book that follow, 'which make explicit the unobserved aspect of this vision' there is, Banfield insists, 'no candidate for a fictional observer.' It is apparent, Banfield suggests, that 'Woolf means these sentences to …contrast with the first person monologues of the chapters themselves which…begin as presentations of perception:[282]

The tree, that had burnt foxy red in spring and midsummer… was now black as iron and as bare.

Here lay knife, fork and glass, but lengthened, swollen and made portentous.[283]

Blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spikes of sea-holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand.[284]

Now the sun had sunk. Sea and sky were indistinguishable.[285]

[276] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University, p277
[277] Ibid., p278
[278] Ibid., p276
[279] Ibid., p278
[280] Ibid., p284
[281] Ibid., p293
[282] Ibid., p274
[283] Woolf, V. (2000) *The Waves,* Penguin, London p148
[284] Ibid., p20
[285] Ibid., p167

Similarly, in a section of *To the Lighthouse* called "Time Passes", Banfield notes, there is a description of the empty rooms of the house that consists 'of sentences in which a now in the past occurs but, where there is no observer to attribute their point of view, appear to [be]… recorded by instruments in the absence of any observer.[286] This is a Look that doesn't see …for it is the lens that sees, not the photographer …all subjectivity that requires a subject, an "I" is eliminated…. [in addition, the photographer] has already been eliminated: the thing doesn't need him there to be seen. The photograph is precisely Woolf's "world **seen** without a self."'[287] Finally; '…this oxymoronic combination of present and past, life and absence of life, movement and stasis, can be translated, [ie can migrate from photography to 'text'] not by the *imparfait* of the spoken language, but by a use of the imparfait restricted to written narrative and specifically, the novel.[288] This is the tense that in French marks the *style indirect libre* …that style for the presentation of consciousness; [and] the tense unique to it is linguistically defined by the unspeakable simultaneity of now and the past, as in the following example from *Madame Bovary* where, in narrating herself [*as* a] now in the past, Emma (re)produces herself as image: "Quel Bonheur dans ce temps-la! quelle liberté! quel espoir! quelle abondance d'illusion! Il n'en *restait* plus, *maintenant.".* This, as Banfield also points out 'is this tense that Roland Barthes resorts to, in *Camera Lucida*, in order to recount the event that is central to his account of photography – the discovery of a photograph of a dead woman; "Et je la decouvris …La photographie était très ancienne",[289] with a sentence that shifts, after the preterite of found – decouvris - to an imparfait – était; thus we enter, novelistically',[290] claims Banfield, 'a now-in-the past[291].

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[286] Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds) (1987*) The Linguistics of Writing*, Ann Banfield, 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', Manchester University Press, UK, p274

[287] Ibid., p 273

[288] In her re-writing of Barthes' *noeme* Banfield justifies her use of the imperfect by linking it back to Barthes' thoughts about memory. In relation to the photograph, notes Banfield, 'Barthes explicitly rejects the perfect as the tense of photography,' stating that 'the Photograph [is] never, in essence, a memory, (whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense) [*Camera Lucida*, p91].' However, as Banfield stresses, 'There is more than one kind of memory, as we know from Proust.' And in *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse*, under the heading "*souvenir/remembrance*", Barthes finds the linguistic form for this – as Banfield claims - *photographic* moment: the imperfect, of which he writes:

'Happy and/or tormenting remembrance of an object, a gesture, a scene, linked to the loved being and marked by the intrusion of the imperfect tense… the tense of fascination: it seems to be alive and yet doesn't move: imperfect presence, imperfect death; neither oblivion nor resurrection...

(Barthes, *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse* p 216-217 quoted in Banfield *L'imparfait*… p75)

Its important to note that it is Banfield, not Barthes, who makes these connections; linking the imperfect tense to the operation of memory, and both to that of the photograph, thereby 'proving' that the tense of the photograph is the imperfect, and doing so in order to equate her novelistic sentence construction with Barthes' photographic *noeme*.

[289] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, p67

[290] Note Margaret Iverson's comment about *Camera Lucida* as being as kind of 'fictional' autobiography – ie a novel. See Iversen, M. (1994) 'What is a photograph?' in *Art History Vol. 17 No.3,* Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p450

[291] Banfield, A. (1990) *L'Imparfait de L'Objectif: The Imperfect of the Object Glass*," *Camera Obscura* 24, p76

Why might an artist or writer want to attempt to 'copy' this unit of language, to construct an'unspeakable sentence'[292] or description of a world, without them in it? The point might be to try and re-enter language on some other terms. In this way the novelistic narrative   could be considered, as Dennis Hollier comments in an essay on Surrealist 'autobiographical' texts such as *Nadja*, as 'a search for what, in literary space, would be the equivalent of what a shadow is in pictorial space[293]: *an index that makes the work lose all virtuality, forever disturbs the calm of the image'.*[294] The photograph makes it clear that it is the continued existence of things outside the self, without the mediation of a thought-full, speaking subject, which is disturbing to the individual. This is photography's 'disturbance'[295]. It is what the photograph, 'starting with the first photograph, Niepce's picture of the table set with no one visible, literally and uncannily' shows. 'In the look of that table which needs no observer to look at it in order to continue to look like a table[296] …the viewer meets with a start his own absence.'[297] As Virginia Woolf observed in her essay "*The Cinema*", "We behold [things] as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it."[298] And yet Woolf also suggested an alternative role for cinema. This, which must connect it to its indexicality, would be to represent 'thought in its wilderness, in its beauty, in its oddity' which could, in the moment of watching cinema, be experienced, made present, 'as smoke pours from Vesuvius'.[299]

"I am Here" as Photographic *noeme*.

In her two-part essay, *Notes on the Index*,[300] Rosalind Krauss draws our attention to a group of artists who, either through a 'pervasive use'[301], of the photographic medium, or through adapting a medium so that it becomes structurally or functionally similar to photography, make apparent within their works 'the presence of the index.'[302] Krauss suggests that what is going on in the body of work that interests her is a 'conversion of the pictorial and sculptural

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[292] This – '*Unspeakable Sentences*' - is the title of Banfield's book

[293] Hollier is particularly interested in *photographs* of shadows.

[294] Hollier, D. (1994) 'Surrealist Precipitates' (Trans. "Précipités surréalistes")' in *October 69, Summer 1994,* MIT Press, Cambridge, p124 (My italics)

[295] To return (again) to Barthes *Camera Lucida*, p12

[296] Barthes also evokes this (Niepce's) table of 1823 Every photograph is a certificate of presence…. [contemplating the] 'first photograph… [man knew that] he was nose-to-nose with a mutant… his consciousness posited the object encountered outside of any analogy, like the ectoplasm of "what-had-been": neither image nor reality, a new being really: a reality one can no longer touch.'

[297] Banfield, A. (1987) 'Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre', in *The Linguistics of Writing* Fabb, Attridge, Durant and MaCabe (Eds), Manchester University Press, UK

[298] Woolf, V. (1950) *The Captains Deathbed and other Essays,* Harcourt, New York, p181

[299] McNeillie, A. (ed.) (1994) *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4 1925–28*, 'The Cinema', The Hogarth Press, pp. 348–354. In the context of my ideas, I would like to substitute Woolf's 'thought' for *desire*, which may anyway – or at least under certain circumstances - be the same thing.

[300] Krauss, R. (1986) 'Notes on the Index', *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press

[301] Ibid., p206 With reference to my suggestion that the use of photography in work is inherently linked to refusal, to a challenge to the prevailing social order. Indeed Krauss notes 'the tremendous disaffection' for the work that preceded that which she focuses on in this essay. 1970's art 'could have been born out of that dissatisfaction.'

[302] Ibid., p202. Krauss claims that 'it is Duchamp who first establishes the connection between the index (as a type of sign) and the photograph.' This is apparent in the work that he made in collaboration with Man Ray, 'the inventor of the Rayograph' or photogram, 'which forces the issue of photography's existence as an index.' (Krauss p203)

[i.e. symbolic] codes into that of the photographic message without a code'. This results in an alteration in, or disturbance to, the relationship between sign and meaning, where something irreducible and unsymbolisable operates in tension with (or as co-presence within) something closer to discourse; an artificial system based on the substitution and exchange of nameable things. Presented in the form of a list, Krauss begins her essay by noting the 'proliferating string of terms' that seem to emerge in any attempt to describe art from the 1970's (this decade is the context for her essay). She makes the observation that '70's art is 'diversified, split, factionalized.' There is no unified outlook or coherent theme, no dominant idea. However, the outlook is optimistic - perhaps even utopic - with Krauss suggesting that within this list of descriptive terms, 'there is prefigured an image of personal freedom.'[303] In this 'great plethora of possibilities', as she suggests, there is room for individual choice or will. This begs the question as to whether there isn't 'something else' going on, present in the work - other than 'style' - 'for which all these terms are a possible manifestation'.[304] Indeed, as Krauss seems to be implying, these works might be engaging with something that is *in itself* like a list, that is note-like, provisional, able to be shuffled or sorted into any order,[305] and that the string of descriptive terms generated by this work – the 'multiple options' – might be considered as structural echo of that which is being investigated within it. The work that interests Krauss is generally characterised by its autobiographic mode; ways in which the artist represents his or her subjectivity, or how s/he perceives him or her self within a social/cultural context. Yet the artists she focuses on appear to be aiming at a representation of selfhood that contains something that cannot be spoken, even though as I discuss below, this unspeakable thing might itself be manifested within or contained by speech. The role of the index in the works that interest Krauss is to reflect as trace, notation, print or *cast,* something of the self that is intermittent, variable, fragmentary; foregrounding the 'something else' which seems to exceed a single term; which is, like Barthes' photograph, 'unclassifiable'.

Krauss discusses Vito Acconci's 1973 video[306] work *Air Time,*[307] which presents us with a monologue in which there appears to be two separate 'voices', or positions from which to speak:

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[303] Ibid., p196 Also: …'we are asked to contemplate a great plethora of possibilities in the list that must now be drawn around the present.'
[304] Ibid., p 196
[305] This latter theme being taken up by Denis Hollier in his 2005 essay *Notes on the Index Card.* In this essay Hollier draws our attention to the fact that two of the writers who, in their 'systematic use of the autobiographical first person,' Roland Barthes and Michel Leiris, 'demonstrated values that are close to one another' but, as Hollier points out, 'they have something else in common: both left an impressive volume of index cards or slips… The result is a secondary, indirect autobiography, originating not from the subject's innermost self but from the stack of index cards (the autobiographical shards) in the little box on the author's desk… A self built on stilts, on 'pilotis', relying not on direct, live memories (as in Proust's involuntary memory) but on archival documentation, on paper work, a self that relates to himself indirectly, by means of quotation, of self compilation.'
[306] Video is clearly considered by Krauss to fall into the category of the photographic and to therefore possess its indexical qualities.
[307] Acconci, V, (1973) *Recording Studio From Air Time.* (This is the correct title of the piece)

'…for 40 minutes the artist sits and talks to his reflected image. Referring to himself, he uses "I", but not always. Sometimes he addresses his mirrored self as 'you'. "You' is a pronoun that is also filled, within the space of his recorded monologue, by an absent person, someone he imagines himself to be addressing. But the referent for this 'you' keeps slipping, shifting, returning once again to the "I" who is himself, reflected in the mirror. [308]

'Acconci', suggests Krauss, 'is playing out the drama of the shifter.' Caught in a loop, he plays with the confusion between a (desiring) self that speaks and an image of the self (on which the speaking self is hinged), which is mute but appears to 'lack' nothing. Acconci ties this confusion to the very words he uses to differentiate one self from the other: 'I' and 'you'. These, as Krauss points out, are '"shifters"; 'defined by Jakobson as linguistic signs that are "filled with signification" only because they are "empty"'. The word "This" (as Krauss reminds us) 'is such a sign, waiting each time it is evoked for its referent to be supplied. The personal pronouns "I" and "you" are also shifters'[309] and, 'insofar as they are arbitrary' are obviously 'part of the symbolic code of language'. However, they are also 'a case of linguistic sign which partakes of the symbol even while [sharing] the features of something else.' The pronouns, for example, depend for their meaning 'on the existential presence of a given speaker', and therefore, as is the case for all shifters,[310] they 'announce themselves as [also] belonging to a different type of sign: the kind that is termed the index'.[311] Therefore these signs are hybrids, both indexical and iconic, and thus, as I will explain in more detail below, they reflect the condition of subjectivity. And this hybridity, as Krauss demonstrates, is also the case for the photograph. Krauss draws on C.S. Peirce's categorisation of signs to back up her claim that the photograph is inherently indexical, although this is complicated, as Pierce concedes, by the fact that photographs are representations and therefore also iconic.[312] The complicated hybridity of the Photograph, where it either falls between the two categories of sign or is equally in both at once, with the result that it verges on being unclassifiable, evokes the condition of the subject, as split between "I" and "you", self and other – a fact that Acconci – amongst others - exploits in his work.

Physical traces are obviously indexes (I mentioned Krauss's example of 'footprints' above). But I could add the spider's web to this list and, by extension, an individual's particular

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[308] Krauss, R. (1986), *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, Notes on the Index*, MIT Press, p196-7 In fact the "you" Acconci addresses is his absent (ex) girlfriend… although he does mix 'you' and 'I' up, as Krauss suggests, having chosen to speak to her (and very publicly) through looking at his mirrored self. Acconci almost always does have an 'other' that he is addressing, although the closed circuitry is also an important part of his work.
[309] Ibid., p197
[310] Ibid., p198 This is not just the case for the personal pronouns alone but applies to all shifters, a fact that Ann Banfield put to use in her demonstration of (paradoxically) 'speakerless sentences', which gave a role to the shifter "This". As I explained above, she achieved this by having a camera occupy the place of the speaking subject, thereby providing a place for a kind of impersonal subjectivity – an unoccupied centre.
[311] Ibid., p 198
[312] Ibid., p215

drawing style or handwriting, especially their signature or autograph.[313] These are types of graphic mark making that can be thought of as indexes that are attached to or derived from the self, like a cast shadow.[314] Similarly, speech can be considered as an indexical trace of the shifter "I", when the person talking is temporarily occupying the place of the "I"; 'vacant' until the moment someone starts to speak. Quotes are also indexical 'marks'. These are all forms of 'marks or traces' of a particular cause; 'the actual referents of the shifters'.[315] Something could also be said about thumbprints, which, as is sometimes the case for signatures, are indexes of the body that are used to recognise or even legally verify the status of an individual, his or her existence; these are marks that are regarded as indexes of the truth, recognisable by law, that are used in legislation as certification of innocence or guilt.[316] However, I am interested in exploring the idea, which Krauss raises in this essay, that there are occasions when what the object the marks or traces signify is the fantasy, which has no corresponding point in reality; when the 'cause' of these marks (~~stemming from the imagination~~) is desire. Lacan uses the term 'shifter' (or index-term as he also calls it) 'to show the problematic and undecidable nature of the I'. As Dylan Evans elaborates, 'the I of the enunciation is not the same as the I of the statement… the shifter, which, in the statement designates him.'[317] The "I" of the enunciation is the index of the self that speaks. However, self definition is composed, in part, through an identification with what Krauss describes as 'a felt connection to someone else', and self expression is grounded in the symbolic i.e. the "I" speaks *through* the other. 'It is within that condition of alienation', Krauss suggests, that fantasy 'takes root.'[318] Fantasy is a component of the image one has of oneself, but it is also *surplus* to that identity; a part of the subject that escapes or evades symbolic definition. Nevertheless, as Krauss seems to be implying, fantasy, (as the referent of the shifter "I") can be indexed, pointed to. Suspended like smoke, or experienced as an echo, it makes an

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[313] I refer the reader to Daniels, D, (1996) *Media Art Perspectives*, 'Hand-Name-Script-Medium-Identity: Signature', ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany, p157-165. As Daniels notes on page158, 'one of the first signatures in European art to reproduce the appearance of the artist's ordinary handwriting is that of Jan van Eyck… instead of using the customary terms "fect" ("made") or "complevit" ("completed"), the inscription reads "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434", (literally, "Jan van Eyck was here".)' This certification of the artist's 'being there' became increasingly important after the birth of print making in the 15th century, where the signature plays the role in Krauss's theory above, as that which might cut across the indexical cast of the print and thereby complicate the mode by which the work functions as a sign. The signature signifies as 'perishable trace' of the artist, with this interfering with or claiming something back from the indexical closed circuit of the print.

[314] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p 198. See also Hollier D, Surrealist Precipitates… In evoking the hybridity of the photograph and the status of indexes that are also icons or representations, that in other words, like the spider's web, are photographs and therefore indexes of indexes Hollier uses the term 'catachreses' Cast shadows in photography, he writes, can be described or categorized as 'pictorial catachreses… shifting from causality to resemblance, from metonymy to metaphor these doubles (*these severed shadows* – separated and liberated from the object that caused *them*), in addition to being the effect of their cause, merge with it in order to resemble a third thing.'

[315] Ibid., p198

316 Questions may be raised here about the status of electronic (digitally created) footprints… which although legally viable seem to cut the subject, as fantasy, out – yet is this really the case? Can the fantasy be traced, return, in whatever medium or code?

[317] Evans, D. (1996) *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* Routledge, London, p 182

[318] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p197

impermanent mark on the here and now. Yet it can also be represented, embedded in an artwork.

In order to - as Krauss describes it - 'play with the shifter', one needs a device - such as a mirror or a photograph - which can produce a doubling or multiplicity of "I" 's exchangeable with "you"'s. Indeed, Acconci has written that video and photography are appropriate 'instruments of self-analysis and person to person relationships.' But, as Krauss points out, this slippage between the personal pronouns occurs in every day conversation: 'as we speak to one another, both of us using "I" and "you", the referents of these words keep changing places across the space of our conversation'[319] Acconci's *Air Time* establishes, according to Krauss, both the 'drama' of the shifter, and its 'indexicality', providing 'a space in which linguistic confusion operates in concert with the narcissism implicit in the performers relation to the mirror [with his 'self' and 'other' from which his speech 'derives']. But this conjunction [and the possible confusion that may result - on which hysteria draws] is perfectly logical. As Krauss re-iterates, with reference to Lacan, identification is constructed through the double[320], through the reflected image in the mirror mediated by the (m)other. '[T]he self is felt… only as an image of the self.'[321] So, in the sense that Rosalind Krauss establishes for it - ie as a trace of the 'self - the index is tied to a kind of emptiness, as either a type of mirror image (or reflection) of something that isn't there, or as an unoccupied position that 'waits' to be filled.

The self, as the video work by Vito Acconci described above demonstrates, is dividable into an 'I" and a "you"; it can contain, and speak from, both these linguistic 'positions'. However, as Krauss suggests, in Acconci's work this 'drama' is acted out 'in its regressive form.'[322] Regressive, both because the work re-enacts a state before the differentiation, or split, between the positions "I" and "you" have been successfully formulated, and because it is narcissistic; no one else is involved, no other intrudes to spoil the scene (the other as "you" is the same as the "I"). In this way, Acconci's work points to the illusory, artificial and above all fragile state of this subjective split; it can easily breakdown. As Krauss points out, until the child passes through Lacan's "mirror stage", leaving the narcissistic bliss contained in a body undifferentiated from the world around it in exchange for a 'self' that, defined by the other, resides in an alienating image, he or she does not recognise the difference between the terms "I" and "you". In fact, children usually echo back - when they mean to say "I" - the term they have recognised as addressed to them: "you". Aphasics, Krauss notes, *lose* the ability to recognise this difference.   Therefore, in also muddling up the usage of these terms, Acconnci's Air Time performs a step *backwards* in the subjective mode. The constitution of

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[319] Ibid., *p197*

[320] Again, Krauss p197) is equating the double and the mirror image, which is not entirely correct, at least in the terms that I have been trying to establish for them, through Barthes' commentary on the photograph. She states that 'Lacan's concept of the mirror stage… involves the child's self-identification through his double: his reflected image.' Barthes would say that the double of the photograph was closer to an hallucination than an 'image'.

[321] Ibid., p197

[322] Ibid., p197

the subject hinges on the moment that s/he is able to differentiate between him or her self and another person. Selfhood, as Krauss elaborates, as the difference between "I" and "you", pivots on the correct use of these signs. The child, Dick, in Lacan's case history cited above[323], was an example of a human individual who was not, in the terms just described, yet a subject, who had not moved, as Krauss defines the process, from 'a global, undifferentiated sense of himself towards a distinct, integrated notion of selfhood – one that could be symbolised through an individuated use of "I" and "you".'[324]

Yet Krauss is interested in the way in which artists (she cites Duchamp's work in particular) in refusing to properly recognise or stay within the boundary of a self differentiated from an 'other', have produced what she calls 'split self portraits': works that both point to the division of the self and retain something continuous, simultaneous and undifferentiated; works that seem to indicate that the subject can appear to 'hesitate'[325] on this boundary between "I" and "you", self and other. Krauss notes that this 'splitting' can occur, as is the case within some of Duchamp's work, along the lines of sexual identity (she/ he) but also, importantly, as this links the condition of selfhood with the operation of the photograph, *along the semiotic axis of icon and index.* For example, Duchamp's work *With My Tongue in My Cheek* (1959), which refers through its title to the ironic position Duchamp takes in relation to his practice, also, as Krauss notes, 'both contemplates and instances… a rupture between image and speech, or more specifically, language.'[326] In this way, this hesitation or refusal to take one position or another, ie to either adopt a position in language as a speaking subject or to stay as self-contained, mute, narcissist entertains the fantasy, defined more fully below, of a time before any choice had to be made at all.

'*On a sheet of paper Duchamp sketches his profile, depicting himself in the representational terms of the graphic icon. On top pf this drawing, coincident with part of its contour, is added the area of chin and check, cast from his own face in plaster. Index is juxtaposed to icon…*'[327]

Taken literally, i.e. word for word (as, for example, a psychotic would) this phrase – as title - could mean one only thing. As Krauss points out; 'to actually place one's tongue in one's cheek is to lose the capacity for speech altogether.'[328] In this way, Duchamp's work presents 'a kind of trauma of signification.'[329] Two competing sign systems are present at the same

[323] Lacan, J. (1991) The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book One: Freud's Papers on Technique, Norton, London, p68

[324] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, Cambridge, p197

[325] Baer (p62) suggests this is the case for the hysteric, who is confused by – or hesitates at - the boundary between 'I'/you and Self/Other. Hysteria is 'aporia [doubt] made into symptom'

[326] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, Cambridge, p206

[327] Ibid., p206

[328] Ibid., p206

[329] Krauss claims that 'it is Duchamp who first establishes the connection between the index (as a type of sign) and the photograph,' which is apparent in the work he made in collaboration with Man Ray, 'the

time; the icon – in the form of the drawing, which, as a representation, is part of the realm of language - and the index, the cast of the cheek, which as pure 'uncoded' image, Krauss opposes to the symbolic system of language. The later work of Marcel Duchamp, argues Krauss, demonstrates ways in which 'the use of the shifter to locate the self in relation to its world' can collapse. His work, she argues, exemplifies ways in which artists can engage with this phenomena[330] and use it as a model for a practice aimed 'the problem of naming [or locating, perhaps] an individuated self'.[331] His piece *Tu m'*, [simply, 'you/me'] is one way of signalling the potential for disaster that the shifter presents. Another is the division of the self into an 'I' and a 'you' through the adoption of an alter-ego… "Rose Selavy and I".[332] Other examples of Duchamp's work that Krauss identifies as being both (split) self-portraiture (the self projected as double), and as bearing (testifying to) the indexical character of the photograph, include the *Large Glass.* What she claims for these works is the co-presence of the index (the photograph as always indexical) which sits alongside and disturbs their iconic status. A photograph contains an element – as physical imprint - that 'short-circuits' or bypasses the symbolic. The meaning or interpretation of this indexical element remains 'in those modes of identification that are associated with the Imaginary'[333] - ie the fantasy. This, one could argue, is exactly like the hysterical symptom. For Duchamp, the project of depicting the self took on these qualities 'of enigmatic refusal and mask.'[334] The resulting artworks are branded, stamped or imprinted with the insistence of something unrepresentable, connected to the body.

There is also, as Krauss points out, another way that this desiring body can be heard -quite literally - through speech as addressed to the other, a process that indexes the "I" of the spoken word**.** Krauss gives as example another artwork that has interested her, another monologue; that of Deborah Hay, a dancer who, instead of dancing, speaks to her audience in a live performance and tells them that '*instead of dancing she wished to talk.*' In this way

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inventor of the Rayograph' or photogram, 'which forces the issue of photography's existence as an index.' (Krauss, op. cit. p203)

[330] Ibid., p199 The way that Duchamp does this is more fully explained in Annette Michelson's (1973) article in Artforum, XII, which draws 'parallels between those symptoms that form the psychopathological syndrome of autism and specific aspects of Duchamp's art.'

[331] Ibid., p200

[332] Duchamp can say, and does so in writing, "Rrose Selavy and I", which indicates that someone, or something, *else* speaks at the same time as he does. Language, in this sentence, becomes occupied by a double which is both self and other – this as a strategy for staging the return of something that language may have taken out, extracted (as the price for entry into the Symbolic, the cut or mark of subjectivity). However, it is not just or not only through the addition of an 'other' into his speech (an other who also happens to be of the opposite sex) that Duchamp 'infects' (Kp200) disrupts or disturbs language, upsetting, as Krauss suggests, 'the balance of meaning.' It is also through the homophonic confusion caused by the name – or sound – of Rrose Selavy which, through the way that it is heard, turns into a sentence. Rrose Selavy transforms (in spoken French) into *Eros, C'est la vie*, which in turn evokes the death drive, Thanatos, opposed by Freud to Eros, the drive to conserve life, to stay alive. 'The confusion in the shifter couples', as Krauss asserts, 'with another kind of breakdown, as form begins to erode the certainty of content' (cf Joyce) and 'sheer musicality' is substituted 'for the process of signification.'332 The signifier falls, drops away from, its referent - and vice versa, as the referent disappears.

[333] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p203

[334] Ibid.,p202

the audience witnessed 'a verbal discourse through which the subject repeats the simple fact that she is present' The substance of her monologue – ie its 'essence' - is that *she was there* (note that the speaking of this would have been in the present tense, as in an "I am here"). In presenting herself to the audience through speech, Hay's performance could be interpreted as both a refusal of and a contribution to her particular discipline; dance. As Krauss suggests, her action was 'a flight from the terms of aesthetic convention' coupled with the ideal of achieving 'total self presence'; with this latter component being aligned to the fantasy (that nothing was ever given up). Hay had begun her performance by telling her audience that she had come to dance with the aspiration that, through it, she would be able to 'be in touch with the movement of every cell in her body'. By repeating the simple fact that she is present Hay thereby duplicates the fantasy, both structurally and in terms of its content, as the content of her fantasy is simply the desire to speak, 'to have recourse to speech'[335] rather than to speak *of* any particular one thing or another.

There is, Krauss asserts, a 'logical relation' between the three components of Hay's performance; the refusal or absence of the usual codes of dance, the presence of speech as indexical trace of the body in the here and now (for which the 'language' of dance is exchanged) and finally the staging of the fantasy (something inside the self, connected to 'self definition'), all of which add up, as Krauss argues to 'the reduction of the conventional sign to a trace' The element of refusal, the retention or staging of the fantasy combined with a kind of reduced speech, also has a structural similarity to hysteria. What is indexed in this performance is a kind of pure subjectivity – the essence of the desiring subject – as desire to register the trace of being. 'The movement [ie speech] to which Hay turns – a kind of Brownian motion[336] of the self – has about it this quality of trace.' Hay's performance does however aim at representation because it still uses language – her speech is both unsymbolisable index and 'supplemental discourse'.

The Lacanian analyst Bruce Fink has written about ways in which the subject lies somewhere '"between language and jouissance": the subject can have *either* some sort of primordial [regressive] pleasure *or* language, but not both. But to become a subject, the infant, so to speak, has no choice, or at best a sort of "forced choice". She or he 'has to be "seduced", enticed,' – one could almost say "hoodwinked" - into making this choice; that is, plunging in favour of language. Fantasy, as Fink continues, 'is the attempt to bring the two elements of the choice – the subject of language and jouissance – together in such a way that they are "compossible".[337] Fantasy thus attempts to overcome the either/or, the choice made that responsible for the advent of the subject and for a loss of satisfaction; it stages the attempt to

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[335] Ibid., p210
[336] Brownian Motion (after the botanist Robert Brown): The irregular oscillations of microscopic particles suspended in a fluid. (Definition from The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary)
[337] Fink 'borrows' this term from Alain Badiou [*Conditions*, Paris: Seuil, 1992]

reverse that loss.'[338] In other words, the breakdown in the use of the shifter mentioned above, the lack of a clear difference between the labels "I" and "you" and the refusal to differentiate between self and other – with this action being characterised by a sense of 'return' - is part of the aim of the fantasy. Fantasy (motivated by desire, loss) tries to speak outside of, or find an alternative route within, the language imposed on the subject by the symbolic system, and through which (through differentiation, discontinuity and a process of never ending substitution) a convention of meaning is established. Note, as Michael Finn suggests, 'one of the central Proustian strategies for dealing with the world of the already verbally recognised and qualified, is to circumvent language entirely, to pass through to language's other side, where words have not yet been uttered.'[339] Like desire, the photograph contains an element that evades symbolisation; as mentioned above, that which is indexical (ie all of it) is outside the symbolic system. But the photograph is also a representation, an image. In this way the photograph introduces a confusion at the level of the signifier, echoed within the desiring subject. In terms of desire the "I was here" of the indexical mark allows the fantasy to remain untouched by language, to trace something that is unsymbolisable – that is outside the symbolic order What are these marks? More than just meaningless scribbles, perhaps they are closer to what Barthes calls doodles which have something of the daydream (as fantasy) attached to them – simply 'the signifier without the signified.' It is significant that after reproducing these illegible marks, Barthes returns - for the final page of his book - to writing and in his own hand states, 'One writes with one's desire, and I am not through desiring.'

How does this link to ideas about the fantasy/ the conditions of photography? Krauss argues that the bodies' movement can be understood 'as something the body does not produce.' Instead, it can be thought of as a 'circumstance' i.e. an event in time 'that is registered on it (or, invisibly, within it).' This circumstance, in other words, is what is traced (or what traces itself) in Hay's spoken performance. As it does so, Krauss argues, it 'ceases to function symbolically and takes on the character of the index.' It becomes a manifestation of presence, directly traceable to its cause: the "I" that 'speaks'. Yet this presence, this 'trace of the body's life' as a message that translates into the statement "I am here", is an experience of pure consciousness that, as argued in the first part of this thesis, cannot operate at the same time as the 'self', through which, within which, experience is registered only in the aftermath. Is the self, therefore, absent at this moment of speaking? Krauss seems to indicate that it might be. '[T]his cellular motion[340] of which Hay speaks [within the very act of speaking] is specifically *uncoded.[341]* It is, as Krauss argues, 'disengaged from the codes of dance' but it is also incompatible with the self. In the instance of the spoken word we are in the irreducible

[338] Fink, B (1997) *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Harvard University Press, p278, *n*25

[339] Finn, M.R. (1999) *Proust: the Body and Literary Form,* Cambridge University Press, p89

[340] Re this strange phrase 'cellular motion': remember it is Hay's fantasy that through dance she could 'be in touch with the movement [i.e. the motion] of every cell in her body.' (Krauss, op. cit. p210)

[341] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, '*Notes on the Index', MIT Press, p211 [My emphasis]

presence of the "I"; traced within – or as - the search for words.[342] So, although there is a message in Hay's speech, it is, as Krauss claims, 'a message without a code' – ie a message from which the symbolic, the other, is absent. There is, however, a message in the words Hay uses, as they become joined up into sentences, as they form particular grammatical constructions. This work of art is a *re*presentation; the "I" is literally 'staged'; it can only be presented as co-presence to a 'self' that uses language. The self acknowledges the codes, addresses itself to an Other, through the very act of choosing one word over another and linking them up to make communicable 'sense'. In this way the uncoded message "I" is, as Krauss argues, 'supplemented' by the presence of a discourse; one that repeats - as echo - 'the message of pure presence in an articulated language.'[343] The message therefore *translates*, it is converted into language and becomes readable. The unit of language "I am here" as index of pure presence, pure consciousness, becomes a message, a representation, as soon as it *has been* stated, as soon as it *has been* spoken.

Without this supplement, this mediation through a language that involves the other, the message would simply be: "There is a message" (which would be how it would be received by someone who falls into the psychoanalytic category of psychosis.[344]) Furthermore, as I have been indicating, because of the fact that meaning, as a product of discourse, comes *after* the message has been delivered, "I am here" is only understood retroactively. Presence has no meaning - there is no meaning in it. Hay needs to get to the end of her sentence to 'send' her message. Her message is received, understood, only after she has finished speaking it. Meaning occurs in language only when what is being communicated has already been announced, written or read, it does not occur *in* the saying, writing or reading; nothing means anything until you reach the end of the sentence - or the punctuation mark. In this uncoded (indexical) message, 'meaning' returns, as (symbolic) afterthought. The "I" – based in the imaginary - registers its presence retroactively, mediated through the particular set of identifications that make up the speaker, the self. Therefore "I am Here" is always, like the photographic *noeme*, "That-has-been"; an image that 'returns'. As Barthes elaborates; by stating that the photographic evidence is "that has been", 'what I posit is not only the absence of the object; it is also, by one and the same movement, on equal terms, the fact that this

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[342] Lacan defined neurotics – ie anyone who is a subject of (or to) desire - as people who 'speak beyond the words they consciously use', while psychotics on the other hand 'talk freely and fluently without really speaking.' Neurotics cannot prevent themselves from saying more than they intend to convey, whereas psychotics do not manage to speak, however articulate the sentences they produce. For the neurotic, speech functions *beyond* verbalised language, in the psychotic language operates without speech.

[343] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* 'Notes on the Index', MIT Press, All quotes in this paragraph are from p211

[344] In other words, there would be no content to the message. In fact there is very little content to Hay's message but what there is, ie "I am here" is the very thing that a psychotic could not articulate (Being 'here', for example, means you can't be 'there'. In the very act of designating a place, the speaker has to make a choice has to differentiate between one thing or another, and thereby acknowledge the gap in language… "I am here" automatically supposes a "You" to whom this statement is addressed; a "you" who must be "there", where "I" am not.

object has indeed existed.'[345] Regarded in these terms, speech is the epitome of the 'perishable trace' – registering in memory only after it has faded into silence, after which point it (as "I") is no longer there.

Krauss uses the phrase "message without a code" to link her thoughts to those of Roland Barthes[346] and thereby to connect the logic of Hay's work to what she takes to be the 'inherent features' of the photograph. Barthes made this statement about the photographic image - that it was 'fundamentally uncoded'[347] - some fifteen years before he came to write *Camera Lucida,* and although he then slightly modifies it, the idea is still relevant to this discussion because it gives representation to that which within the photograph is unsymbolisable, disturbing, unclassifiable; that which is outside the subject, who is unnecessary to it. 'The realists', as Barthes declares in *Camera Lucida*, 'of whom I am one and of whom I was already one when I asserted that the Photograph was an image without a code …do not take the photograph for a copy of reality, but for an emanation of past reality… The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time. [In this way, the photograph's] 'power of authentication exceeds the power of representation'.[348] Through its indexicality (although Barthes doesn't use this word, preferring "Reference"[349]) the photograph represents that which is outside, in excess or beyond representation and thus echoes the kind of pre-symbolic (or unsymbolisable) component of identity – a pre-subject before the split caused by the entry into language - which the fantasy strives to reproduce. Indeed as Krauss notes, it is 'the order of the natural world that imprints itself on the photographic emulsion… [like a] transfer or trace'[350]; a world that, as described by Virginia Woolf, is 'without a self'; the experience of which is beyond or before language. 'The connective tissue binding the objects contained by the photograph', as Krauss asserts, 'is that of the world itself, rather than that of a cultural system.'[351] Yet (as discussed above) certain artists have chosen to work with 'the terminology of the index'; to incorporate the immediate, physical, presence of an indexical mark into their works precisely in order to stage a presence of their own. Can it be that these indexical traces or cast objects (which include that which echoes in speech) are offered as *substitute* for the un-split (or regressed) subject? It seems that there may be a point at which the un-coded index coincides with the fantasy of self presence that is the "I". (Although in fact the very act of substitution (re)introduces discontinuity, symbolic exchange – ie in accordance with structure of the fantasy the artists want to have their cake and eat it, the fantasy is to pivot *between* the I and the you).

[345] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p115
[346] Barthes R, (1977) *Image Music Text,* Fontana Press, London, p17
[347] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p211
[348] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p88-89
[349] Ibid., p 77 '..neither Art nor Communication [ie symbolic], it is Reference [Imaginary], which is the founding order of Photography.'
[350] Krauss, R. (1986), *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, '*Notes on the Index', MIT Press, p211
[351] Ibid., p 212

As Krauss suggests, this place of either coincidence or substitution (or both) may be located somewhere on or near the frame. In the work that she is focussing on, the function and, frequently, the conventional form of the frame - as 'edge' of an image – changes. Instead of the frame being the thing that establishes or designates a limit (in response to the internal meaning of a work) the work *itself* becomes the frame; it is given 'the role of selection (gathering a visually intelligible sample of the underlying continuum) in order to become 'repository' of this natural continuum, as 'evidence' of it. The artists of interest to Krauss 'transfer [by or as] impression or cast', the features of the natural world onto or into an image, 'the way the word "this", accompanied by a pointing gesture isolates a piece of the real world and fills itself with meaning by becoming, for that moment, the transitory label [sign or announcement] of a natural event.'[352] "This" as pointing gesture - the act itself - of isolating a piece of the world – coincides with the frame. The work, Krauss argues, functions as indexical shifter – filled or emptied in relation to the presence or absence of something that causes the 'quasi-tautological relationship between signifier and signified with which Barthes characterises [the flat surface of] the photograph'[353] to be interrupted - punctuated - by something intermittent, discontinuous. 'By the mark of something', as Barthes writes, 'the photograph is no longer "anything whatever"' The referent does not, cannot in itself signify, but something to do the return of the natural world presented as evidence of a past that has disappeared provokes 'a tiny shock… a fulguration',[354] which is also an addition. The photograph is no longer the 'continuous message' for Barthes,[355] yet 'what I add to the photograph [is] nonetheless already there.'[356] Something, in other words, that strays beyond the frame.[357] It is here, as Barthes suggests, that 'a blind field is created.'[358] The artists point to or 'frame' the natural continuum - where a mark can function as a frame, a breaking point, and vice versa - and by doing so intercut or break the undifferentiated continuity with something connected to the way in which the shifter "I" is temporally filled in speech. Something interrupts, ruptures or punctuates… What I am trying to do is link the blind field established by the frame or pointing gesture of the artwork to Barthes' experience of the Punctum as punctuation mark, cut, gap or subtle beyond which launches desire… 'beyond what it permits us to see.' [359]

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[352] Ibid., p216
[353] Ibid., p212
[354] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p49
[355] Barthes R, (1977) *Image Music Text,* Fontana Press, London, p17
[356] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, p55
[357] Ibid., pp 56 – 58 Barthes gives as example Robert Mapplethorpe's self portrait with outstretched finger that rests on the very edge of the frame and points to this 'divine' blind field…' a few millimetres more or less' and the image would collapse back into a dull representation of the Studium. Of course, by introducing the idea of a blind field I am evoking Barthes' Punctum but I don't want to stay there – I am trying to equate the experience of the Punctum with the intermittent action - as empty shifter - of the "I". In the encounter with the Punctum Barthes is faced with something intrinsic to himself but also outside the symbolic - the photograph is without a code. In this encounter he ceases to be a subject and collapses – joyfully, crazily - into pure consciousness.
[358] Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, pp56-57
[359] Ibid., p59

Some Words About My Work

After a period of time spent in what the writer W. G. Sebald has described as 'a state of almost total immobility',[360] I made a decision - in order to do something, such was the paralysis brought on by the way that this research, often producing little more per day than a couple of scribbled, half formed, sentences, was eating into my practice and thereby causing me a great deal of anxiety – that I would fill in each box of a commercially bought year planner that corresponded to the days on which I could say I was 'present'. (This might mean, echoing On Karawa, that I thought I was (still) 'alive', or simply that I was 'in the studio'.) I started this on the 1st of January 2004 and continued the process until December 31st, 2006. The images resulting from this process, or decision, are made up out of the repeated action of filling - although this could also be more accurately described as an emptying. The process of making my presence, as blocking out or erasure of another day represented on the year planner, coincides with a moment of blindness. The moment that my pen (constrained by the stencil that I use for the job and by the commercially designed year planner itself) makes contact with the surface of the planner and performs the proscribed task is a curious one… the ink flows, makes a set of marks which form into a solid 'shape' and at the same time some sort of oblivion occurs. Making a mark in this way therefore coincides with a moment of not thinking – the process in fact disallows thought (I must not be diverted from the task in hand or it won't 'work'). More precisely, this is a moment in which thought is *disabled*, with the action both registering my presence and erasing another day. At the end of each year each 'completed' planner, with its squares either filled in or left empty, functions as a record of hidden or forgotten events that are either mundane or, to me, important and meaningful; but with everything reduced to the same kind of mark, to nothing but a kind of nullifying *cloud*. Either marking time or killing time, I would align this process to Krauss's description of a kind of drawing that can be 'converted from its formal status of encoding reality [in my case the presence or absence of the "I"] to that of imprinting it.'[361] Because these works have the status of the index they thereby also reference/relate to the action of photography and stage something to do with the self that is unrepresentable - a fleeting, intermittent "I" – present in the gaps in works that look like writing, or are between writing and a kind of scribble. I would align this practice with what Jorg Heiser has characterised a as romantic or 'emotional' conceptualism; a 'highly abstracted, formalised concern with the attributes of romanticism historically ascribed to artists, adolescents, women and the insane; feelings of alienation, solitude, unfulfilled longing, self-mutilation and melancholia'. Heiser identifies the work of Bas Jan Ader, which 'invests the Conceptual with what appears to be its antithesis', as being 'all about systematically treating the un-systematic: trying the "mend" the split [between some such concise intellectual system and "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"] by admitting its existence… [this as the] contradictory reality [of the mind].'[362]

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[360] Sebald, W.G. (1999), T*he Rings of Saturn*, Harvill Press, London, p3
[361] Krauss, R. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, p216
[362] Heiser, J. (2002) *Emotional Rescue*, Frieze Magazine, No. 71, p71-75

Conclusion

As an outcome of this research I have made a new body of diagrammatic works that represent – or track - certain personal, characteristic, 'traits'. These works are made by collating information from notes in diaries, from chequebook stubs or medical records etc., and mapping them onto year planners. These 'drawings' are then further simplified by translation into a graphic design program to produce a pattern as notation of my activity, minus the specific days, dates, months or year. The information gathered, reduced to a simple transcription, drawing or chart, records incidences of repetitive, cyclical, often mundane or absurd behaviour such as spending patterns, periods of hypochondria, or visits to the hairdresser. I see these works as self or auto-portraits, or body casts; their patterns dictated more by unconscious behaviour than an organising, centred, self. The resulting images also take a form that is similar to writing. The attempt is to stage an utterance[363], to make a kind of picture: of habit, action, or speech. And the aim of this pictorial writing, is not so much to describe as communicate, so that the image appears like a coded sign or message - but one in which gaps, lapses and silences play a component part.

As Benjamin reminds us, the Latin word *textum* (text) means web. In the written component of this thesis I have attempted to weave together a text that both locates, within theory, something, bound up with remembering but tied to forgetting, which I refer to as the 'blank'; identified by the momentary lapses, gaps, or silences in everyday speech, and to raise questions about how I as an artist might find a way of working with this kind of 'mark'. Remembrance (not memory) is closer to forgetting; hence its relation or link to the trauma, and to its obsessive nature, the repetitive or compulsive, somewhat lawless, activity that often accompanies it. My work might take the form of a compulsive restaging of an event – which I have described as the spider web 'incident' - that I encountered as a child; and where the holes in the net or text of my drawings and diagrammatic prints, derived from the movement of my body, like dropped stitches, stand in for (represent) moments of blanking out; for something that fails to register, to get into language. The images themselves, which are based on the notion of a (missed) encounter, are also visually similar to the spider webs, which showed me something terrible, showed me what happens without thought, without a self. When I saw them I had the sense of something continuing automatically, ungoverned, regardless, ie blindly – with neither "I" nor eye. That one can be possessed or directed by something outside one's control frightened me. Yet I have come to realise that what I encountered also represented a kind of fascinating possibility of invention - the breaking off from habit - in order to develop a new way of writing or drawing; a new form of expression. The spider webs were saying something at (or about) the limits of speech, mapping out the gaps in language, which is also at the limits of memory, of subjectivity – beyond which lies the unknown. I am interested in the idea that something that can exist or operate between memory and forgetting (this, like the action of the spider). The drugged spider spider's

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363 I am deliberately echoing Barthes with this phrase (from *A Lover's Discourse*)

movement could be described as a combination between what it knew (its genetic evolutionary programming – on which its life depends) and what it had forgotten; it drew on what its forgetting had left behind, from the ruins, the remains of that 'memory'. Building from the point at which it can no longer remember, yet, through remembering something (it continues to move - compulsively) it makes something else. This new kind of thing that is created echoes the photographic operation - as blanking - of remembrance.

Artists have a hunger for, perhaps even a dependence on, ideas outside their own field. What I have done here is to try and give an account of some of the themes discovered (particularly within Barthes' book *Camera Lucida*) that I consider relevant or important to me as an artist. My main response, however, is articulated with my visual practice. Through the new works documented in this thesis I have proposed a way of 'writing the self' that, reflecting the photographic process, is indexical in that the images (like 'texts') created have a direct, physical, relation to their cause - the record of the artist's tears *is* 'the artists tears', for instance. Yet this indexicality is undermined by their reference to a pictorial tradition. In this way I am evading either category in the search for something between, the model for which might be Barthes' 'third form'. If the 'blank' is that towards which my practice is aimed, perhaps it can be defined as the attempt to convert *speech into mark*.

Finally, I should say something about the fact that my recent work does not use photography – despite being generated out of an interest in photography theory. The aim of my work is to stage that which remains unsymbolisable or blank. In order to achieve this I have embedded within the images something that has a indexical relation – through direct physical contact with its referent - to that which caused it. Through the operation of the index, which, as Krauss argues, bypasses any symbolic, cultural, system of language, physical presence is registered as 'meaninglessness'. Since digitalisation it is no longer possible to stage this absence or unsymbolised presence through 'straight' photography – therefore some other strategy has to be found. And it seems to me that the recent turn (or *re*turn) amongst contemporary artists to a certain kind of drawing or mark making – one which shares the properties of the photograph – is directly related to a loss of belief in photography's indexicality.

In the next section I include images of a recent exhibition, plus examples of related works.

Information about the exhibition can be found in the appendix.

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