The black orb has me in its sight. At the turn of almost every page a solid black spot aims at me straight in the eye. The punctum, the absolute singularity of the other, points at me. Perforating the page, each punctum also links together the passages that it separates. Pierced and punctured by its gaze, like the stare of Cyn- cro's eye, I am its only concern, for it ad-

addresses solely me.

Completed of a series of fragmentary para-
graphs or sections, each separated from the other—punctuated, Derrida would say—by a solid black circle or point which, with more than a wink, refers to one of its main motifs (the punctum), *The Deaths of Roland Barthes* is a remarkable testimony to the writ-
ings of a contemporary, and a testament to a unique friendship. Written on the occasion of the passing away of a friend, originally pub-
ished in the *Journal Français* in 1981, and later collected in *Psyché: Inventions de l'oeuvre* in 1987, Derrida's essay is a meditation on death and mourning, memory and ghosts, the refer-
ent and the other, the proper name and the unique, the look and the image, and their inter-
twining in the structure of photography. Mainly devoting itself to a reading of Barthes' last book, *La chambre claire*, itself a book of mourning, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" elucidates how the force of metonymy allows us to speak of a singular death, how, despite having a suspended relation to the referent, photography permits us to maintain a relation to the absolute singularity of the other, and how, given the ubiquity and pervasiveness of photographs in our culture, their relation to singularity remains to be examined.

The point of the commentary that follows, if it has one point, will be to attempt to graft a few remarks onto just one passage of Derrida's es-
say, a passage that ties together all of the motifs mentioned above, in order to elaborate the rela-
tion between photography and spirituality. By functioning as a testament or proof for the exi-
gency of the absolute singularity of the other, or the "referent," photography demonstrates how death and the referent are brought to-
together in the same structure (Psy 291/76). It is this "conjunction" of death and the referent in the "photographic event" that I would like to show, giving photography its "spectral" struc-
ture (Psy 291/76).

I

A text written for Roland Barthes and in

tribute to him, Derrida's essay addresses the di-

lemma of not just writing about, but also to and

for a friend who has recently passed away.

How to write, Derrida wonders, so that the

writing would, somehow, keep alive within one- self the recently departed friend? Derrida

admits to wishing to "write at the limit," in a

writing beyond the neutral and colorless,

that would respect the singularity and uniqueness of Barthes' writing but would also circumvent the pitfalls associated with conventional ecolo-
gies and tributes (Psy 283/60). These pitfalls

would consist of either (i) an excess of fidelity,

which in its devotion to the subject amounts to

saying nothing and returning the other's words

back to him, or (ii) an undue emphasis on the

living friend speaking as the other, which

would then risk the total effacement of the

friend. Neither of these paths—or "infidelities,

to Derrida calls them—is avoidable, and we

are left with correcting the one with the other

(Psy 283/62).

It is "for him," for Roland Barthes himself, that

Derrida wants to write, yet he realizes that

any attention paid to Roland Barthes, and thus

to his name, would have to be fully aware of the

separation of the name from its bearer (Psy

284/62). So, when Derrida evokes the name of

Barthes after his passing away, he knows that it

will not be the bearer of the name who will re-

ceive it, but only his name. Unable to call upon

the friend who is no longer here, "it is certainly

him whom I name," Derrida writes, but also

"him beyond his name" (Psy 284/64). By in-

voicing his name—which can never be said to

have been his uniquely, since any proper name

can only function if it is detachable from its

bearer—"it is him in me that I name, toward

him in me, in you, in us that I pass through his

name" (Psy 285/64). When I call out his name,

Derrida says, he is with me, with us, here. He

knows this because "the image of the I of Bar-

thes that Barthes inscribed in [him]" smiles at

him, here and now (Psy 275/47). This "image"

is not merely a memory that I have of the

friend; it is not how he or she is going to be re-

membered—he is here, now. Conventionally,

we believe that mourning begins with the death

of the other, with that "unqualifiable event
called death," but from the first moment that

the name separates from its bearer, and perhaps

even before, mourning—"the internity of the

other in me, in you, in us"—has com-

menced (Psy 285/64).

II

Just as Barthes in his texts "mobilit[ed]

concepts by playing them against one another,"

Derrida's essay plays "concepts"—derived from a close reading of *La chambre claire*

(though somewhat unsatisfactorily translated as *Cam-

era Lucida*)—against one another in order to

arrive at Barthes' "unique trait" (Psy 275/60).

By reading Barthes' first book, *Writing De-

gree Zero,* and the last book published before

his death, *La chambre claire,* two books that he

had never read before, Derrida hopes to have an

"instantaneous access" to Barthes' work. With

a combination of irony and seriousness, 

knowing that what he is asking is unrealis-

tic and daring, Derrida still believes it possible to

ask for "revelation" from a detail. "As if," he

emphasizes, by proceeding in this manner—by

reading the first and the last book and by play-

ing off one motif against another—the "secret"

of Barthes' text would yield itself to him (Psy

276/49). Risking "a certain mimeticism," which

is necessary whenever we take someone into

ourselves in order to make him or her speak

within us, Derrida claims he will be able to "see

and know everything" about Barthes, "the

pace, step, style, timbre, tone, and gestures" by

following this *modus operandi* (Psy 276/48,

49). Thus Derrida's essay—inevitable, yet faith-

ful to Barthes' own manner of approaching a

topic—follows a detail "at once very visible

and hidden," that of the relation of the

punctum to the *studium* in *Camera Lucida,* in

order to gain access to all of Barthes' work and

his unique way of reading and writing, as if

such a thing were possible (Psy 277/50),

Derrida reads Barthes as Barthes himself read

the text of others. Choosing his words care-

fully, as one would choose a garment to wear,

Derrida feels it important to take on an ap-

proach or a writing that would suit Barthes,

that would attend to the openness, refinement

and rigor of his writing.

It is from a detail, then, rather than a major

theme, subject or theory, that Derrida asks

for "the ecstasy of revelation [l'extase révélatrice]" (Psy 277/50). By focusing on this

detail, by magnifying it and opening it up, Derrida seeks to search, he confides in the

reader, just "like him, as him" (Psy 277/50). Having secluded himself to read Barthes' first

and last book in order to write his essay, he keeps looking at photographs of Barthes for

something that may catch his eye, a particular detail, something that speaks only to him, something that is meant only for him. And it is in

the punctum, he finds, that is pointing at him, and only at him. The punctum is that detail which looks only at him.

In *La chambre claire* Barthes distinguishes two elements of a photograph, the punctum and the studium. He defines the punctum as a

"prick [pointe], little hole [petit trou], little patch [tache], little cut [couper]"—and also a cast of the dice. A photo-

graph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me, grips me [*me pointe*, but also bruises me, is poignant to me [me piquent]] (CC 49/27, trans. slightly modified). The *punctum,*

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Derrida elaborates, is that "point of singularity that punctures, the surface of the reproduction—and even the production—of analogies, likenesses and codes" (Psey 277/51). The stadium, in contrast, is "a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment," a pole "irresponsible interest" which is of "the order of liking, not of loving" (CC 49-50/26.27). Barthes notices that in certain photographs the stadium is "turned (traversed), lashed (fourteed), stripped (ghetted) by a detail (punctum)" (CC 69/40 §17). In a photograph, Barthes admitted, he sought out and culturally participated in the stadium, but the punctum was that which rose out of the scene of the photograph, shooting out like an arrow to point to him and prick him.

Such is "the Winter Garden photograph" in La chambre claire, a photograph capturing Barthes' mother at the age of five, posing with her brother in a glassed-in conservatory, a photograph that Barthes confesses he cannot reproduce in the book. For others this photograph could, at most, sustain a mild interest or curiosity, whereas for Barthes it remains a poignant wound. Yet this wound is not an insubstantial detail of mere personal interest; "irradiating" the entire book, as Derrida claims, it is the punctum of La chambre claire (Psey 296/84). Evoking the love of the mother, his mother, the unique other, the Winter Garden photograph seems to encapsulate an irreplaceable grace and a quality (a soul) that Barthes associated with her—not just with the Mother, but with his mother (CC 75/31). The Winter Garden photograph, he writes, "was indeed essential, it achieved for me, unexpectedly, the impossible science of the unique being" (CC 77 §28).

Yet, for Derrida, the "poignant singularity" of the Winter Garden photograph need not signify a personal particularity restricted to Roland Barthes' life. The singularity does not forbid the generality from having "the force of law, but only arrows it, marks, and signs. It is singular plural" (Psey 284/63). That is why in La chambre claire Barthes had decided to take the Winter Garden photograph as his guide, as the thread that would connect all the photographs of the stadium to the dance of repetition—and even the production—of analogies, likenesses and codes (Psey 277/51). The stadium, in contrast, is "a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment," a pole "irresponsible interest" which is of "the order of liking, not of loving" (CC 49-50/26.27). Barthes notices that in certain photographs the stadium is "turned (traversed), lashed (fourteed), stripped (ghetted) by a detail (punctum)" (CC 69/40 §17). In a photograph, Barthes admitted, he sought out and culturally participated in the stadium, but the punctum was that which rose out of the scene of the photograph, shooting out like an arrow to point to him and prick him.

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He "looks at us (inside each of us [chacun à lui]) but his look is that within us, in us outside, is not ours, we do not possess it even though each of us has it at his disposal, to do with it whatever we wish (Psey 292/60-1). This look means that I am never in a position to deny, reject, or suspend the absolute singularity of the other (or of what is perhaps lightly called, the Referent).

2. The absolute singularity of the other, the Referent, cannot be suspended, although a naïve notion of the referent must be. Earlier in his essay, noting that punctum could be translated as "detail," Derrida mentions the proximity of Barthes' position for details with that of Walter Benjamin's. "Moving through, extending beyond, and exploiting the resources of phenomenological as well as structural analysis, Benjamin's essay and Barthes' last book could very well be the two most significant texts on the so-called question of the Referent in the modern technological age" (Psey 277/51). For Derrida, photography in general, and Barthes' La chambre claire in particular, brings to light the significance of the notion of reference.

Differences of "the referent" often invoke the thought of a unique, singular thing or object, which is said to "really exist." It is commonly believed that a photograph always points to the preexistence of an external origin or model. One takes a photograph of something and the photograph is the most simple proof of the existence of that which was photographed. For Barthes, what the photograph points to is not the preexistence of a fully constituted referent or an independent reality but to the inevitability or insistence of the referent. As Barthes writes in La chambre claire, "the photograph always carries [emporte] its referent with itself" (CC 17/5 §2), it testifies to the "singular adherence [adhérence] and "sub-borneess [l'extrait] of the Referent in al- ways being there" (CC 18/176 §2). Photography is thus always dependent on "a visible referent" that it must presume as given. Barthes admits that "in Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there [la chose a été là]" (CC 120/76 §32). He adds that what he calls the "photographic referent" is "not the optionally real [situé au hasard] thing to which an image or sign refers but the necessarily real [nécessairement réel] thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph" (CC 120/76 §32).

For Derrida, it would be more accurate to say that the photograph does not serve as evidence for the Referent itself—as if such a thing existed—but as a structure of reference to the absolute singularity of the other. The notion of the referent, and, in particular, reference, cannot be dispensed with; rather, it is the effects of reference that must be rethought. What "adheres" in photography, then, is "the photographic referent," a more rigorous discussion of which would require us (1) to suspend a naïve conception of the referent which is most commonly subscribed to, and (2) to acknowledge the possibility of the suspension of the Referent, but not of reference (Psey 287/68).

What is meant by the terms "suspension" and "referent" in the phrase "the suspension of the referent" needs to be closely examined. For they are understood by Derrida in another register. Unlike the vague "grandiose theories [quelques gros théorèmes] on the general suspension of the Referent," mentioned by Derrida, always certain about the meaning of "the reality of an exterior referent," suspension here does not amount to a denial of the necessity of the referent, or to a rejection of historic- cal or political factors pertaining to it (Psey 292/60). What it does suggest is suspension as a discontinuation or cessation of maintaining a notion of the referent as a fully constituted, independent object anterior to the structure of reference.

In photography the referent is not renounced, but is held in abeyance. Even though this suspension entails putting off, deferring, and delaying the encounter with the absolute referent, the wholly other, a suspended relation is always connected to the process of placing in quotation marks. This sus-
pended relation denotes suspense (the state of being suspended, of awaiting determination or a decision that is pending) but also dependence on the referent (a hanging onto, a reliance on it). While there is no direct access to it, the referent is still desired and reference is maintained. In photography it is always the "photographic referent" that "interests us and animates" our readings (Pzy 299/89).

Highlighting the notion of reference—or what Derrida prefers to call "the referential (le référentiel)" in order to combine reference and the referent and not to have to choose between them—the photographic referent is not related "to a present or to a real but, in an other way, to the other, and each time differently according to the type of image, whether photographic or not" (Pzy 287/68). That which is referred to, alluded to and pointed to in reference is not necessarily "reality" as such, but the other, to which there can never be any direct access.

Even though the other is irreducible and can never be fully comprehended within any enclosure, there is no reference to a relation to the other. Reference, or the structure of referral, maintains a relation to alterity—to that which differs—and retains the mark of the other. Thus reference describes the structure of being marked by the other and maintaining a relation to it at the same time. Further, in its etymology, reference (ference/ference) carries, bearing [portier], of "what carries" and referent: what "carries back to," from pherein (Ok and ferol) points to a relationship to the other. What is significant in reference, then, is the combination of the ference, the conveyance, the transport or mediation and the referent, what "carries back to" the other. The structure of reference carries or bears the other and carries back to the other. Photography thus refers to and suspends that which it refers to, the absolute singularity of the other.

1. Photography functions as a testimony to death, mourning, and bereavement. In its structure, photography, or the photographic event, assumes the mortality, that is, the possibility of the loss or death of the photographed. In order for photography to be at all possible, its most rudimentary requirement dictates that photographs be able to circulate freely, separated from the presence of the photographed. Each photograph, then, functions as the announcement of the absence—or death—of what is photographed. At the click of a button, there is death. From the moment the picture is taken and the photo becomes detached from the photographed, like the name from its bearer, the presence of the photographed is not necessary for the survival of the photograph. In other words, that which is photographed might as well be dead. Photography brings sudden death: by becoming photographic "images" the subjects of photography are transformed, petrified, mortified, embalmed (CC 30/14 §5). In this sense, every photograph is a picture of death.

The photograph that brings death thus enables us to speak of our death before our "actual" death. The taking of a photograph is at once a suspension of life (the life of the photographed, assuming for the moment that we know what "life" is) and the instigation of death, producing the "posthumous" character of lived experience. Every picture that I look at is a signal that the one whom I am looking at could have died long ago, is now dead, or is going to die. Bearing the signs of death, every photograph speaks of a past anterior—"a catastrophe that has already occurred"—or a future anterior of a death (CC 150/96 §39). It is not important whether the photographed is "actually" dead or not; what does matter is that "every photograph is this [very] catastrophe," pointing to the mortality of its subject (CC 150/36).

Derrida refers to this "posthumous" character, which links death to a certain strange temporality, when he writes that "the other can even be "me," me having been or having had to be, me already dead in the future anterior and past anterior of my photograph" (Pzy 278/52).

This "other," mentioned by Derrida, refers to the manner in which photography enables me to view my own picture. Since my photograph, by its very structure, survives me, we are already dead and we should be able to look at my picture after my death but I, when I look at it, will appear to myself as dead, as already other, even before the moment of my death. This is, perhaps, what Roland Barthes is suggesting when he writes: "The photograph is the advent [l'avènement] of myself as other" (CC 28/12 §5). The photographic structure is what makes the bereaved memories of a mourning-yet-to-come possible.

This explains Barthes' conviction, in the—albeit nocturnal—light of the Winter Garden photograph, that the best way to interrogate photography is from the viewpoint of love and death; since for Barthes, the loss of the unique—his mother's death—the one he uniquely loved, is not his first death, is not the first that he has had to bear, but precipitates and presages his own death. Following his mother's death, life takes on an "unqualifiable" quality, already beginning to resemble death—death in life. The deaths of Roland Barthes in Derrida's title thus alludes not just to the singular and unique death of Barthes (Barthes beyond the name), but to the "plurality of deaths" in Barthes' life (made possible by the name) including his own (Pzy 285/65) [With the first notification, the first interiorization of the other, preparation has already begun to make room for a "plurality of deaths.

IV

It is the reference of the structure of reference, or the incessant movement of referral to the other, to the photographic referent, that bestowed photography with spectral qualities and the conceptual apparatus of photography. "The Spectator is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs—in magazines and newspapers, in books, albums, archives... And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any eidolon emitted by the object, which I should like to call the Spectrum of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root, a relation to 'spectacle' and adds to it that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead (le retour du mort)" (CC 22/3/9 §4).

Echoing Balzak's belief in the ghostly character of photography, Barthes writes that the photograph captures the emanations emitted by the referent. "What emerges is "neither image nor reality, a new being, really: a reality one can no longer touch" (CC 13/67 §36). Photography then, for Barthes, is not only a means for the production of ghostly images but also a technical method or apparatus for recomposing the impressions of these eidola. It is as if there is a direct link, by "a sort of umbilical cord," Barthes explains, between which is that which is photographed and the gaze (CC 12/67 §34). Upon the realization that his photograph is being taken, Barthes admits, "I then experience a micro-version of death (a parenthesis). I am truly becoming a specter" (CC 30/14 §5). Moreover, this experience need occur only when one is photographed but also when one looks at one's own picture. As Derrida notes, "the target, the referent, the 'eidolon' emitted by the object, the 'Spectrum', (CC 22/9)."

In La chambre claire Barthes insists that even though what the photograph portrays cannot be lived, the referential structure of the photograph always attests to its having-been-there. It is an undeniable fact that photography points to the "That-has-been (ce-qui-a-dit)" (CC 12/77 §32). Agreeing with Barthes, Derrida writes that even though in the photograph the so-called referent is "noticeably [raisonnable] absent, suspended, vanished into the unique past time of its event," the "reference to this referent... implies just as irreducibly the having-been (ce-qui-a-dit) of a unique and invariable referent" (Pzy 29/77-77, my italics). Derrida returns to the
discussion of the photographic referent and its relation to death and temporality in a text published five years after the appearance of "The Deaths of Roland Barthes," entitled Droit de regards (translated as The Right of Inspection). Toward the end of his reading of Marie-Francoise Pitisart's series of photographs, Derrida writes: "Of all the arts, photography, it seems to me, is the only one that is unable to suspend its explicit dependence on a visible referent" (D&R xxxiv). Yet the having-been-of the referent and its "exteriority" are not mutually exclusive. Derrida writes: "Here, the exteriority of the referent, its being-passed, is not canceled out [ce n'est pas une aventure de la photo, cet être passé ne s'annule certes pas]" (D&R xxxv).

It seems everything hinges upon how this "having-been" is understood. According to Derrida, the "having-been" of the referent is never a reference to a presence or an external reality that must have existed at some time, but to the referential relation of the referent that incorporates death, temporality, and temporality. "What assimilates to the photograph," Derrida explains, "is perhaps less the referent itself, in the present effectiveness of its reality, than the implication in the reference of its having-been unique (avoir dit-là)" (Perry 299/200). My emphasis. Yet the having-been-unique, the unicity of the "having-been," is a "sentimental" experience. (Perry 301/200)

The temporality of the referential combines the time of a future anteriority and a delay or deferral. According to Barthes, "what I see may have been there "yet already deferred (c'était déjà différé)" (CC 121/173 323). Thus the having-been-there of the referent is always deferred, constituting itself in a delay. "In order to be photographable, in order for it to be possible to have technically reproduced images of infinitum, the "now" of what is photographed must already be self-differing and deferred, it must constantly diverge from itself. It can only ever be itself through a detour, by way of the other. The photographic referent is thus never itself-identical, but already split from itself, already ghostly. This self-divergence constitutive of any entity is specificity itself and makes photographs possible. From the moment of taking the picture—perhaps, even before—the photographed is a phantom. For there to be photography, the referent must be spectral. So, what the early photographs allude to, with their sepia tones and hazy images (which resemble emissions or emanations), is not some defect or imperfection in the instrument or the photographic process that could be eliminated with advances in technological technique, but the ghostliness of what is photographed and photography itself. In fact, there would be no photography without specters. In every photograph there are specters. What survives or lives on in a photograph, thanks to the photographic process, is the survival of the dead or of ghosts. If, as one of the voices in Droit de regards proclaims, "The spectral is the essence of photography (C'est l'essence de la photographie, le spectrume)," then photography is nothing but taking pictures of ghosts (D&R vi). It is an inscription or a writing, in light and shade, of phantoms (phantasmaphotography). Those who look at photographs, then, are being looked at by ghosts. Derrida writes of such an experience while looking at some of the photographs of Barthes during the preparation of his essay. "I am looking," he confesses, "for something that regards me [quelque chose qui me regarde], or has me in view, without seeing me [sans me voir]" (Perry 301/202). Mourning and spectrality are nothing else but this relation of being regarded by all "the others outside and inside ourselves (ces autr' es dehors et en soi)" (Perry 288/270).

V

Throughout his essay, Derrida approaches the studium and the punctum as a pair (and not as distinct concepts). Attentive to Barthes' comment that, in general, the photographs he likes are constructed in the manner of a classical sonata, Derrida traces the compositional relationship of what he deviously refers to as S and P. Traditionally, the predicative formula "S is P" designates the attribution of a property to a subject or denotes an object placed under a concept. From very early on, Derrida has substituted the proposition "S is p," which is for Husserl "the fundamental and primitive form, the primordial aoristic form of perception which every logical proposition must be derivable by simple construction," to a rigorous examination. Also, whenever the opportunity has presented itself in various texts, he has played with this predicational statement and its terms, S and P, sometimes to hilarious ends.

In "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" Derrida examines "the concepts that seemed the most squarely opposed, or opposed in Barthes' work, such as Nature and History, but also Studium and Punctum, and shows that they were put in play by him, the one for the other, in a metonymic composition" (Perry 276/249). What may have been interpreted as the presence of binary oppositions in Barthes' work is, in fact, Derrida contends, his "light way of mobilizing concepts" by setting them off against each other, which could "frustrate a certain logic, while at the same time resisting it with the greatest force, the greatest force of play" (Perry 276/249). According to Derrida, the apparent opposition of the studium and the punctum instead "facilitates a certain composition between the two concepts" (Perry 279/55). Remaining heterogeneous yet not opposed to each other, they "compose together, the one with the other" (Perry 279/55).

Barthes' analyses consists of first demonstrating the heterogeneity, the "absolute irreducibility of the punctum," or what Derrida calls the "unicity of the referential" (Perry 295/82). Derrida explains: "The heterogeneity of the punctum is rigorous; its originality can bear neither contamination nor concession. And yet [et pourtant]. . . " (Perry 295/82). And yet, Barthes also comes to recognize that "the punctum is not what it is" (Perry 295/83). The singular, unique punctum is right from the start a "double punctation"—there is already introduced in the first mark another possibility (Perry 279/52). Derrida writes of the two different aspects, or the two "exposures," of the punctum: "On its minute surface, the same joint divides itself" (Perry 278/52). The punctuated effect of the punctum is brought about in a double movement, when in the same instant and

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2) A rhythmic relationship: The punctum, “this absolute other composes with the same, with its absolute other that is not its opposite, with the locus of the same and of the studium” (Psy 295–96/83). In composing with it, in giving rhythm to the studium, the punctum “scans” it (Psy 280/57). Composition, then, is this rhythmic relation between the punctum, and the studium in the photograph (the punctum pieces through the fabric of the photograph but allows itself to be reappropriated), and all photographs bear the signs of a constant negotiation or rhythmic relation between what is irredeemably other, outside, and the process of technological reproduction, which seeks to interiorize it. Every photograph is thus a constant attempt at capturing the other by luring it into the picture, a relentless pointing to what is singularly other within a graphics of light and shade.

3) A relationship of haunting: The punctum inhabits the studium in such a manner that the haunting of the two elements prevents us from closely distinguishing two distinct places, concepts, or things from one another. In this way, neither the punctum nor the studium could be “entirely subjugated to a concept,” since a concept usually signifies “a predicable determination that is distinct and opposes” (Psy 280/56). Not a concept, but “the ghost of a concept,” not a clearly demarcated, self-sufficient concept or entity, but one inhabited by another (Psy 280/56). This relation of haunting suggests a “quasi-concept” of the ghost; “quasi” because the “quasi-concept” of the ghost, barely understandable or graspable as such, could hardly be considered a “concept,” as this term has been traditionally understood. Thus it is necessary to designate the relationship of the punctum to the studium in another way. Derrida writes, “Ghosts [Fantômes]: the concept of the other in the same, the punctum in the studium, the completely other, dead, living in me” (Psy 280/56). The quasi-concept of the ghost is also what permits Derrida to discuss the relationship of another pair of motifs, separated by a slash, evoked by glancing at Barthes’ photographs: life/death.

VI

Early on in his essay, Derrida writes of the Winter Garden photograph and Barthes’ relation to his mother, “there should not be [il ne devrait pas], there should not be [il ne devrait pas], any metonymy in this case, for love prevents it” (Psy 286/67). The relationship between Barthes and his mother ought to remain unique, for it is without his mother that Barthes can not live, and not without the Mother. Yet the singular punctum lends itself to metonymy, allowing it to be “drawn into a network of substitutions” (Psy 296/83). “Scandalously” though it may sound, metonymy does not efface the singularity of the punctum, but actually allows us to speak of the unique (Psy 296/84). If the punctum were a mere “one-off,” occurring only one discrete time, we would not be so deeply moved by what Barthes writes of his mother. Nor would we be able to offer his writings up to any analysis or sustain a discourse of “a certain generality” about them.

Thus there must be a “metonymic force [force métonymique]” at work that is “induced [induit]” by the punctum itself (Psy 296/83). It is the punctum that induces metonymy, Derrida notes, “and this is its force, or rather than its force (since it exercises no actual constraint and exists completely in reserve), its power, its potentiality, virtuosity [virtuédité], and even its dissimulation, its latency” (Psy 296/83). In La chambre claire, Barthes observes the force of the punctum and its potential “power of expansion [force d’expansion]” (CC 7445–46). Derrida relates this “metonymic force” or “force métonymique” to the supplementary structure of the punctum and to the studium “that receives from it all its movement” (Psy 286/84). Since the punctum is “more or less than itself, disymmetrical—to everything and in itself”—then it can invade the field of the studium to which, strictly speaking, it does not belong” (Psy 296/83). Contaminating “the field” of the studium, Derrida comments to the studium supplement parasites the haunted space of the studium,” pluralizing itself (Psy 296/85).

This pluralization occurs because the metonymic force “divides the referential trait, suspends the referent and leaves it to be designated, while still maintaining the reference” (Psy 299/86). In photography, the referential trait is split by a metonymic force, which prevents the trait from ever being uniquely itself, but also constitutes it in this process of self-deconstruction and splitting. This division (or spectrality, we may say) is what allows for the possibility of repetition and technical reproduction. Thus the “unique death” and the instantaneous (“instantané” always susceptible to metonymy.)

This metonymic force, or this force of pluralization, also allows one death to be substituted for all the others, “one part for the whole or one name for another” (Psy 297/85). The whole is inserted into a part, which thus becomes larger than the whole. Hence each photograph, even the Winter Garden photograph, can be inserted into another photograph. This relationship of haunting, where each photograph threatens the other, pertains not only to the studium and the punctum, but applies to every conceptual opposition. In this way, the part that is smaller and more particular escapes to it. It is thus impossible to arrest the metonymic substitution, this “phantasmagoria” (“phantasmagologie”) without limit, the invagination of an imagination, a photograph in a photograph (DdXXXI).

VII

“Torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical,” between Proust and Michelet, between the Novel and History, Barthes’ book on photography eschews any encyclopedic pretensions (CC 2018 §3). As an annotation, a musical remark—on photography, expressed in concise, staccato fashion, Barthes’ La chambre claire

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will remain dissatisfactory for those who expect a commentary analyzing and dissecting the medium of photography, for the same reason that Michélet was considered by many to be a bad historian—because he wrote. Yet, Barthes’ book, a chamber of light lit by “the radiant invisibility of a look [as regard],” (Ps. 275-78) takes as its inspiration, not the desire to comprehensively say all that can be said about photography, but a desire to bear witness to the “bright shadow” cast by its author’s gaze (CC 169/110-845).

By Barthes’ own admission, all of his work supposes “a mobile, plural reader,” a reader who, as he writes in Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, “begins to write with me.” In “The Death of Roland Barthes” Derrida begins to do just that. His elegiac reading of Barthes, following Barthes’ own intimatable manner of reading, also “displays, plays with, and interprets the pair study/punctum, all the while explaining what he is doing by giving us his notes” (Ps 279/34). Negotiating between S and p, between a studied discourse and minute attention to detail, neither embroiled longingly in its own words over that of the other nor totally giving itself over to the voice of the other, Derrida’s own “metonymic composition [compo- sition métonymique]” adds to what is nevertheless already there (Ps 276/49).

Derrida’s own essay could be described with the very same words he uses to explain Barthes’ “manner [manière]” of proceeding. Derrida writes of Barthes:

This manner is unmistakably his. He makes the opposition punctum/studium, along with the apparent versus of the death, appear slowly and cautiously in a new context, without which, it seems, they would have no chance of appearing. He gives to them or he welcomes this chance. The interpretation . . . imposes its necessity without concealing the artifact under some passive nature. It demonstrates its rigor throughout the book, and this rigor becomes inextricably guessable from its productivity, from its performative fecundity. He makes it yield [le fait rendert] the greatest amount of meaning, of descriptive or analytic power (phenomenological, structural, and beyond): (Ps 270/43-44)

ENDNOTES

tion, trans. David Wills, (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), unpagedinated. All further references to this text shall be cited as DRD followed by the pagination of the French text. Translations have been occasionally slightly modified.


4. After all Barthes was the author of a text entitled Système de la mode (The Fashion System).


6. In “Lecture de Droit de regard,” Derrida relates that “The invention of photography and the adversal (‘instrumentation’ of psychoanalytic analysis coincides?” (Ps. 273/21). He adds that these “two religions or two cultures of ‘detail’ fully understand the power of magnifying details (p. xxii).


8. Cf. Ps. 285/22. See also the references to the “inde-
scribable referential” (indescribable référentiel) (Ps. 299/90).

9. In Droit de regards Derrida emphasizes that photography does not suspend reference to “reality as such,” but only to a certain type of reality. In doing so, it opens a relationship to the wholly other.

10. “Je ne suis pas fou, dis-lui qu’on est fou, mais fou de l’examen. ‘Il faut que l’image soit une image réelle’” (Lautréamont, Œuvres complètes, quoted in text).

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superposer à l'œil, filmées en pellicule ininflammables, inextinguibile. C'est ainsi que l'empédocle et le démocrite se sont appliqués une des couches du corps objet. De là pour le corps objet, et à chaque opération renouvelée, pense évidemment de son espace constitutif (p. 6). Un ponton de Nader's autobiographic has been translated as "My Life as a Photographer," trans. Thomas Repenning, October 5 (Summer 1978): 7–28. Susan Sontag, in On Photography (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), refers to Bataille's views on photography (p. 158–59). (My thanks to Jean-Christophe Ferrat for this reference.) Bataille mentions Sontag's text without discussing Bataille's explicitly (CC, p. 126/25: 41 §34). It is not clear whether Nader had based his views on a particular text of Bataille, but a possible source may be Le Cousin Pons (written in 1848) in Histoire de Bataille, La Comédie humaine Vol. VI, Ed. Marcel Brion, (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), Cousin Pons, trans. Herbert J. Hunt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985): "Si quelqu'un a tel venu dire à Napoléon qu'on avait déposé qu'un homme est incessant à et heureux des personnes imprévisibles par une image dans l'atmosphère, que tous les objets ont un spectre satisfaisant, il avait laissé l'homme à Charnon... Et est il est cependant ce que Dagnan a prouvé par sa découverte" (p. 625). "If any one had come and told Napoleon that a man or building is not incessantly and continuously represented by a picture in the atmosphere, that all existing objects project into it kind of spirit which can be captured and perceived, he would have consigned him to Charenton", p. 625. (And perhaps it is this "Dagnan's discovery that") (p. 113). Also: "Mais il est vrai que les corps se projettent rétrospectivement dans l'atmosphère en y laissant subsister cet esprit qui est le daguerreotype qui l'attein par passage, de même, les idées, croyances réelles et agissantes, s'impliment dans ce qu'il faut nommer l'atmosphère du monde spirituel, y produisent des effets, y vivent spectrament (car il est nécessaire de fonder des mots pour exprimer des phénomènes immémorables), et dits leurs croyances rhétoriques de façons rares peuvent parfaitement apporter ces choses ou ces traces d'idées" (p. 626). "Just as physical objects do in fact project themselves on to the atmosphere so that it remains the 'space' which the daguerreotype can fix and capture, in the same way ideas, which are real and active emotions, imprint themselves on what we must call the 'atmosphere' of the spiritual world, produce effects in it spectrally (one must coin words in order to express unnamed phenomena); if that be granted, certain creatures endowed with rare faculties are perfectly capable of discerning those forms or traces of ideas" (p. 132).


13. "By the time—at the instant—that the punctum rests space, the reference and death are in touch together in the photograph" (Pp. 29/270).


15. Precision is necessary here: the referent, as has been already described, is not an already existing entity that emits edelweiss. The spectrality of the photographic referent resembles that of creations or emissions.

16. For an account of the relation between photography and the production of ghostly images, see Tom�ing, "Phenomen Image and Modern Manifestations: Spirits Photography, Magic, Theatres, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny," in Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video, ed. by Patrick Pert (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 42–71. That photography was associated with Spiritualism from its inception has to do more with its spectral potential than any lack of objectification in the technological capacity of the early instruments.

17. See CC, p. 172/111 §46 for the distinction between looking and seeing.


19. See Le voix et le phénomène (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 82: Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 73. Also Cf. Edmund Husserl, Formal and transcendental Logic: Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft, ed. by Paul Jussen, (Husserl Textes, vol.17 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974); Formal and Transcendental Logic, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, in Ch. 1, 4–15 Husserl begins by studying logic from the Aristotelian perspective, i.e., Analytics, which treats predicative judgments or assertions. This "psychic analytic" (from psychagogia meaning "study of judgments in the propositional form. The determining judgment "S is P" (where S denotes a subject and p a determination) is the "primitive form" from which other "particularizations and modifications" are derived (p. 457)). In his commentary Le logique de Husserl: Esthétique logique formelle et transcendante (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), a Study of Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic, trans. Lester E. Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), Suzanne Bucheck emphasizes that "there is only one truly fundamental form of judgment" from which other forms can be generated by derivation, and that is "is in" (p. 53/11).

20. See for example another text, also published in 1980, "Éros et le Corps, (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), where Derrida plays with: Socrates-Piato, 5s, Sp, Xs, 5s and [os], S bars (that in 1 speculate, the primal zones, as you'll see his-philosophies-philosophie and many other similar formulations. For a more recent occasion, see "Savoir les phénomènes—pour Salvador Puli;" Convergences I (Winter 1995) 14–22, where Sphinx Photographie, psyché or sono, and, of course, Salvador Puli are put into play.


22. For example: If the photograph bespeaks the unique death, the death of the unique, this death immediately repeats itself in such, as itself and elsewhere" (Pp. 260/018). Elsewhere: "The 'instantaneous or instantaneous in photography, the snapshot [immédiat photographique], would be the most striking metonymy [un métaphorique le plus saisissant] within the modern technological age of an older instantaneous" (ibid., p. 390/09).


25. I would like to thank Pleintheek Dokmich and Michael Nuss for reading, and commenting on, early drafts of this essay.