Esther Teichmann

FALLING INTO PHOTOGRAPHY

ON LOSS DESIRE AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC

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ABSTRACT

Falling into Photography examines the relationship between loss, desire and the imaginary. Across writing, photographic works and film pieces, we move from real to imagined spaces, exploring the boundaries between autobiography and fiction within the alternate orphic worlds evoked. Within staged fantastical images, the subjects are turned-away figures of loss, desired but always already beyond reach. The photographic medium is worked upon with painting, collage and montage, narrative voice over juxtaposed with moving image. Here, the photographic is loosened from its referent, slipping in and out of darkness, cloaked in dripping inks and bathed in subtle hues of tinted light. The spaces inhabited within the films and images are womb-like liquid spaces of night, moving from beds to swamps and caves, from the mother to the lover in search of a primordial return. Central to the work lies an exploration of the origins of fantasy and desire and how these are bound to experiences of loss and representation. The following essays explore these themes, interweaving psychoanalysis, philosophy and fiction with the artist's own prose and visual works. This story of falling, into the image and into love, asks what it is to make a work of art and how this process is necessarily bound to the maternal. The relationship between mourning and the creative process is explored throughout the writing, with emphasis on the photographic object, process and encounter.

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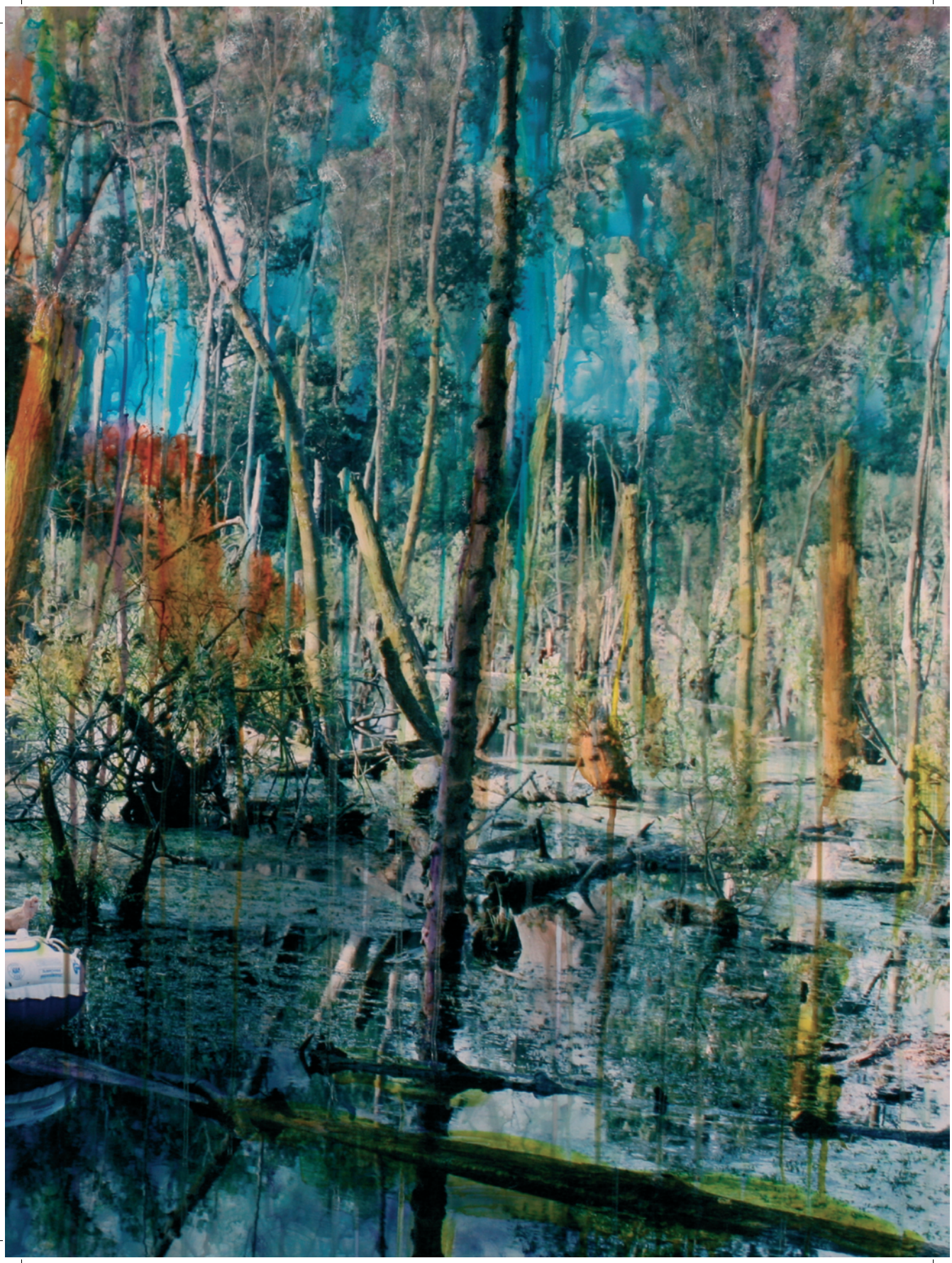

Introduction

THROUGH SWAMPS BEDS AND CAVES

IN SEARCH OF LIGHTNING

Desire, even love itself, is always born of a certain photographic sketch. Everywhere love reveals itself to desire, that is through infinite renunciation, a photographic event will have already been called forth, we would even say, desired. Desire is also the desire of photography.[1]

Jacques Derrida

FALLING INTO PHOTOGRAPHY is the story of picturing love and loving pictures. It is a story of falling, a story about the fear and exhilaration bound up within the fall, and a story of loss, desire. To fall is to give myself up, to momentarily lose control over my body, mind and subjectivity, handing myself over to another being or thing. Children whoop with glee when thrown into the air, delighted at their weightlessness, assured that their fall will end within loving, steady arms, fully aware however of the danger associated with this game. After the fall, will I still be me, will I be able to return to myself reassemble my body and psyche, readjust my relationship to the ground?

Falling always demands that I ask myself whether I will be able to get up again. Yet falling is rarely voluntary. I feel it happening, feel the ground giving way, the vertigo of altered sense. We fall into darkness, into mourning, into love and into sleep[2], sinking into this otherness so sought and feared. We hope that should this fall ever end, the impact will not obliterate our very being (unless we are intentionally falling to our death) and that our mother's arms will catch us once again.

To plummet against gravity is to experience a shedding of the body as we know it. I fall towards and into something or someone. I fall through the air in an extension of time, an elongated moment. Falling is both desired and feared, always bound to the risk of the complete dissolution and annihilation of the self.

A fallen woman is believed to have the power of the evil temptress of Eve, able to begin a civilization with her seduction. Eve embodies the first Fall of man, seducing Adam in the garden of Eden, leading to their expulsion from paradise with her introduction of the sin of sexuality. The myth of this inherent evil and destructive potential within woman, of her desire so strong, her hunger so great, has inspired horror throughout history, woman figured as natural, abominable, primordial. Closer to nature, she is seen as reproductive, procreative as opposed to her controlled and cultured (thereby creative and productive) male counterpart.

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1. Jacques Derrida. 'Aletheia', *The Oxford Literary Review,* Volume 32, Number 2, 2010, 'The Truth in Photography', edited by Micheal Naas, p. 175.

2. The title, *Falling into Photography,* was inspired and influenced by Jean-Luc Nancy's recent poetic reflection on the falling into sleep (*The Fall of Sleep.* Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), which echoes Maurice Blanchot's essay, 'Sleep, Night' in *The Space of Literature,* Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]).

This story of *Falling into Photography* is not a countering of this myth, but rather an underlining of the strengths, advantages and ultimate creative freedom falling brings forth. A world of flesh and fantasy is revealed within the vertiginous plummet. The artist as desiring body, is she who allows herself to fall, sinking into the image-world, finding a voice there. I fall through the air, towards the impact of the ground and into water. Rain falls and night falls, I fall in love and out of, into sleep and towards my death. I fall into the image, into the projected picture of the body I desire. I fall into photography.

Inherent to the photographic, as to desire and love, is the paradox and impossibility of grasping a body, the quest to close this gap between oneself and the other, the image, and the inevitable distance which always remains. As much as the photograph is a question of this body of desire, it is also a moment of violence, of wanting to possess that which is always beyond reach. This moment is one of undoing, of destroying the mother and lover in anger at their imagined inevitable departure.

My relationship to photography is less connected to the idea of delivering transparency or of a copy, rather, the camera and image function here as metaphors for subjectivity, memory and desire. The real is transformed from one thing into another in a magical totemistic process, fracturing any claims of the photograph as evidence. Momentarily photography delivers the perhaps universal and timeless desire to become one with another, sought within the lovers' embrace. I fall into the image, into the projected, miniature crystalline glow of the body I will lose. The apparatus makes this possible, makes loving pictures and picturing love a vertiginous extended moment of absolute proximity and distance at once. Image has replaced the actual loved body, flesh fallen away in place of this more exhilarating fiction. Photography here is an apparatus of fantasy driven by desire; the desire of the artist, the subject and the viewer. Within this story and these images of love, the work of art remains within a perpetual process of becoming, the bodies of desire never quite imaged or captured, forever eluding the present, always already lost.

Long before I began to think about and make images within the context of the work of art, I was aware of and wary of the strange power of the photographic, of the pleasure and fascination as well as the unease and pain evoked by the object. As a child I would secretly look at family albums when alone, crying over the images of a little girl I recognized only in glimpses as my mother, realizing I would never know her as the child or young woman smiling back at me, unsettled that she should have existed before me. This unnoticed catastrophe, this sense of missing someone whom you will never know, but who

is also still present, is perhaps a metaphoric kind of homesickness, a longing for something unnamable, an inherited grief.

My father would occasionally set up the super-8 projector, screening an evening of silent films for my sisters and me. Lulled by the whirring of the spools and fans, we would silently watch my mother swimming in oceans and lakes, walking through mountains and different cities, unaware of the camera until she might turn and catch it looking at her, her gestures and movements suddenly altering self-consciously. The three of us would lie on the floor beneath the projector, leaning into one another, watching the same films again and again. Our father, operating the apparatus behind us, interrupted only occasionally with fragmented exclamations of joy, which was in any other circumstance entirely out of character. My mother chose not to watch these home movies with us.

This strange melancholy, this mourning, which I knew the images evoked in her, was fascinating and disturbing at once. I scrutinized every motion and gesture of this familiar yet ghostly screen figure, recognizing moments of my mother within this enigmatic adolescent woman.

Fearful of this duplicitous machine, I shunned being photographed from as early as I can remember, offering to stand behind the camera, so as to evade its potentially damning gaze. This invisibility within the family albums, and the later absence within the party pictures shared amongst friends—both feels like a lucky escape, yet also gives one the sense of not having been quite present. The photographs I was unable to escape are never quite reconcilable or recognizable.

I remember seeing fragments of a troubling documentary on an Amazonian tribe[3], the last people to be discovered in the world

3. This fantasy of there existing groups of 'pure', 'primitive' people, unmarked by western civilization and thereby being somehow closer to nature and closer to our 'original' home, is discussed in Jean Baudrillard's essay 'The Precession of Simulacra'. He describes a discovered tribe being returned and sealed off in their original home, away from contact with the world that found them and upon whose touch they began to perish. "In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being "discovered" and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it. Doesn't all science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in its very apprehension, and by the pitiless reversal that the dead object exerts on it? Like Orpheus, it always turns around too soon, and, like Eurydice, its object falls back into Hades." *Simulation and Simulacra*. Translated by Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994 (1981[1]), p. 7. This idea echoes our desire for the maternal body to also be this untouched, primordial place of home.

who had not ever had contact with other humans. The footage showed the anthropologist and tribe's chief nearing one another, circling one another in fear and fascination. A hand was reached out, hair of a different texture stroked, skin examined. The anthropologist then took out a small mirror showing the warrior his own image. The terror of encountering this returned gaze was sudden, bodily and violent, also however entirely fitting. He had understood immediately that it was himself he saw gazing back within this tiny shard of reflective surface, but equally, knew instinctively he must look away, so as to protect himself from what might appear.

Sharing this instinct, I began to use the camera differently, making images I recognized myself within even if it was not my flesh depicted. The discomfort and unease of being photo-*graphed* was inflicted upon those who did not seem to perceive this being looked at by another through a cannibalistic apparatus as something to avoid. A skeletal, little sister, to show her she was wasting away, disappearing. A lover's fragmented body, unwittingly taken the morning of the day he would later die. Images processed months afterwards, reanimating what was then no longer.

The magical potential of transformation and fiction that the camera allows within the construction and editing of the image, whilst some other form of 'truth' or 'reality' subsists, is the dual aspect of the photographic which holds me prisoner. Now, after years of thinking about the photograph and its deceptive powers, I am back at that initial encounter—looking at images of a man I no longer know, searching for some shred of recognition, for evidence that what I had thought to have experienced was not purely imagined.

A body, which was so very real, constant and present, has now become a phantom. Day by day the ghostly remainder becomes more alive than the flesh that was so tangible. Left only with images of fantasies constructed within the cave of the studio, I see nothing more than a fictive lover, a body envisioned. These works suddenly act entirely as mirrors of myself, of the images I could never allow others to take so easily for fear of losing my subjectivity, for fear of not recognizing what might be reflected.

The photograph deceitfully promises to deny nothingness and inevitable disappearances, leaving images of desire in place of the unimaginable and unsayable. Yet these very same images become hauntings, betrayals and at times encounters with the lost other. The photograph competes with death by pre-empting it, thus delivering us with exactly the rupture we are hoping to detain.

The lover and the artist turn their beloved, their subject into an object, and within this shift a kind of violence occurs, complicating this meeting further, drawing the other, now object into an

auto-erotic, fetishistic relationship. The condition of artist and lover is one of projection, of idealized and imaginary, narcissistic image; this representation is now one's 'truth', the imagined and real no longer separable.

As Julia Kristeva writes:

> He loves, he loves Himself—active and passive, subject and object. The object of Narcissus is psychic space; it is representation itself, fantasy. But he does not know it, and he dies. If he knew it he would be an intellectual, a creator of speculative fictions, an artist, writer.[4]

It is this difficult relationship to the photographic as constructed space of fantasy and loss, a space closer to writing and dreams than the harsh, too painful hyper-reality of the snapshot, which my practice explores. Here, images and narratives create an alternative world, in which the dead can touch and be touched, and ghosts can be called upon to return. The work of art, the photographic, can extend and recapture that which no longer is.

Talking, writing of love, Kristeva concedes, is different from living it, "but no less troublesome and delightfully intoxicating. Does this sound ridiculous? It is mad."[5] The artist, the poet, make works on, and write of, love, but also, within this very process, create a psychic space of heightened pleasure. These images, and the subterranean shelters they are conceived within, are more alive than the living. Alone within darkrooms, studios, saunas, eyes shut, within the night, under blankets, in bed, eyes wide, diving into blackened waters—it is here that I am alive, can feel, think, make and read—here within the photographic womb of primordial seeing. Kristeva describes the collapsing of self with other in religious, almost photographic terms[6]:

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4. Julia Kristeva. *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p. 116.

5. Ibid., p. 2.

6. These religious almost photographic words such as 'flash' are also used within Kristeva's poetic essay on the experience of maternity and the relationship to her own child and her own body, juxtaposed with a theoretical analysis of the most powerful Western symbol of maternality-for-the-other, the Virgin Mary. In 'Stabat Mater' she describes the experience of pregnancy and giving birth as a: "FLASH—instant of time or of dream without time; inordinately swollen atoms of a bond, a vision, a shiver, a yet formless embryo. Epiphanies. Photos of what is not yet visible and that language necessarily skims over from afar, allusively." *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p. 234.

> Erotic fantasy merges with philosophical meditation in order to reach the focus where the sublime and abject, making up the pedestal of love, come together in the 'flash'... The contemporary narrative...has a post-theological aim: to communicate the amorous flash. The one in which the 'I' reaches the paranoid dimensions of the sublime divinity while remaining close to abject collapse, disgust with the self. Or, quite simply, to its moderate version known as solitude.[7]

Falling into Photography merges voices and narratives, gleaning fragments from various sources, grazing upon texts and reconfiguring these within a new narrative.[8] This process of reworking and interpreting existing material to create a new fictional space spans both my visual and literary practice. *Falling into Photography* is punctuated and separated by visual spreads and short stories, moving from autobiography to fiction, philosophy to psychoanalysis, considering our relation to the other and the experience of the photographic. Like the artists and writers I am drawing upon and referring to, subjective experience is insisted upon as a crucial element of knowledge. Thus, the following essays slip between subject–object pairs, each section drawing upon the intertwining and confusion between the surfaces and beings discussed, moving between registers of voice to constantly pull us back to our relationship to the photograph and the production of the work of art. Hélène Cixous describes this process within visceral bodily terms:

> Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me—the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live—that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me.[9]

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7. Ibid., p. 368.

8. In Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text*, he describes the act of reading as 'cruising' and 'grazing'. Barthes differentiates between the text of pleasure, which is the text we expect, the one within culture that does not break with it, and the text of bliss, that "imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts", unsettling the reader and bringing to "crises his relation with language." *The Pleasure of the Text*. Translated by Richard Miller.
New York: Hill & Wang, 1980 (1973[1]), p. 14.

9. Hélène Cixous. 'Sorties' from *The Newly Born Woman*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1986 (1975[1]), p. 86.

The maternal body as lover, as home and origin echoes throughout the work, at times almost invisibly, yet always there.[10] The mother's and lover's bodies evoke the illusion, that to survive without the existence of the other would be an impossibility. Both bodies remind us precisely of our own separateness; exactly at the point of contact with the other, we become most acutely aware of our own skin, our own boundaries. These ideas of an impossible return, of grief and a sense of inherited homesickness, return us to the womb, to the original home of mother and beyond. This image of otherness hails the maternal as an image of escape, a place to travel to: backwards and towards.

Within the first essay *Mourning and Melancholia—The Origins of Fantasy and Desire*, questions are raised surrounding the necessity and drive to make and write, thinking about the relationship creativity has to loss, and how these are bound to the maternal.

Slipping between Bodies—The Mother as Lover looks at the bodies that are always bound to mourning in a preempting of the inevitable loss to occur. Upon waking, in a half sleep, lovers collapse into one being, bodies confused, lover becomes mother, child becomes lover, and one's subjectivity and self is momentarily de-centred and dissolved.

The third essay, *The Flesh of the Image—Touching the Untouchable,* returns us more tangibly to the bodies we desire, the skins, which form, hold, shield and betray us. Here, 'skin' is the containing vessel of the living body and the corpse, whilst also the surface of the photographic image. This dissolving into the body and image of the other takes us into the womb-like space of the darkroom, a space of escape, allowing for the possibility of the reanimation of the lost object.

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10. At the centre of *Falling into Photography* lies not only the photograph and its relationship to love, but also Maurice Blanchot's *The Space of Literature*. Like the maternal body, Blanchot's is perhaps my 'original' text, which since grasping me has become no less slippery nor less exhilarating than that first contact. These interruptions of the graspable and this intentional insecurity of which Blanchot writes, bring us closer to something like truth or authenticity. This text has been a haunting; at moments it erupts like a flash, clarity of blinding light, only to fade as quickly into its own darkness. Reading here becomes parallel to the encounter with an artwork—knowledge must momentarily be left behind; interpretation remains inexhaustible. The work of art and *The Space of Literature* demand uncertainty, exhaustion, a falling away from oneself and a falling into the work. It is the work as origin and the nature of creativity, which Blanchot writes towards; this origin at once an unreachable place yet also the only one worth striving towards.

Inverted Projections—The Hallucinatory Space of the Darkroom considers this mythical, already historical container of fantasy and projected desire. Within this parallel world outside of time and space, unfixed liquid images emerge as transitional skins. Here, within this photographic tomb, we breathe in fantastical images of loss and homesickness. The image, the image as corpse, the corpse as image, the mother, the lover, the mother as lover and lover as mother, the darkroom as home, as womb, as place of origin and return; all objects, subjects and spaces not quite of this world, not quite graspable, touchable, yet all bound inextricably to the photographic—image, process and encounter. In these cave-like spaces of sweaty delirium, spaces which recall an encounter with a once known, now lost, no longer graspable space of home, we are in turn held, soothed, de-centered and destabilized. Wrapped within this brilliant darkness, desire and fascination move us towards that which no longer allows our enclosed separateness.

> A giant camera, a camera obscura stands on the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea. Its blue and yellow exterior echoes the city's pastel 1950's hues, a fairground nostalgic air of a once loved, now abandoned attraction. She expects it to be shut, but finds a sleepy man wrapped in a blanket reading the newspaper behind the box office entrance. She hands him a dollar and he springs into action, reciting the camera's history and taking her through black double doors into its belly.
>
> She walks into darkness, eyes adjusting to the change in light whilst he describes the apparatus' mechanisms. The lens in the centre of its conical roof focuses the image that is thrown onto the mirror that rotates in a slow motorised movement, projecting into the concave circular dish in the room's middle. By the time his automated explanation is complete and he has left her alone, her eyes have adjusted. The eggshell lacquered projection bowl now holds the most exquisite image—tiny crystalline waves break silently over jagged cliffs, water droplets spray in minute detail. It is more perfect, more breath-taking and so much more mesmerising than the harsher landscape outside. She wants to climb up into the dish, its circumference fitting a curled up body almost exactly. She could sleep here, waves crashing over her skin, dancing on her eyelids, covering her with its continual circular motion. She realizes then more than ever that she could happily never leave, would prefer to live inside a camera, inhabiting the silence and intensity of the projected spectral image.

As she eventually reluctantly leaves this oceanic dream-space, some children on the cusp of adolescence are pushing through the double doors, having talked the attendant into allowing them free entry. She follows them back inside, recognizing in their confident stride that they are regulars. Gaming machines and phones are stuffed into pockets and suddenly the jostling raucous group falls into silence. Together they watch the mute waves crash, until she slips out, leaving them alone in dream-like exaltation.

The photograph and photographic apparatus underlines a corporeal trace, an index, a theatrical medium in which desire is enacted. Within this intrauterine maternal space of camera and studio I gaze upon the lover's body as muse. Within these pictures of love my body is invisible, whilst nothing other than my desire is imaged. Both subject and myself disappear, melting into one, melting into a fictional fantasy, unseen image-maker more present than the body depicted. I am the photograph's stain,[11] the shadow hovering, the desiring eye that cannibalistically, gently and in complete silence devours the body that has given itself to me. I know that my desire damages this being, know that my need for the image in their place cannot be hidden from them, know that what will reveal itself in the developed film, the printed image, may fill the other with dread, sadness and fear. Yet the image must be listened to—looked at in dim light, through half-shut eyes, it reveals the future to us.

Falling into Photography echoes and repeats themes across different registers, like sleeping sisters, shifting positions each night, taking turns occupying the airless centre. Imprinted bodies intermingled, tossing between twisted sheets in choreographed succession, never sure on waking whose waist my arms are clasped around, whose leg is flung across my stomach. Roland Barthes describes this referential clinging:

> It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world; they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in

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11. In Jacques Lacan's essay 'The Line and the Light' (1964) he speaks of the haunting subject being a 'stain' within the image. The mimetic subject depicted "becomes a stain, it becomes a picture... And if I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of a screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot." *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: W.W. Norton, 1978, p. 99.

> certain tortures; or even like those pairs of fish (sharks, I think, according to Michelet) which navigate in convoy, as though united in eternal coitus.[12]

Falling into Photography takes us from the literal to the imagined, exploring throughout the relationship the production of work, in particular the light-sensitive image, has to loss and mourning, and the risk this encounter demands. In beds, caves and wading through swamps, I search for lightning. The trick, it seems, is to get close enough to become entirely lit up within its flash of blue, glowing momentarily in its aftermath, without however being struck down.

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12. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography.* Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 5.

Chapter I

MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA

LOSS AND THE ORIGINS OF FANTASY AND DESIRE

What is no longer there performs upon us and we perform upon it.
It bereaves us and we bereave it.[13]
Carol Mavor

Not—says the sleeper as well as the dead man, I am not there.
Not there, not now, not here, not thus.[14]
Jean Luc Nancy

THE POETIC MOMENT, the positive force of creative production is, one could argue, founded upon desire, born out of pain and loss, the artist a technician of melancholia. This artist is bound to the maternal and the melancholic, to homesickness, loss, desire, love and the abject.[15] Artistic creation could thus be defined as a countering of a fundamental lack inherent within the subject, and, much like desire upon which creativity is founded, moves towards its object through displacement, deformation, representation and delirium, the object itself always unattainable and beyond reach. Within this exploration of the origins of creativity, the artist and poet make and write from within the maternal realm, this semiotic space bound to the most archaic memories linked to the maternal body. This identification with the archaic mother could be seen as that which all makers share, and with it, the risk of losing one's self, an acknowledgement of the instability of identity. "The poet's jouissance that causes him to emerge from schizophrenic décorporealization is the jouissance of the mother."[16] Kristeva positions the artist as the one who is unable to separate herself from the mother. She also emphasises the necessity of the work for the artist stemming from an absence encountered within melancholia:

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13. Carol Mavor. *Pleasures Taken*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 4.

14. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Fall of Sleep*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 43.

15. In Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror,* the *abject* is that which threatens to destroy meaning by dissolving the distinction between ourselves and other. This understanding of the abject is useful in terms of thinking about Lacan's object of desire *(objet petit a)*. The *abject* "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" and "preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be", whilst Lacan's object of desire allows the subject to remain within the symbolic order of meaning. Abjection is marked by a relationship to discourse or rather the absence thereof. Kristeva examines the borderlines that exist within the oppositions of our own subjectivity and our relationship to the other and the borders between inside and outside. The *abject* oscillates between repulsion and desire in a double movement, always ambiguous and threatening. The *abject* so defined is the object of a primal repression that is constituted in the space of the before, and as such it is archaic. *Powers of Horror—An essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982 (1980[1]), p.2 and p.10.

16. Julia Kristeva. *The Kristeva Reader.* Edited by Toril Moi. London: Blackwell, 1986, p.192.

> the creative act is released by an experience of depression, without which we could not call into question the stability of meaning or the banality of expression. A writer must at one time or another have been in a situation of loss—of ties, of meaning—in order to write.[17]

Within the artist's relationship to the maternal,[18] separation and love always involve a splitting of the individual. An historical train of thought insists upon the redemptive aspect of melancholia in relationship to art (that it is within melancholia that the sublime is born). For later thinkers melancholia was seen as an aborted grieving process, in which separation from the lost object is refused and it is in turn incorporated and enshrined. Within this latter context, the act of, or desire for, suicide, is (for the melancholic) not a violent act against the self, but rather, a fantastical belief in the reunification with this impossible love beyond reach.[19]

Julia Kristeva draws upon the myth of Narcissus in her description of melancholy, the wounded melancholic bound to his infinite suffering as Narcissus is to his mirrored, fragile and unfixed liquid image, both preferring solitary silence.[20] Kristeva's melancholic body is the body that has lost contact to its home, its origin—has lost the mother's body and in turn its mother-tongue. This loss requires the formulation of a new language, which may be found within the creative process.[21] In turn, as a reactive mechanism, narcissism here functions as a defense against the emptiness of separation. The conjuring and production of images, representations, identifications and projections, are (for the narcissistic, melancholic subject) a means of strengthening the ego and subject and a means of exorcising emptiness.

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17. Julia Kristeva quoted in 'A Question of Subjectivity: an Interview' with Susan Sellers. *Women's Review,* 12, 1986, p.133.

18. Within *Falling into Photography,* the maternal refers to the mother's body and the relationship as artist and child we have to this subject—physically, psychically and metaphorically. When attributed to a subject other than one's actual mother or as a quality of a space or experience, I use it to highlight parallels to the experience evoked by the mother's body.

19. Julia Kristeva. *Black Sun*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 22.

20.Ibid., p. 24.

21. Ibid., p. 54.

It has been dark for several days now; day turns to night and night to day without there ever appearing to be but brief glimpses of light, flashing momentarily. The skies roll by furiously, swelling angrily in a strange twilight, crashing in waves, bursting, pouring showers. Water runs in tiny rivers, steam rising upon impact.

She had come here almost every day –the glass roof amplifying rain, comforting, dramatic overtures. At least the weather seemed to hear her, this grief, the rage.

Inside and outside collide here, within this forgotten corner of the city. No one seemed to remember this house. Birds fly in and out of the tipped glass panels–only the black blue sky and blurry grey outline of the city visible through the sweating, dripping glass.

Weeks, maybe months have passed since they spoke. She was beginning to think maybe she imagined him, these images all that tell her otherwise. Maybe, she only ever knew him, saw him, as image, pictures of herself, pictures, which slowly erased him. Somewhere, at some point, while her back was turned, he disappeared, into image, left her, exactly as directed. She knew he was out there, was here, somewhere within this city.

The orchids, ferns and palms, with their Latin names on carefully placed signs, bloom proudly, oblivious. She sounded out these unfamiliar words, forgetting them as soon as they formed a shape in her mouth. The air is so thick here it feels solid, acrid, sharing the vegetation's breath. The silent statues looked on with their artificially dismembered limbs, copies of gods and goddesses from another time.

Surrounded by fragmented broken bodies, twisted rotting flesh with pierced and flayed skins, stretched out Christs in the hundreds drape the walls of the adjacent museum with gaping mouths, silent cries. She walked past them, looking without seeing. Pain veiled and unveiled in burnt gold, umber, petrol, the same story told and retold. Walking through these empty rooms to get to the glass–house, silent guards sit immobile at every corner as though cast, carved, mirroring the bodies they protect.

Presumably this could go on forever, this wandering, the emptiness, the iron taste of apathy that coated her tongue no matter how raw she scrubbed it. Perhaps she could simply sit on this bench until the thunder stops and the skies close up. She hoped the storms would continue forever, feared the surfacing of day.

She knew language would return eventually, remembered the last time, recalled the dragging of feet, the pain along her spine every morning, the flood of dread upon waking. This prior knowledge, this bodily remembering, this physical infidelity in the repeti-

tion of mourning, brought no relief. What was automated just last week, had now become a complex chain of actions, requiring a will she no longer possesses.

The black of the storms had folded into night and caretaker was locking each section of the house, maintaining their different temperatures and humidities. She wondered if she could will her legs to move, allowing her to leave.

Like a knife he is lodged inside me. She had read those words somewhere.

Why was it, she wondered suddenly, moving from the sweet wet air of the palm-house into the cooler desert night, that each work seemed like the last? Another always inconceivable, yet somehow more words, more images eventually follow the last. Each time they had held one another, entwined in each other's arms, inside one another, each time, she had been equally sure it was the last.

Like a knife, you are lodged inside me—she mouthed these stolen words silently.

A girl at school had stopped speaking. Did not speak for years. She wondered if she was forming these words, reading the Latin signs of plants imported by an emperor in another time, from distant lands, simply, so that language might not leave her entirely.

Grief took hold anew each day, as though the fall of sleep withdrew all memory, and every day upon waking he died again and she with him.

She moved from one glass-house to another, days spent in saunas, steam rooms, the world disintegrating in water vapour and heat as she pushed her body further and further, head separating, leaving body behind. This self-induced fainting, this wilful drowning, delivered the delirium of falling away.

Much like the melancholic body, the photograph refuses to give up the lost object, embalming that which is no longer. In the photograph's magical, maternal, and uncanny ability to procreate, there is an unmistakable reanimation of that which has been lost. Roland Barthes explores this strange medium within *Camera Lucida*. This book of loss and waiting is a contemplation on the peculiar space and time of the photographic, encountered after the death of his mother. Searching for an image in which he might recognize her essence, Barthes is faced with this uniquely photographic hovering between life and death (every image reveals that "he is dead and he is going to die"[22]). The subject becomes transformed into object, and, by inducing belief in that which is alive, the real is shifted into the past, eter-

nally immobilised within the image. This liquid oscillation leads Barthes to describe the photographic as:

> a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest shared hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there', on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality.[23]

This moving between imagination and reality, between dream and waking, past and present, mirrors the altering of perception within the process of mourning. Sigmund Freud saw the repetition and reliving of the past as an unconscious way of overcoming a specific loss, whereas Lacan later subverted this idea, by freeing the subject from a literal event. Rather, he believed that we adopt a more poetic quotation of the past, in which we revisit it through performance, deliberately reciting rather than repeating or reliving. This differentiation seems crucial when thinking about the process of mourning in relationship to the photographic and the production of the work of art, as this deliberate and altered recitation parallels the artist's process of making. This shift also anticipates the structure of the creative process, in which the self acknowledges how the domination of a chaotic, subjective inner reality shapes and transforms one's perception of the world. Inducing on the one hand an experience of helplessness, on the other it reveals the power of affect and subjectivity to the mourning and creative self.

This differentiation between Freud's historical loss and Lacan's interminable experience of lack also determines their use and discussion of different tenses. This theatricality of the unconscious, which Lacan adopts from Freud, highlights the performative and fictive aspects of memory and our relationship to the past. Lacan's shift however, from Freud's perfect tense to his own future anterior, questions this subjective position that Freud posits in terms of the internalization of memory. "The 'past' after all, can never be entirely remembered if it is regarded as never having taken place."[24]

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22. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 95.

23.Ibid., p. 115.

24. Sigmund Freud. 'Mourning and Melancholia' from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.
London: Hogarth Press, 1953, p. 239 ff.

Sometimes, not often anymore, she takes the bus to the building you work in and stands hidden in a doorway nearby just to feel closer to you.

Sometimes, not often anymore, she stands in this doorway and thinks that maybe you will walk out of that building across from where she stands, will see her and smile, walk towards her, folding her into your chest.

Sometimes, not often anymore, she forgets the strange anger and hatred that has taken the place of your love, and thinks that if she just called your now disconnected number, you might answer and laugh, saying you are almost home.

In 'Mourning and Melancholia',[25] Freud writes that the person in mourning is constantly confronted with a multi-layered reality. The mourning subject must negotiate memories, within which the lost other is still very much alive and present. This process of, often obsessive, recollection, during which the survivor resuscitates the existence of the lost other in the space of the psyche, leads to the replacing of an actual absence with an imaginary presence. Both mourning and the creative process are defined by this movement between an outside and inside reality, an external world and an inner processing and interpretation of this world.

This shift from Freud's notion of mourning as the reworking and working through of a specific loss, to Lacan's examination of a grief that cannot be rationally associated or understood, highlights the unknowable and unpredictable aspect of mourning. Freud's understanding of mourning was that of an enigmatic and mysterious process (*a puzzle, Rätsel*), inexplicable in the intensity and stubbornness of the investment and attachment to the lost object. It is not just the expenditure of psychic resources which make the mourning process enigmatic—its radical mystery lies in its confronting us with the ultimate enigma of the other, perpetuating questions which remain forever unanswered. This openendedness without resolution or solution, without knowingness or definite ending, is one of mourning's most difficult aspects, echoing an inherent nature of creative practice.

25. Ibid., p. 239 ff.

To think about loss and mourning in relationship to the process of creating works of art, it is useful to draw upon Freud's notion of mourning as psychological work, *Trauerarbeit* (grief-work). The inclusion of the word work signifies an arduous and laboured process, implying a devoted application of the self in order to survive, relinquish, or perhaps just diminish the shocking pain of loss. This grief is an activity rather than a romanticized, passive, sentimental state of being. With Freud's later introduction of the *death drive*[26], there is a partial withdrawal from the notion of the possibility of a successful and completed work as well as from the previous clear division between mourning and melancholia (being a chronic mourning without end). With 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable'[27], Freud draws the conclusion that every work, in particular that of analysis, presupposes mourning. In his revisiting and reworking of Freud, Lacan draws upon the death drive and the subject's relentless quest for the lost object (always revealing itself to be lost by definition). Loss, for Lacan, does not refer to a historical, specific event, but is rather the solution to the question of desire, loss thereby being a universal and unspecified, undirected emptiness or absence. This understanding of desire celebrates and requires the object's absence, whilst this idea of an overcoming of mourning contains in itself a denial and rejection of the importance of the 'work' as outlined by Freud, mourning now intervening only at the level of desire.

In *The Ends of Mourning—Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*, Alessia Ricciardi calls for a 'reenchanting' of mourning as an ethical call against the detachment and disavowal of the past within contemporary culture.

> We must search for a new ground on which mourning may be redefined and thus allowed to retain its imaginative urgency. The reinvigoration of mourning in the domain of cinema is of particular interest, because film poses a potential challenge to the assumption that the image is the commodified medium par excellence of contemporary mass culture.[28]

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26. Freud introduced the notion of the death instinct or drive in his essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' from 1929. Initially turned toward the self, the drive subsequently turns from the self-destructive to an aggressive or destructive instinct externally to the surrounding world.

27. Sigmund Freud. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, 1953, p. 211 ff.

28. Alessia Ricciardi. *The Ends of Mourning (Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film)*. Palo Alto: Stanford University press, 2003, p. 8.

According to Ricciardi, cinema is a space, which not only consumes our anteriority, but also projects it back upon us. The photographic and cinematic in particular confront us with human referents whose "mortality has been suspended or annulled through the visual production of the perpetual simulacra of life."[29] This fragmented, strange cinematic experience of time counters our subjective activity of remembrance, revisiting and fictionalizing experience not simply to cite, but rather to allegorically recode it within this impossible experience of the real.

"It is not enough to have remembrances, it is necessary to forget them when they are too numerous, and it is necessary to have the patience to await their return," says one of Jean-Luc Godard's characters.[30] Godard's adopted motto borrowed from Saint Paul is that, "the image will come at the time of resurrection ... Above all the object during editing is alive, whereas during shooting it is dead. It is necessary to resuscitate it. It is witchcraft."[31] In his description, cinema becomes an act of mourning attempting to reclaim life, through the process of first ordaining death through the photographic and filmic process of fixing and embalming the subject, then mourning for this lost object until it becomes representation within the projected reanimated space of the cinema. Through quotation, the moving image serves to reorganize our relationship to loss and death by recovering the fundamental unrepresentability of the past, precluding any possibility of a successful overcoming of loss, "yet at the same time resists a wholehearted embrace of the paradigmatic Freudian alternative of melancholia, arriving instead at an outlook we might call that of *sublime* mourning."[32]

The work of art and the process of its production in particular, might be able to offer a new form of mourning that oscillates between the subjective, personal and the collective, intersubjective modes of

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29. Alessia Ricciardi. *The Ends of Mourning (Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film).* Palo Alto: Stanford University press, 2003, p. 13.

30. Ibid., p. 13.

31. Ibid., p. 179.

32. Following ideas from German Romanticism and Kantian thought, the experience of the sublime is one of the subject at the limit of its senses, an overwhelming state, inducing pleasure and fear simultaneously. The etymology of the word sublime also connotes the causing of a solid state to pass into a vapour then returning to its previous form. The subject experiencing the sublime is a subject in dissolution, experiencing the loss of self. A 'sublime mourning' might thus be understood as one of self-sacrifice, experienced collectively. Ibid., p. 185.

memory. The work of art is not solely a work of mourning (although the process of making may parallel aspects of Freud's *Trauerarbeit*), does not concern itself only with the lost object and re-finding thereof, but instead, may function as an undoing and restructuring of temporal relationships, in which memory is not introjected and consumed, but reworked, projected, and returned.

With Freud's rethinking of the *pleasure principle*[33] in his development of the *death drive,* he comes to the conclusion of mourning being interminable, which Lacan develops further in his insistence on the inability to recover or access the lost object and history, thus suppressing the importance of our relationship (both individual and collective) to mourning, history and memory. Freud's shift from a specific loss to a transcendental lack, from terminable grief and a completed work to an interminable sorrow, saw him wrestle with and move from a linear understanding of time in the overcoming and working through of grief, to a less directional and more fundamental, seeping mourning which ebbs and flows, but never completely retracts into a linear past. Lacan's reworking of this later position of Freud's places lack at the core of the psyche. This non-specific loss before memory and death of the thing, lays the foundation for the subject's eternal, unfulfillable desire. Within the early Freudian scheme, the work of mourning deals with actual loss, whilst melancholia deals with its idealized occurrence. With his introduction of the idea of *Trauerarbeit*, Freud reinterprets the process of remembering and forgetting as work. This mental labour of grief implies a productive outcome, this being for Freud the substitution of a new object for the lost object preceding it. The work of mourning is thus completed when the subject finds or produces a new libidinal object. This possibility of a complete breaking (implying a linear step-by-step forgetting) with the lost object is however continually questioned.

> As difficult as it is, a successful work of mourning finally achieves the detachment of libido from the 'lost' object. Success is contingent on a form of repetition—the reinvestment

33. In Freud's 1920 essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', he revisits and challenges the idea that the pleasure principle (the instinctual drive toward experiencing and maintaining pleasure and warding off experiences of pain) is the dominant mental drive and examines how it is in constant tension with the reality principle (which postpones the immediate shortest route to pleasure in favour of a more gradual learning process) and the death drive (which is introduced within the essay). The multiple drives are thus active within a complex and often antagonistic interplay with one another.

> and hypercathexis of each bit of memory—that, unlike the repetition-compulsion of the death drive, is benign and opens up the possibility of a renewal of the object. The *Arbeit* (labour) of mourning produces a shock that, however fleetingly, reinforces and amplifies the significance of the object.[34]

This difference in position between the significance Freud gives to the lost object, and Lacan's replacing of the object with a non-specific loss, an a priori absence, overrides the need for a work of mourning, for an indefinite and potentially endless labour without finite outcome. This shift results in a blurring between absence and loss, mourning and melancholia, and a rejection of the importance of the labour of mourning, both of a personal and collective nature.

> Recently she stayed in bed for days at a time, reading and sleeping with blinds drawn so that night and day were indistinguishable. Stories bled into one another and were forgotten before their end was even reached. Stacks of novels surrounded her. She would sometimes read two or three at once creating a new narrative between books, force reading with a ferocious anxiety, as though something terrible might happen if she were to stop or run out of stories to gorge on.
>
> She realizes that she hardly seems to remember anything. A sort of dense fog covers everything she tries to recall, emerging if at all as tiny shards, dissipating upon contact.

"We only see that libido clings to its objects, and will not renounce those that are lost even when a substitute lies ready to hand".[35] In order to withdraw libido from the lost object, the subject 'sets-up' the lost object within the self, thus undergoing an identification process. This identification, initially only associated with melancholia, and later acknowledged to also take place within

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34. Alessia Ricciardi. *The Ends of Mourning (Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film)*. Palo Alto: Stanford University press, 2003, p. 25.

35. Sigmund Freud. 'Mourning and Melancholia' from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* p. 309.

non pathological mourning, is "the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects",[36] melancholic identification, thus becoming an integral part of all mourning. This merging of mourning and melancholia both shifts the temporal nature of mourning, (namely that mourning might, like melancholia, be never-ending), and also highlights that the lost and dead other is interminably preserved within the self. This inner space inhabited by the dead, carved out to preserve and protect the lost object, allows the subject to have seemingly come to terms with the loss, whilst actually having simply moved the object from the outside to the inside of the self, thus becoming an integral part of the ego. The dead go on living within an invisible, unconscious inner crypt; the mourning subject does not fully acknowledge its loss, unable to psychically separate the imaginary from the real.

This *narcissistic identification*[37] with the lost object and its oral incorporation, (so as to preserve it permanently as an idealized and

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36. Freud articulated an idea of ghostly presences which haunt our psychic life in his 1923 'The Ego and the Id', "When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object there quite often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego ...; the exact nature of this substitution is as yet unknown to us. It may be that by this introjection, which is a kind of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase, the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible. It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects. At any rate the process, especially in the early phases of development, is a very frequent one, and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object choices". Here Freud shows that identification is the very mechanism by which the ego is formed.

37. Freud initially develops his idea of *narcissistic identification* in 'On Narcissism: an Introduction', 1914, in which the narcissism is posited as a stage within sexual development between *auto-erotism* and *object-love*, in which the subject "begins by taking himself, his own body, as his love-object." Freud later (in 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', 1921) divides narcissistic identification into two distinct stages of *primary* and *secondary narcissism*, *primary* being characterized by a lack of differentiation between self and other and the absence of a relationship to the outside world (the intrauterine experience being its initial form with sleep being a weaker imitation thereof) and *secondary* being that identification which comes into play during the development of the ego through the identification with an other. (Jacques Lacan develops this idea into what he calls the *mirror stage* (1936) in which the ego is formed via a narcissistic identification with the object, this object being the image of himself founded on the model reflected by the other.)

fixed image), also appears in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's writings on mourning. The differentiation between mourning and melancholia is developed in their essay on metapsychological reality and fantasy entitled, 'Mourning or Melancholia, Introjection versus Incorporation'. Their interpretations and discussions of fantasy in relation to mourning and loss, as well as their studies of *introjection* and *incorporation* of the lost object, seem particularly pertinent in thinking about the creative process. *Incorporation*, according to Abraham and Torok, implies a fantasy, *introjection* a process (by which the small child and adult comes to accept the mother's absence). Whilst *introjection* is the non-pathological response to loss, *incorporation,* the denial of a loss that is too overwhelming to come to terms with, leads the subject to erect an inner crypt within the self.

> Don't you see, she screamed silently, "I slept with him to stay with you, to be your equal, to not be a victim. I kicked and punched back to say to myself, 'I am the same as you, it is simply how we are, and, as I am as much at fault, there is no reason to go.'"

Fantasy[38] always functions within a preservative framework as a preventative and conserving mechanism. *Incorporation,* Torok and Abraham's words, "the fantasy of non-introjection", is the fantasy of the introduction of all or part of the love object into one's own body, possessing, expelling or alternatively acquiring, keeping, losing it, all stemming from the realization of a loss sustained by the psyche.

> If accepted and worked through, the loss would require major readjustment. But the fantasy of incorporation merely simu-

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38. In *Falling into Photography*, *fantasy* takes on the ideas of the German origin of the word, '*Phantasie*', which points towards the world of the imagination, that which is imagined and the creative act conjuring these scenes. Fantasy thereby always sets itself in opposition or in distinction to reality, fantasy thus being an illusory production, which cannot be sustained, but is always in a dynamic relationship to desire.

See also Victor Burgin: "In a classic, Freudian, setting the word "phantasy" refers to imaginary scenarios which can be conscious (as in the day-dream), preconscious (not conscious, but which may emerge into consciousness under favourable conditions), and unconscious (radically inaccessible to consciousness, except in the disguised form of dreams, slips of the tongue and other lapses— and, of course, conscious phantasies)."

Victor Burgin. 'Re-Reading Camera Lucida' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 40

> lates profound psychic transformation through magic; it does so by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. So in order not to 'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost.[39]

In the form of imaginary ingestion, the lost object, which we refuse to mourn, is incorporated rather than introjected, thereby being denied the full impact that its loss has had on the subject. Thus, when a loss occurs which cannot be acknowledged as such, incorporation takes place, leading to a radical denying of the loss and an erecting of a secret tomb, the lost object buried alive within an internal crypt, an inner cave. "To have a fantasy of incorporation is to have no other choice but to perpetuate a clandestine pleasure by transforming it, after it has been lost, into an intrapsychic secret."[40] The melancholic, magically, violently and without mediation, binds himself to the lost object by use of this phantasm.

These words, metaphors and visualisations are echoed in Barthes' description of his encounter with the body of the lost other via the medium of photography. At once both inside and outside the melancholic subject, the lost object, the beloved, hidden within this silent and secret internal enclosure, beyond all naming or contact, is now untouchable. This unspeakable grief that is hidden away by fantasy in an imaginary internal tomb, does not however lie dormant. The main function of this fantasy life born of incorporation is to repair, within the space of the imaginary, the injury that was really inflicted upon the ideal object.

"The fantasy of incorporation reveals a utopian wish that the memory of the affliction had never existed or, on a deeper level, that

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39. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. *The Shell and The Kernel.* Translated by Nicholas T. Rand. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 126.

40. The "clandestine pleasure" of which Abraham and Torok speak, follows the case history of a juvenile incestuous seduction that preceded the death of the love object (the seducer); "his prohibited and shameful sexual games did not admit of any form of verbal communication ...the carrier of a shared secret, he became, after his sister's death, the carrier of a crypt...The foregoing represents our hypothesis. Its clinical import is that every time an incorporation is uncovered, it can be attributed to the undisclosable grief that befalls an ego already partitioned on account of a previous objectal experience tainted with shame ... It is ... the object's secret that needs to be kept, his shame covered up". Ibid., , p. 131 f.

the affliction had had nothing to inflict."[41] Examining Freud's essay on mourning and melancholia, Abraham and Torok find particular interest in the recurring image of the gaping wound. It is this wound precisely that they believe the melancholic attempts to wall in and hide through incorporation—the moment the object is incorporated, the imaginary crypt is formed. As long as this crypt is retained intact, as long as incorporation is successful, there is no melancholia. Only with the crumbling of this internal fortress, often triggered by a secondary loss, do the original symptoms reappear.

> Faced with the danger of seeing the crypt crumble, the whole of the ego becomes one with the crypt, showing the concealed object of love in its own guise. Threatened with the imminent loss of its internal support—the kernel of its being—the ego will fuse with the included object, imagining that the object is bereft of its partner. Consequently the ego begins the public display of an interminable process of mourning. The subject heralds the love object's sadness, his gaping wound, his universal guilt—without ever revealing, of course, the unspeakable secret, well worth the entire universe. The only means left by which the subject can covertly revive the secret paradise taken from him is to stage the grief attributed to the object who lost him.[42]

This subject's attribution of grief to the enshrined lost object, and the 'staging' of the object's grief at having lost the subject, implies a radical ability to transfer. This shift in perception and blurring of reality and fiction fuses the subject with its internalized lost object further. This entanglement of imagination[43] and reality, producing instances of the uncanny, rings very similar to the artist and poet's relationship to the work; the separation of where subjectivity ends and

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41. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. *The Shell and The Kernel*. Translated by Nicholas T. Rand. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 134.

42. Ibid., p. 136.

43. The concept of the *uncanny* was developed by Sigmund Freud in his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny'. Freud identifies the uncanny effects as resulting from instances of "repetition of the same thing," including incidents wherein one becomes lost and accidentally retraces one's steps, having a sense of repetition and doubling. Freud relates one aspect of the uncanny from its German etymology. By contrasting the German adjective *unheimlich* with its base word *heimlich* ("concealed, hidden, in secret"), he proposes that social taboo often yields an aura not only of pious reverence but also of horror and disgust.

the produced object begins is often indecipherable, elusive and invisible to the maker. Abraham and Torok emphasize the collapsing of the divide between reality and imagination, dead and alive, ghost and human that comes to the fore in this establishing of the crypt. This activation of fantasy within the mechanism of mourning, this falling away of logic governed by an external reality, may also ignite creativity and the imagination outside of mourning.

The art object and the process of making, have the potentiality to underline and retrieve the importance of this psychical and at times physical labour in relationship to cultural as well as personal memory.[44] In Freud's later recognition of the impossibility of complete detachment from the lost object, mourning and melancholia are viewed as processes which, rather than weakening the ties to the object, actually strengthen this relationship, increasing rather than decreasing the subject's identification with the other.[45] With this shift within mourning, each former self dies away according to an increasingly destabilizing logic of self-annihilation, initiating and triggering a process of fragmentation of the subject.[46]

A historical reflection upon the shifting ideas surrounding mourning and melancholia in relationship to subjectivity and artistic creation offers descriptions of fragmentation and annihilation of the melancholic as well as the lover, emphasising the notion of a sacred madness, a divine mania afflicting the artist and poet. Melancholia as an ecstatic clarity resulting from celestial madness is later developed into the idea of a positive melancholy, linked to erotic desire.[47]

This potentially difficult and problematic, but perhaps equally insightful reading of melancholy as the ultimate creative state, has been charted throughout Western theories of creativity to the current day. This internal, special relationship to melancholia is described repeatedly as an emotional state that is at once dangerous and privi-

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44. The work of art and the creative process can be a form of restaging and reworking both a specific or non-specific loss for the artist, creating new narratives, which in turn may open up a space for the viewer to project their own experiences and identifications.

45. Sigmund Freud. *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*. Translated by Tanya and James Stern. New York: Basic Books, 1960, p. 386.

46. Alessia Ricciardi. *The Ends of Mourning (Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film)*. Palo Alto: Stanford University press, 2003, p. 77.

47. Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson. *As a Weasel Sucks Eggs—An Essay on Melancholy and Cannibalism*. Translated by Brian Manning Delaney. Berlin: Sternberg Press 2008, (1992[1]), p. 17, 19.

leged, allowing and enabling thought and creativity. "In melancholy the soul gains access to a light that lies beyond the sun of reason."[48]

This double nature of melancholy as both a positive force and as a de-centring, destabilizing and potentially destructive one, describes the subject as split between madness and lucidity.[49] Within these accounts we repeatedly stumble upon (almost photographic) metaphors of darkness (the darkness of depression) and sublime illumination (the light of creativity).

Subjectivity and truth are undone in the face of loss within Marie Darrieusseecq's, *My Phantom Husband*, an exploration of the fragile and changeable nature of reality, in which the imagined and real are no longer distinguishable. The novel is a description of the unnamed narrator's descent into hallucinatory mourning, after her husband's disappearance. As grief takes hold and his absence remains unexplained and unresolved, the narrator's sense of reality and truth becomes increasingly unstable. Alienated and isolated, her existence becomes one of constant doubt, illusion and numbed emotion. Within one passage the narrator describes examining herself and vanished husband in their wedding photograph, searching for some truth within the image. The photograph however reflects the present rather than the fixed moment suspended on film, his flight animated and predicted within the past. Sight, perception, memory and the photographic collapse and undo one another.

> My husband was fading away. Sometimes it can be hard to make out a point in semi-darkness, because the harder you look at it the more it dissolves against your retina, disappearing into blackness, and so you have to look slightly to one side of it before you can pick it up out of the corner of your eye... That day, around nine in the morning, my head swimming from holding my breath, I managed nevertheless to get up from the armchair and pick up our wedding photo from the bureau. I hoped I'd be able to find in this image, in the slightly awkward smiled elicited by the lens, in the cliché of my hand on his elbow, a sense of reality, a sense of our past, the two of us as a couple, which would put paid to this extraordinary anxiety. But it was just at that moment, looking at the photo (and only at that moment), that I was forced to admit, after a night without sleep or rest, that my husband had disappeared; that my anxiety was justified, boundless and featureless. The

48. Ibid., p. 22.

49. Ibid., p. 31.

> photo had moved. It had become blurred. My husband had turned his back, as though, at the very moment the flash went off, someone had distracted him. My smile was all the more forced, my expression all the more false, because I was actually gripping on to him to keep him there, to get him to look at the camera.... instead of his paralyzed face, the image showed an act of movement, of flight in subtle tones of grey and brown. It was a lovely photo. It was his disappearance photo.[50]

Following this extraordinary description of the destabilizing force of grief, in which a photograph is reanimated to reveal a previously unnoticed, hidden truth, the narrator is suddenly certain that if she had only studied this image more closely at an earlier point in time, she would have seen the loss to come and been able to prevent his leaving by holding on more tightly, thus preventing this slipping of the image, the vanishing of her husband. This missed opportunity, the certainty of what this simple measure would have averted, poignantly renders mourning's folding of reality and the imaginary into one another.

> She calls him on the phone. He is surprised, caught off guard. She hears it in his voice, wanted this moment in which she hoped to hear some sign of the old him, the person she recognized. They talk. She tries to think of things to keep the conversation going, not daring to speak too openly in fear of his reaction, his hanging up and cutting her off as she knows he eventually will. She wants to bask in this illusion of intimacy a little longer, letting the familiar hum of his voice fill some of the hollow cavern in her stomach.
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> Eventually he must go. They say goodbye. No resolution or hope is given, but she hangs onto the waves of his voice for a moment longer before nausea seizes her.
>
> Finally, if only for an instant, she feels again, tears surge from their ducts. And as quickly and violently as this despair arrives, it leaves again and in its place that terrible numbness sets in.
>
> She has been trying to feel something for months, seeking out silent nights with strangers, so that at some point perhaps she will wake from this sleep. These momentary intensities however pearl off her, slipping away without leaving the faintest residue or trace, entirely inconsequential, exchangeable, as though never having taken place.

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50. Marie Darrieussecq. *My Phantom Husband*. Translated by Esther Allen. London: Faber and Faber, 2000, p. 39 f.

> She wonders if it was an illness, a contagion she had caught from him. She had watched it slowly take hold over several years, although she now wonders if he had always been a carrier. His apathy increased steadily and along with it, the risks he took.
>
> She knows it was not always like this, remembers a time when this persistent nothing did not follow her around like a loyal, unwanted friend. She could not describe this state as one of grief any longer, could not even say she was particularly unhappy, simply, that she seemed to have lost the capacity to feel anything, joy nor excitement, fear nor anxiety able to touch her. In their place an endless, unfolding emptiness took hold, unstirred no matter how she tried to release herself from its grip.

Marguerite Duras' *The Malady of Death* is a short story of loss and grief, infused with erotic longing. The novella's title refers to a disease of the soul, a soul which has died. The story takes place within one hotel room over a period of days and nights, which seem to melt into one nocturnal space. The man, whom the author addresses as 'you', hires a woman to spend several weeks with him by the sea. The breaking waves of the black ocean form the backdrop to this struggle to feel alive through the body and skin of another. The man weeps and the woman sleeps (sleep appearing as almost the natural state of being).

He is unable to feel or desire, and suffers from this detached numbness which she identifies as the malady of death. This melancholic subject is described as the living dead, unaware of his loss, as to his knowledge he has never loved nor desired. For his purposes she could be any willing woman, soft skin, open to him, yet distant. They rarely fully look at one another awake, as he perceives her gaze upon him as somehow threatening his very being. However, he watches her asleep. He silences her pleasure, hand across mouth, stifling this expression of joy. They rarely speak, maintaining the protective separateness of their anonymity, the gap is narrowed only through touch. He thinks he would not recognize her outside this room, dressed and in the street, as it is her body he is trying to know. He asks the woman:

> Why she accepted the deal and the paid nights.
>
> She answers in a voice still drowsy, almost inaudible: Because as soon as you spoke to me I saw you were suffering from the malady of death. For the first few days I couldn't put a name to it. Then I could....

> You ask her how she knows. She says she just does. Says one knows without knowing how.
>
> You ask: why is the malady of death fatal? She answers: Because whoever has it doesn't know he's a carrier, of death.[51]

Communicating almost entirely through touch, the characters Duras describes suffer from the tension between emptiness and passion. In another of their few verbal exchanges, the man asks the woman how loving is possible, and when or how it might it be felt:

> You ask how loving can happen—the emotion of loving. She answers: Perhaps a sudden lapse in the logic of the universe. She says: Through a mistake, for instance. She says: Never through an act of will. You ask: Could the emotion of loving come from other things too? She says: It can come from anything, from the flight of a night bird, from a sleep, from a dream of sleep, from the approach of death, from a word, from a crime, of itself, oneself, often without knowing how.[52]

Love and desire are described by the woman to the afflicted man, the living dead, are that which cannot occur through intention, but rather, happen by mistake, a momentary chasm, in which the rational is no longer the governing force.

> She waits by the corner, away from the glow of the streetlamp, in the shadow of the tree. A car pulls up—she recognizes him without being able to see him. She walks over slowly, conscious of every movement of her body, her whole skin aware of the fabric it is shrouded within.
>
> They had not spoken in years, the only communication occasional letters, written more to themselves than the other. She thought about these letters at times, years of writing about loneliness, escaping in words to the comfort and potentiality of their shared adolescence. They had both left home, said goodbye knowing it was not the end, that there was no end, and gone separate ways.
>
> A year later at almost the same instance she had watched her new lover die in a crash, the body which mapped her future broken into unfixable parts, whilst a few borders away he was

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51. Marguerite Duras. *The Malady of Death*. Translated by Barbara Bray. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1986, p. 18 f.

52. Ibid., p. 49 f.

pulled over and searched, sentenced to too many years of isolation for a thoughtless risk he should never have taken.

Now, here, they met again. She opened the car door, sat down, and looked at him briefly, sideways for just an instant. He reached over and touched her bare knee, squeezed it gently, palm covering the whole of the cap. They glanced at one another at the same time, smiling wryly, happily, tired. He pulled her towards him and their bodies sagged into one another, relieved that this at least was unchanged. They stayed like this for a while; she was not sure for how long, until she noticed the gearstick poking into her thigh quite painfully. He pulled the car out into the darkness, driving along back country roads, no destination in mind.

She rolls down the window, leans her arm out, balmy night air rushing through her fingers, filling her lungs, momentarily returned to who she was before. She slouches down into the passenger seat, kicks her shoes off, placing her feet on the dashboard, and closes her eyes as the wind brushes her face. Without taking his eyes off the road he reaches towards her, his right hand running the length of her leg, from foot to thigh.

This same touch had released her from everything but the present ever since they had first embraced as kids at a party in someone's parents' basement. Time was now once again suspended.

Headlights of passing cars occasionally bathe them in a flash of light and she wonders what image of abandon they illuminate. By day, as her other self, she might worry or feel embarrassment or shame. In this hurtling car however, moving through darkness and going nowhere, she feels invisible, powerful, entirely protected and safe. Hours later they have still not spoken, afraid language will return them to the truth, to the present in which they are strangers, in which this desire has no place. Words will signify the end of the night too soon, returning them to the reality of their current lives in which the other no longer fits. She curls up onto her side, lies her head in his lap and, looking up at this most familiar face, this man she knows everything and nothing about, falls asleep, his hand stroking her hair as the first signs of dawn break through the black pine trees, now tinged with a blue-green shimmer.

Chapter II

SLIPPING BETWEEN BODIES

THE MOTHER AS LOVER

Philia begins with the possibility of survival.
Surviving—that is the other name of mourning whose
possibility is never to be awaited.[53]
Jacques Derrida

To love is to always love someone, to have someone before you,
to look only at him and not beyond him—if not inadvertently,
in the leap of passion that knows nothing of ends. And so finally
love turns us away, rather than turning back.[54]
Maurice Blanchot

TO LOVE IS to always be aware that one of you will witness the other die—one must always die before the other, that is the basis of friendship, its foundation, the structure of its very core. This possibility then binds mourning for that which is yet to come, for this future inevitability, to every friendship. This law of friendship, this possibility of the other's dying or leaving, (and with each new death and loss, the repetition of a mourning that is both unique and at once the same as every previous loss), brings with it an inescapable infidelity. Each loss inevitably betrays every previous one, each mourning a 'posthumous infidelity'[55] to the others before. This paradoxical relationship sees one loss slip into another, one death into another, repetition and transference of one mourning into another. Fidelity may seem a strange sentiment towards the dead, yet in a sense to love another is to prepare for this potential need to survive without the other, thus imagining a world in which the other or ourselves must continue without this unique friendship. Each friendship is based upon this knowledge, yet each loss is also the end of the world. Each death is thus the first, yet this first death gets repeated, and with each loss the world is lost anew, each friendship thereby always already carries this future infidelity within it.

> For we might think we are mourning one friend when we are in fact mourning another,.. or a mother. Or perhaps all our mournings are but iterations of the one death that can never be identified—the first death, the total, undialectical death—so that what is mourned is a singularity that exceeds any proper name, making posthumous infidelity the very work of mourning.[56]

No first death is therefore available to us, as every death slips into another, iteration, and citation, unavoidable and inevitable. Fidelity then, if we can think such a term without the living other, is to recognize that the dead are now only 'in' us, the interiorization of what can never be interiorized (the dead now simultaneously within, beyond and out of reach).

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53. Jacques Derrida. *Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins. New York: Verso, 1997.

54. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 136.

55. Marcel Proust. *Remembrance of Things Past*. New York: Random House, 1981,Volume 3, p. 940.

56 Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 17.

> When we say 'in us', when we speak so easily and so painfully of inside and outside, we are naming space, we are speaking of a visibility of the body, a geometry of gazes, an orientation of perspectives. We are speaking of images... The other appears only as the one who has disappeared or passed away, as the one who, having passed away, leaves 'in us' only images.[57]

Mourning consists of recognizing the lost other as now belonging to the realm of images, any returned gaze from the lost other now at an infinite remove (from within me). This dissymmetry of gaze can only be interiorized by "exceeding, fracturing, wounding, injuring, traumatising the interiority that it inhabits or that welcomes it through hospitality, love or friendship."[58] This preparation for, and anticipation of separation means that to love is to see ourselves as survivors, or as having already been survived.

> From the first moment, friends become, as a result of their situation, virtual survivors, actually virtual or virtually actual, which amounts to just about the same thing. Friends know this, and friendship breaths this knowledge, breathes it right up to expiration, right up to the last breath.[59]

Perhaps however, the drama is not within the loss of love, of friendship with death, but rather that with death we are no longer able to lose our friend. Paradoxically whilst death widens the caesura between us and the other, throwing them into ungraspable alterity, it simultaneously erases any separation, the other existing now only within us.[60] Fidelity then, in relationship to mourning, must not be thought of in terms of ethics or the pathos of faith(fullness), but rather as something bodily, which must continually be negotiated between infidelities and betrayals. The law of mourning therefore disturbingly dictates failure and infidelity so that it may succeed.

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57. Ibid., p. 10.

58. Ibid., p. 160.

59. Ibid., p. 171.

60. Maurice Blanchot. *Friendship*. Translated Elizabeth Rottenberg. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 292.

> Is the most distressing, or the most deadly infidelity that of a possible mourning which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us? Or is it that of the impossible mourning, which leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or vault of some narcissism?[61]

Jacques Derrida here refers again to the relationship between the loss of the other, their becoming image within us, and the danger to fidelity this shift bares. The photograph then carries the weight of this possible betrayal within its embalming gesture. The photograph too rejects all memory in place of image, and our loyalty remains only as long as we vigilantly watch this fading movement.

The photograph announces this irreconcilable movement of fading, this cruel eclipse of memory, which leaves us with the remnants of image. The photograph whispers of "this catastrophe that has already occurred. Whether the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe."[62] This futural death, this estrangement of the image, of the photograph, which is always already there within friendship, within love, tells us that it is with fidelity to this very estrangement that we must look towards the living other, in acknowledgement of the loss to come, in anticipation of the silent cry, throat engorged, of separation. One or the other will always have to leave first. One or the other will become image within the one left behind.

The photograph whispers of this violent force, this injury to come. "The horror is this: nothing to say about the death of one whom I love most, nothing to say about her photograph."[63] Fidelity, even though here the bodily, moral, rather than ethical kind, is always also bound to guilt. The survivor's guilt is a guilt without fault or debt, a guilt, which is tied to loyalty and responsibility. Emmanuel Levinas describes this responsibility to the other and how their death alters this relation.

> The Other individuates me in my responsibility for him. The death of the Other affects me in my very identity as a responsible I...made up of unspeakable responsibility. This is how I

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61. Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 12.

62. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 96.

63. Ibid., p. 92 f.

> am affected by the death of the Other, this is my relation to his death. It is, in my relation, my deference toward someone who no longer responds, already a guilt of the survivor.[64]

Love, then is always also bound to shame, the shame of inevitable betrayal, the guilt of survival and the discovery that the other's death means more to me than my own. Each loss is singular and unique, yet I can do nothing to halt the repetition of loss and my response to it, thereby betraying this very uniqueness. Paradoxically, the tension between the singular event and the inevitable seriality of this same event, risks the response to each loss resembling the one before. In response to this betrayal of repetition, Emmanuel Levinas demands that we see the face of the other as not-yet-image, as image-to-come, for which we have responsibility. This is the demand of the other, the demand of friendship, which binds mourning and fidelity to the image and to love. Attending to this unarrestable, fading movement of the other, to his ghostlike image, is a moral injunction insofar as the ghost occupies the place of Levinas' other, whose intrusion into our world is beyond our comprehension, yet whose very otherness we are called upon to preserve. The presence of that, which no longer exists or does not yet exist, requires of us the refusal to mourn, if a successful mourning could be understood as the overcoming of grief—the ultimate infidelity.

Melancholia then shifts from the pathological perspective, in which mourning has failed, into an ethical dimension in which the refusal to mourn well is a question of fidelity. A good and 'normal' mourning would be one in which we eradicate the otherness of the dead other, subsuming it to an idealised image, killing the dead again so we might be able to survive the better. Derrida challenges the 'abnormality' of melancholia, arguing that perhaps this very refusal to terminate the process of mourning, the refusal to subsume an idealised image, the refusal to let go of the lost one's otherness, is an ethical responsibility and obligation: a question of fidelity.

> But if I must (it's the very core of ethics) carry the other in myself to remain faithful to him, to respect his singular alterity, a certain melancholia must still protest against normal mourning. It must never be resigned to idealising introjections. It must be enraged against what Freud says about it with calm assurance, as if to confirm the norm of normality. The 'norm' is no more than the good conscience of amnesia. It allows us

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64. Emmanuel Levinas quoted in Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 205.

> to forget that to keep the other within oneself, as oneself, is already to forget him. That's where forgetting begins. So there must be melancholia.[65]

We become subjects when faced by the other. It is in the moment of becoming an image-to-come for another, we become aware of our own subjectivity. The still and moving image return the dead to us, only for us to lose them again. Burnt into the light sensitive emulsion, the dead subject is always already announcing their death, forever futural and already past, shifting time and space from the present, to being simultaneously within the past and yet also still to come.

The photographic then, knows a great deal about love and death, entangled with hauntings already occurred and yet to come. As subject for another, for ourselves in front of another, when image and image-to-be for another, we are haunted prior to bereavement, exposed to the possibility of impending grief. This risk and uncertainty, this possibility of the end of the world within the loss of the other, is that which is incurred when responding to the demand of love, this risk then fundamental within the obligation to the other that we love. Thus, there are no bodies which represent a greater risk to our being, than that of the mother and lover. These two bodies become, within their soothing embrace, extensions of our own being. Momentarily we are fused, united with this shared, common skin. The relationship to the maternal as lover, as well as the melancholic sexuality of the photographic medium, emphasize the photograph's tie to its referent, like the indexical imprint of the mother's body.

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65. Jacques Derrida quoted in Colin Davis. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. London: Macmillan, 2007, p. 147. Derrida however seems to 'forget' within this passage the fact that the unconscious is unable to forget (according to Freud as he evoked in his beautiful description of mourning and narcissistic identification, the identification of the ego with a lost object: "Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as transformed by identification." in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated by James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1953 (1915[1]), Vol. 14, p. 249. Derrida's writing on mourning is more of an elegy (with an implicit political dimension) than a theoretical argument. See also Harald Weinrich. *Lethe—The Art and Critique of Forgetting.* Translated by Steven Rendall. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004.

> The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, that was there, rays went out that came to touch me, me who is here ... the light, although impalpable, is certainly here a carnal medium, a skin that I share with he or she who was photographed.[66]

Giving birth to an image, to which it remains umbilically bound, the maternal body is "at once camera, developer and photographic darkroom,"[67] another name for photography. Roland Barthes, however, also speaks of the mother as being bound to photography in a non-indexical, non-referential way, opening up another temporal relationship to the photographic, which paradoxically leads towards the inverse of the insistent witness emphasized throughout *Camera Lucida*. Within a remarkable, short and often overlooked passage, Barthes draws parallels between the maternal body, a landscape of desire, and the familiarity of a home, which lies outside of conscious memory. This sense of recognition, of having known and knowing, evokes these thoughts in response to a photograph of an ancient urban landscape:[68]

> This longing to inhabit, if I observe it clearly in myself, is neither oneiric (I do not dream of some extravagant site) nor empirical (I do not buy a house according to the views of the real estate agency); it is fantasmatic, deriving from a kind of second sight which seems to bear me forward to a utopian time, or to carry me back to somewhere in myself: a double movement...Looking back at these landscapes of predilection, it is as if I were certain of having been there or going there. Now Freud says of the maternal body that 'there is no other place of which one can say with so much certainty that one has already been there.' Such then would be the landscape (chosen by desire): heimlich, awakening in me the Mother (and never the disturbing Mother).[69]

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66. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 80.

67. Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love and Photography' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 126.

68. Charles Clifford's photograph '*The Alhambra (Grenada)*' 1854-1856 from Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*, p. 40.

69. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 40.

This passage reveals several crucial aspects of Barthes' relationship to the photograph, which perhaps seem at odds with the overtly emphasised aspects of photography's over-indexical madness. This landscape evokes a sense of the familiar and comforting maternal body ('*heimlich*'), a sense of knowing outside of memory, yet Freud's use of the term underlined that it is also never far from its disquieting, unfamiliar opposite, '*unheimlich*'.

This involuntary, unpredicted response conjures a new, fantasmatic image, and with it a different temporality, a utopian time. Rather than Barthes reading this image, the image works upon him, drawing from his psyche, a latent image of his desire from an unknowable past. This kind of image, which evokes sensations of the maternal as primal dwelling place, of a time before our birth, is of a very different nature to the photograph that tells of its indexical referent. What is seen here is not visible, the fantasmatic image lying somewhere between dream image and referential representation. Looking at the original source of the extract from Freud quoted by Barthes above, we are taken to a passage from the 'Interpretation of Dreams'[70], in which he speaks of landscapes within dreams often awakening a sense of familiarity, different to other experiences of 'déjà vu' within dreams. The dreamed landscapes evoke the sense of having inhabited them, bringing forth a bodily remembering, a trace of the real lived experience within the maternal body. This dream image however functions differently to other dream images, which are reworked, repressed psychical material.

> In some dreams of landscapes and other localities emphasis is laid in the dream itself on a convinced feeling of having been there once before. (Occurrences of déjà vu in dreams have a special meaning.) These places are invariably the genitals of the dreamer's mother; there is indeed no other place about which one can say with such conviction that one has been there before.[71]

This déjà vu experienced within dreams, does not function in the same manner as normal dream-images, but rather acts as a "psychic photograph" recalling the indexical imprint and telling us of the body

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70. Sigmund Freud. 'The Interpretation of Dreams' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated by James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1953, (1899[1]).

71. Ibid., p. 399.

we once inhabited.[72] This sense of having previously experienced a place in dreams is thus a form of photographic remembering of an impossible image, an un-photographable time, registered within the darkroom of the maternal body, recalling a former life before our birth.

Some bodies, especially those we desire and are drawn to, evoke this same sense of recognition, of a familiarity that is outside of our lived experience and temporality. Like these landscapes within sleep returning us to the womb, the lover's body also evokes something of the dreamed déjà vu, this re-finding often combined with an irrational sense of homesickness for an unknown place.

Thus, Barthes' reference to a '*fantasmatic image*' and *'utopian time'*[73] is not only an experience evoked by the encounter with a specific photographic image, but is also one made possible due to the photographic potentiality of the maternal body. Within this context a different approach to historical writing is argued for, in which latent experiences prior to a conscious linear temporality can be drawn upon, opening up new forms of truth and knowledge.

This other sense of knowing, this impossible recognition as derived from the photographic potentiality of the maternal body before and outside linear time and consciousness, echoes Julia Kristeva's ideas around creativity.[74] This latent truth can be seen as the origin of all works of art, and is the basis for the artist's sense of knowing a work as though it had been encountered elsewhere in another time and in another form.

In Jacques Derrida's *The Work of Mourning*, one essay is dedicated to Roland Barthes, and focuses primarily on Barthes' uses of the term *'utopia'*, and the temporal space it implies. Derrida points out that several uses of the term occur when Barthes describes this new time of waiting and mourning after his mother's death, before his own. Between these two deaths, hers past and his to come, writing is his salvation, what he has dedicated the remainder of his life to, a writing towards death, which Derrida associates with a utopian time,

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72. Elissa Marder. 'Dark Room Readings: Scenes of Maternal Photography' in *The Oxford Literary Review,* Volume 32, Number 2, 'The Truth in Photography'. Edited by Michael Naas. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 237.

73. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography.* Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 40.

74. Julia Kristeva links creativity to an archaic semiotic modality: "I think that every type of creation, even if it's scientific, is due to this possibility of opening the norms, towards pleasure, which refers to an archaic experience with a maternal pre-object." Julia Kristeva quoted in 'A Question of Subjectivity: an Interview' with Susan Sellers. *Women's Review,* 12, 1986, p.131.

in which writing, mourning and the photographic are bound together and within this space, "the impossible, sometimes, by chance, becomes possible: as a utopia".[75] The impossible becoming possible by chance refers to Barthes finding in the image of his mother as a child, "*utopically, the impossible science of a unique being*".[76]

Here, the photograph is loosened from the otherwise repeated emphasis of its hyper-referentiality, opening up unconscious psychic processes parallel to the experience of déjà vu within dream—not a repetition of what has previously been experienced, but rather a recognition of what has never been seen before. Here, knowledge is not based upon photographic evidence, but rather its opposite, the unpredictable and uncontrollable sense of recognition. An involuntary, yet none the less certain reading of the image occurs, in which the photograph is no longer representative, but rather presents a truth outside of its indexical status, photography here becoming something other than its ability to record and document the visible and knowable. And it is within this utopic photographic space that the image is connected to the maternal. It is this non-referential, transformative and haunting aspect of the photographic, which allows us to see another truth, another reality.

This relationship to a latent truth, a truth which is not visible in the moment of the manifestation of the photograph, nor necessarily even visible within its frame, is also developed by Walter Benjamin in his writing on history, temporality and the photograph.[77] Benjamin emphasises a nonrepresentational approach towards the truth of photography, in which the future can touch upon the past, and the past upon the future. This altered time belongs to the photograph; its flash-like temporality creating a caesura within the present, interrupting momentarily history's seeming linearity with a messianic time of possibility and redemption.[78] Benjamin describes this dialectical image as a disruptive, fragmentary force, which shatters any illusion of the dangerous totalising, linear view of history which we can or should understand within the present, moving us rather to an experience

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75. Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 276.

76. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 71.

77. Discussed within Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project, Little History of Photography* and *Illuminations*.

78. Walter Benjamin quoted by Elaine P. Miller. 'Primal Phenomena and Photography' in *The Oxford Literary Review*, Volume 32, Number 2, 'The Truth in Photography'. Edited by Michael Naas. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 210.

of the familiar as othered, strange and unknowable. The dialectical image is "that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: the image is dialectics at a standstill…not temporal in nature but figural."[79]

The latent quality of the image, the aspect of the (photographic) image which only reveals itself within the future, veiled and invisible within the present, functions as a re-encounter with that which has never been experienced before, drawing upon a sense of unconscious recognition and knowing. This experience of the image as a transfixive space for seeing what is invisible and telling what is untellable, brings it closer to literature, dreams and fascination.

Blanchot vividly describes the mother as, "… she (who) concentrates in herself all the powers of enchantment. It is because the child is fascinated that the mother is fascinating, and that is why all the impressions of early childhood have a kind of fixity which comes from fascination."[80] And so this first contact with the state of fascination, with being thrown into a place of separateness where what you see, what lies within this gaze, takes on a simultaneous distance whilst touching without bodily contact. This is the first experience of the image, of absorption and of infinite passion controlled by the power of the gaze.

This first experience of loss and love and the child's creating an alternate reality to transform its grief into something bearable, can be seen as laying the foundation for our relationship to reality and the imaginary. We learn that love is intrinsically tied to illusion, transforming our perception of the object. It thus follows that to find an object of love is to re-find and re-experience this first childhood relationship to desire and loss. The representation of the lost object only exists and has power in the absence of the 'thing'. And so paradoxically, our complete fascination by the image requires the absolute non-presence of the original object, making it impossible to place oneself simultaneously on the plane of the aesthetic and that of physical possession.

This slippage between mother and lover is identified and discussed in Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*. He sees an underlying suppressed sense of hysteria and suffering which accompany the most mundane of absences of mother and lover. And yet, as Barthes continues, does this anxiety not stem from a fear of a mourning, which has already taken place? This anxiety is heightened in the recurring

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79. Walter Benjamin. *Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999 (1950[1]), p.463.

80. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 33.

passages of waiting. Waiting as a child for the mother to return home in the evening, waiting with pounding heart for the lover to return unharmed.

> The being I am waiting for is not real. Like the mother's breast for the infant, I create and re-create it over and over, starting from my capacity to love, starting from my need for it: the other comes here where I am waiting, here where I have already created him/her. And if the other does not come, I hallucinate the other: waiting is a delirium.[81]

Waiting for and anticipating the return of the mother, of her touch, her skin, is a delirium first experienced in childhood fascination with the image of the mother, and re-encountered later with that of the love object. The mother and the lover are both image; distinct matter observed as whole at a distance and at absolute proximity, fragmented. In Barthes words: "...matter is first mother... and the mother is that from which, and in which, there is distinction: in her intimacy another intimacy is separated and another force is formed, another same is detached in order to be itself."[82]

In the embrace, the two subjects fleetingly become one. Anxiety calmed, fear pacified, the lover's skin becomes maternal. For an instant the two desires meet in one complete, ideal being. Barthes speaks of another embrace different to that of intercourse, a static embrace in which "we are enchanted, bewitched" and are returned to the mother as we are within the fall of sleep. Yet, he adds,

> within this infantile embrace, the genital unfailingly appears ... the will-to-possess returns, the adult is superimposed upon the child. I am then two subjects at once: I want maternity and genitality ... I shall persist in wanting to rediscover, to renew the contradiction of the two embraces.[83]

Within childhood and artistic creation, the mother is the necessary, but silent, invisible other, the body in which we search for our own reflection, the one we seek to destroy and recreate time and

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81. Roland Barthes. *A Lover's Discourse*. London: Penguin Books, 1990 (1977[1]), p. 39.

82. Ibid., p. 12.

83. Ibid., p. 104 f.

again. A writer, says Roland Barthes, is "someone who plays with his mother's body ... in order to glorify it, to embellish it, or in order to dismember it, to take it to the limit of what can be known about the body." The maternal being has the ability to make space too full, a space in which one is no longer able to locate oneself exactly, as the divisions between one's own mind and the other become unclear and blurred. The space of the mother then becomes a vanishing point of all identities, beyond the reach of any form of knowing, and at the limits of what language can know about itself.[85]

The work of art functions then as a reclaiming of a lost language, a revisiting of the archaic home, a return to the first body and voice of the mother. The artist, the poet is she who recognizes, addresses and does not fight the instability of identity. This acknowledgement of a fixed identity as necessarily an illusion and survival mechanism is at times a threatening and terrifying space to inhabit. The artist is dedicated to understanding and exploring this fragmentation and fluidity, concerning him-/herself with what is normally consciously and unconsciously kept at bay. "Poetic language, the only language that uses transcendence and theology to sustain itself; poetic language, knowingly the enemy of religion, by its very economy borders on psychosis (as for its subject) ... ."[86]

The artist is perhaps then psychically closer to the infant, who has not yet differentiated herself from the mother, confusing her own image with that of the maternal, occupying the space between the maternal and the individual, the symbolic and semiotic. This archaic,

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84. Roland Barthes quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman. *Writing and Motherhood in the (M)other Tongue*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.

85. This link between the maternal and immersion, leading to a breaking up and dissolution of form, and to a dislocation within space and orientation, reveals the symbolic origin of water seen metaphorically as a maternal and feminine entity. In Julia Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater', she speaks of the relationship between the maternal and the boundaries of language which mirrors the relationship between the loss of language and the ability of water (and the maternal) to fill this void; "Belief in the mother is rooted in our fascinated fear with the impoverishment of language. If language is powerless to situate me for, or speak me to, the other, then I presume—I yearn to believe—that someone somewhere will make up for that impoverishment. Someone, or rather someone female, before there was speech, before it—before the unconscious—spoke, before language pummeled me, via frontiers, separations, vertigos, into being." Julia Kristeva. *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p.251.

86. Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language—A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 (1977[1]), p. 125.

pre-oedipal space where the subject both comes into being and is negated, is Kristeva's *chora*.[87] At once a real and imaginary space, conceptual and amorphous, the *chora* is ambiguous and non-representable, situated before language and the subject's entering into the symbolic realm. The artist occupies both the real and metaphoric space of the chora, the semiotic realm in which language is not that of the symbolic patriarchal naming.

> Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother. On the contrary, the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language (for whom the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element. If it is true that the prohibition of incest constitutes, at the same time, language as communicative code and women as exchange objects in order for a society to be established, poetic language would be for its questionable subject-in-process the equivalent of incest: it is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other—forbidden. [88]

The pleasure of the work of art is that of the pre-linguistic, incestuous realm of touch, of the mother as lover, creation thus always linked to pleasure and sublimation.[89] The artist, in this possession of the maternal body, metaphorically displaces the father, situating herself within the maternal, within the chora. It is however, not possible for the artist to remain purely within the semiotic realm outside of language or meaning, as this would lead to psychosis. Rather, the creative process is positioned at the precarious, yet exhilarating intersec-

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87. From the Greek, *chora* means receptacle, a space, which is at once real and imaginary, ambiguous and non-representable with a different modality of time, a feminine temporality, of the unconscious, night time and magic.

88. Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language—A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*. Edited by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 (1977[1]), p. 136.

89. A concept which psychoanalysis borrows from chemistry and alchemy, sublimation refers to activities which are not directly connected with sexuality, yet are driven by libidinal instincts. The instinct is sublimated in that it is directed towards a new non-sexual aim, such as (Freud suggests) artistic creation and intellectual inquiry.

tion of the semiotic and the symbolic. This relationship between the marginal, mute maternal and the creative process is one of making the ungraspable graspable, a balancing act between the unknown unsayable and expression.

Kristeva positions the artist and the language of art in a place parallel to that of maternal jouissance. "At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not."[90]

The necessary space to be maintained, the awareness of any shared skin only being a momentary, illusory sensation of reproducing for the other, their original common skin, is also evoked in Luce Irigaray's painfully descriptive essay, 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other'.[91] The impossible, yet necessary separation from the maternal skin, and the repetitions of seeking and losing this skin again within lovers as an adult, is portrayed in this address from daughter to mother. Irigaray talks of the contact with that original, yet always also lost, first skin. She speaks of mother and daughter as living mirrors, passing images between each other, demanding and only able to exist within the gaze of the other, dissolving and boundless when alone. This cycle of searching, this repetition of loss and this slippage between mother and lovers, and this inability to exist as a bounded entity without these other skins and their touch, speaks of images and the photographic as well.

> It's evening. As you're alone, as you've no more image to maintain or impose, you strip off your disguises. You take off your face of a mother's daughter, of a daughter's mother. You lose your mirror reflection. You thaw. You melt. You flow out of your self.
>
> But no one is there to gather you up, and nothing stops this overflow. Before the days end you'll no longer exist if this hemorrhaging continues. Not even a photographic remembrance as a mark of your passage between your mother and your daughter. And, maybe, nothing at all. Your function remains faceless. Nourishing takes place before there are any images.

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90. Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language—A semiotic approach to Literature and Art*. Edited by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 (1977[1]), p. 242.

91. Luce Irigaray. 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other' from *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1.
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

There's just a pause: the time for the one to become the other. Consuming comes before any vision of her who gives herself. You've disappeared, unperceived—imperceptible if not for this flow that fills up to the edge. That enters the other in the container of her skin. That penetrates and occupies the container until it takes away all possible space from both the one and the other, removes every interval between the one and the other. Until there is only this liquid from the one into the other, and that is nameless.

... No one to take you into herself tonight, Mother. No one to thirst for you, to receive you into herself. No one to open her lips and let you flow into her, thus to keep you alive. No one to mark the time of your existence, to evoke in you the rise of a passage out of yourself, to tell you: Come here, stay here. No one to tell you: Don't remain caught up between the mirror and this endless loss of yourself. A self separated from another self. A self missing some other self. Two dead selves distanced from each other, with no ties binding them. The self that you see in the mirror severed from the self that nurtures. And, as I've gone, you've lost the place where proof of your subsistence once appeared to you.

... But have I ever known you otherwise than gone? And the home of your disappearance was not in me. When you poured yourself into me you had already left. Already become captive elsewhere. Already entered into someone else's gaze. You were already moving into a world to which I had no access. I received from you only your obliviousness of self, while my presence allowed you to forget this oblivion. So that with my tangible appearance I redoubled the lack of your presence.

But forgetfulness remembers itself when its memorial disappears. And here you are, this very evening, facing a mourning with no remembrance. Invested with an emptiness that evokes no memories. That screams at its own resounding echo. A materiality occupying a void that escapes its grasp. A block sealing the wall of your prison. A buttress to a possible future, which taken away, lets everything crumble indefinitely.

... Was I not your predestined guarantor? The profile of yourself that another would have stolen from you? The skin that another would have taken away? Wandering without identity,

> discharging upon me this endless, and at each step excruciating, wandering of yours. In me, shaping your destiny of an unknown. The yet-undeveloped negative images of your coming to yourself/me.
>
> ... With your milk, Mother, you fed me ice. And if I leave, you lose the reflection of life, your life. And if I remain, am I not the guarantor of your death? Each of us lacks her own image; her own face, the animation of her own body is missing. And the one mourns the other. My paralysis signifying your abduction in the mirror.
>
> And when I leave, is it not the perpetuation of your exile? And when it's my turn, of my own disappearance? I, too, a captive when a man holds me in his gaze; I, too, am abducted from myself. Immobilized in the reflection he expects of me. Reduced to the face he fashions for me in which to look at himself. Travelling at the whim of his dreams and mirages. Trapped in a single function—mothering.[92]

In Irigaray's appeal to her mother, this common skin shared with the maternal is not a fantasy of return; rather it is a painful, binding and paralyzing skin that was never torn away. And, when Irigaray does tear herself away from the mirror of her mother's gaze, which constitutes her very being, it is only, inescapably and necessarily to re-find herself reflected within her lover's look. Descriptions of containers, which leak, overflow and become boundless, hemorrhaging vessels of betrayal, are juxtaposed with references to intangible and unfixed reflections, always about to fade. The skin here is one under threat, one which must, yet cannot be, torn away. The relationship between daughter and mother is one of mutual mourning, the one dependent upon the other for an image of herself. Irigaray describes an existence, which is always already grieving the loss of the skin, the loss of that gaze, which solidifies and bounds a liquid image of self. The maternal skin as prison, as repeatedly betraying, is described in an image of loss. The only seeming escape simply throws the narrator from mother to lover, from one dependency to another. The underlying anger and helplessness within this address is tinged with fear and frustration, survival bound so entirely to an image under siege.

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92. Luce Irigaray. 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other' from *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

She read the letter again trying to imagine him writing it. Where had he been sitting she wondered and what was the expression on his face. What image of her was he addressing these words to and when had this image shifted to the one to whom these words were directed.

She tried to piece together the little information she gleaned from these recent letters, tried to match this voice to that of her husband. She had not heard him speak in months now except through these words, each brief sentence on a new line, aligned to the left. From afar they almost resembled a poem, a love song with their fragmented paragraphs. She continued trying to imagine what might have prompted this newest outburst of silently typed hate and rage.

The first letters had stopped her for days, paralyzing every ability to speak or move. Something would shut down upon her reading these words that may as well have been blows. She would retreat to bed repeating them to herself, wondering how and when things had changed without her noticing.

Now the nausea upon reading the threats and accusations subsided more quickly, clung to her less chokingly, hovered more quietly, allowing daily work and conversations to happen in alongside their existence.

She read the words slowly, then faster, searching for clues in the line breaks and pace. She laid the two pages together, folded them into half, then quarters, stood up and pulled out the whole of her underwear drawer. In the bottom at the very back corner there was an envelope in which the other letters were stowed, until one day she might be able to destroy them.

In Didier Anzieu's 'The Skin Ego', the edges and peripheries of the self are explored, expanding upon Freud's statements in 'The Ego and the Id':

> The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. (i.e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as mental projection of the surface of the body, besides ... representing the superficies of the mental apparatus.)[93]

Elaborating upon Freud's text, Anzieu proposes that the 'ego is the projection of the psyche of the surface of the body.'[94] He understands the skin to function as a protective intermediate between ego

and that which threatens to destroy its vulnerable self-enclosure. The skin ego is formed as a way for the infant to recreate or extend the conditions within the womb. Although the skin-ego is already formed as an interior prenatal experience of the skin as an envelope, it is only with the separation of birth that this experience of a connective membrane is displaced by the fantasy of the psychic envelope.[95] And so our skin is born from this separation into difference, separating our inchoate, not-yet self from the world and opening our sense organs to the outside beyond the womb.

The relationship between sight and skin is drawn on by Anzieu to expand upon Lacan's understanding of the role of vision and 'the look' in the formation of the ego. Freud links ability to see and our desire to look with a fundamental sense of loss; for Lacan, the desire to look is indissociable from the perception that something is blocked from our view, that something undefined is potentially missing .[96] Thus our entering into the visual world necessitates something being excluded from it, which we are then driven to look for. Lacan elaborates that what is excluded from the visual field is 'the look', the experience of being looked at. The binary structure of presence and absence of this (initially) parental '*look*' introduces the dimension of lack to vision. We become aware of our own separateness, aware of our own skin through this parental gaze upon us, thus '*our look*' and our own self-image are always in relationship to the '*other's look*' upon us.

Anzieu describes this ascension into differentiation as a series of 'envelope-mirrors', thus expanding upon the Lacanian *mirror-phase* to include the protective envelope of maternal skin. Steven Connor describes this protective skin as an imaginary shield and the mother as she who "is not merely the one who gratifies or frustrates,

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93. Sigmund Freud. 'The Ego and the Id' (1923) from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth, 1974 (1953[1]), Vol.19, p. 26.

94. Didier Anzieu. *A Skin for Thought: interviews with Gilbert Tarrab on psychology and psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac, 1990, p. 63.

95. Steven Connor. 'Integuments: The Scar, The Sheen, the Screen', from *New Formations*, issue 39, 1999, p. 35.

96. Jacques Lacan. T*he Seminar. Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-54*. Translated by John Forrester. New York: Norton, 1988, p.215.

who accords more or less with desires; she is also a concrete reality, a surface, a skin surface, the skin of the world."[97]

The mother's skin thereby acts as a mirror, reflecting difference and separation, countering the uterine fantasy of re-assimilation. Skin as barrier, as marker of refusal defines then our relationship to the maternal body and that of the lover. The one skin disallows a re-entry into her body, the other skin is a realization that any fantasy of oneness is just and only that.

> On the night that he died, the girl returned home and called her. By the next morning she had somehow managed the journey, arriving in the afternoon. Someone had let her into the house and she quietly put her bag down, removed her shoes and coat and came to lie down next to her daughter. The girl could not turn to face her, was unable to thank her for coming so fast, or say anything at all.
>
> Rather than the physical pain, in which grief had manifested itself, subsiding, it intensified in her familiar embrace, her whole body cramping and choking within her mother's arms. Suddenly, the realization that this unbearable thing would one day be repeated swept over her, rage filling her very being that her mother too would one day leave. The girl could not stand her touch, yet needed nothing more. Asleep she wrapped herself around her, holding on with ferocious determination, burying herself within her mother's skin.
>
> Dreams of searching in vain repeated themselves every night. Worse than these nightmares, more painful than the insistent drone of everyday life continuing was the shattering of the briefest moment of forgetting upon waking. For the most fleeting instant, before opening her eyes, she thought her to be him. For a second their bodies had collapsed into one and the same. For a moment, nothing had been lost. And then it came back to her, smashing into her neck, knocking all breath away. Every morning she opened her eyes to hers in horror, angered by her skin's trickery.

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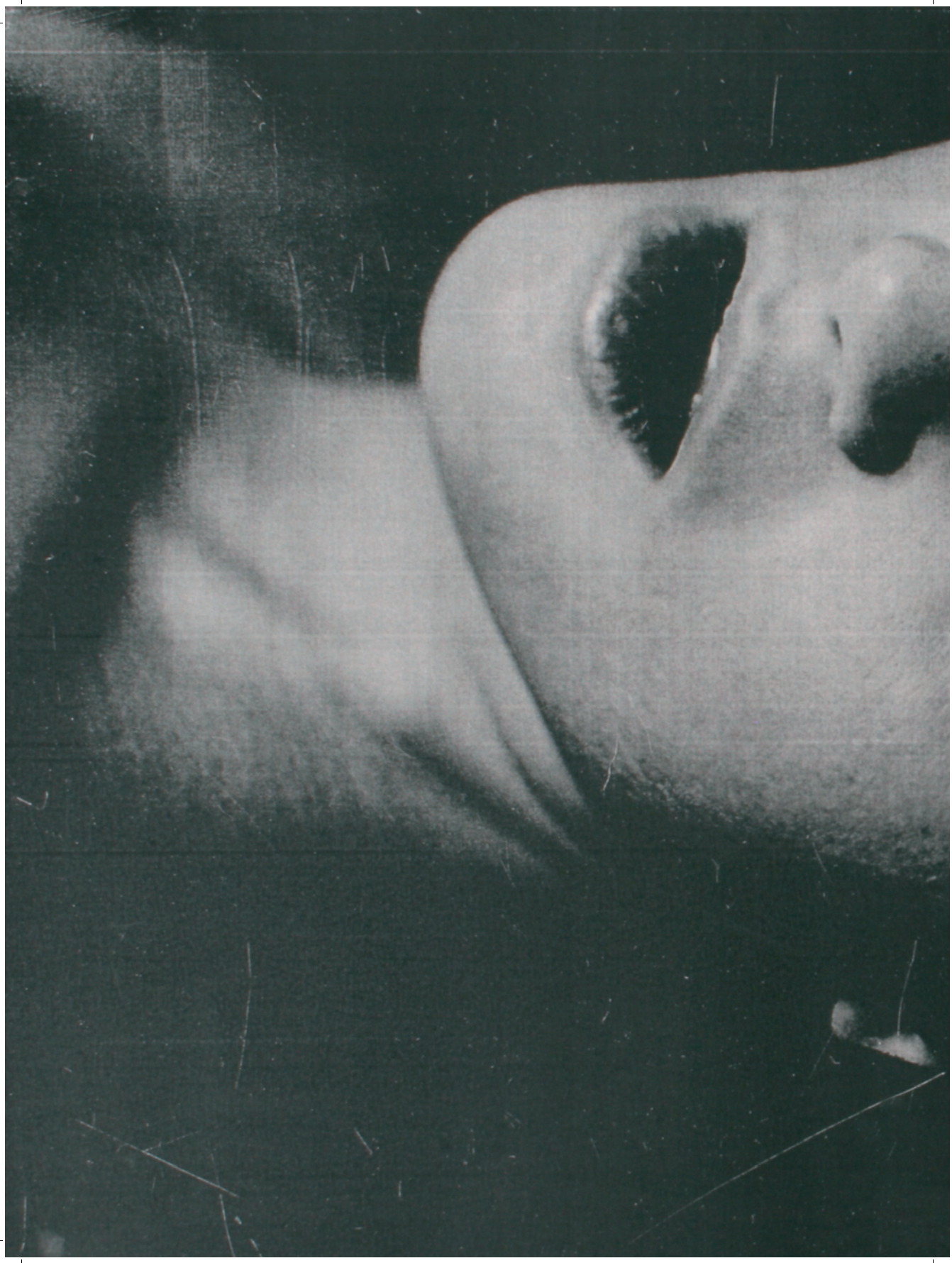
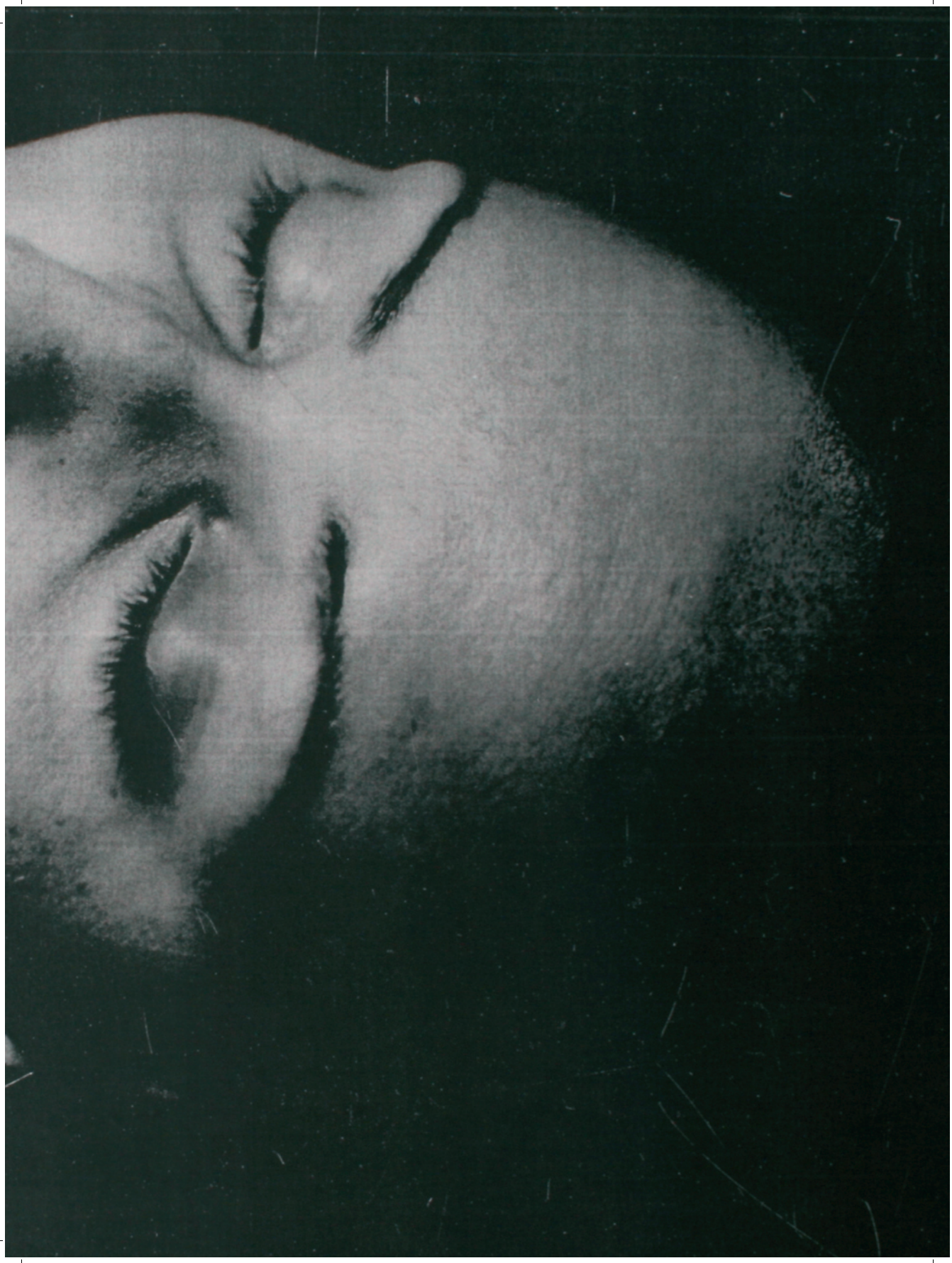
97. Steven Connor. 'Integuments: The Scar, The Sheen, the Screen' from *New Formations*, Issue 39, 1999, p. 37.





Chapter III

THE FLESH OF THE IMAGE

TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLE

Love, as it exists in Society, is nothing more than the exchange of two fantasies and the contact of two epidermises.[98]
Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort

> The last photograph became her marker of time. For those weeks, which turned into years, she carried that last image taken of him laughing back at her, unknowing contented sleep-filled-eyes, skin stretching languidly against the morning sun. She wore the tiny smooth square against her skin. Each morning she placed this image against the bottom curve of her belly, just to the side of her hipbone, a second skin invisible beneath the layers of clothing placed on top. Each evening she would peel him off, tiny bits of photographic emulsion sticking to her, her skin slowly erasing him, rubbing away and disintegrating his skin day by day. Eventually his eyes no longer looked back and the edge of his body became blurred.

IN OUR LOOK upon them, the lover and mother are already image, are image before a camera is even considered, before the image is created and fixed. These bodies exist as surface, as resemblance, as a strangeness floating out of that which is the familiar and known. The image of these bodies then, is an image of an image. One skin holding another, contained within the other.

> What makes the photograph possible ... is that in the photo it is a question of the body: it is the body that grasps, and it is the body that is grasped and released. It is the body, its thin surface that is detached and removed by the film. This is the physics and the chemistry of the instant, the force of gravity of the click, this curvature, space and this impalpable lightness of a vision that precipitates and coagulates into a thickness of skin, a density of touch.[99]

Nancy speaks of the essence of the photographic being in its flesh, within the body (of photographer, subject and viewer), much in the same way Kristeva describes a folding of skins within the relationship between mother and child, one skin folded into another, violently separated at birth: "What connection is there between myself, or even

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98. Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort. *Products of the perfected civilization: selected writings of Chamfort*. Translated by William Merwin. London: Macmillan, 1969 (1796[1]).

99. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Ground of the Image*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 107.

more unassumingly between my body and this internal graft and fold, which, once the umbilical cord has been severed, is an inaccessible other?"[100]

It is then strangeness, foreignness that characterises from the very beginning any relationship to the skin of the other, to the maternal and the photograph. In his essay 'The Two Versions of the Imaginary', Maurice Blanchot draws comparison between the uncanny and unsettling nature of the image and that of the corpse. This now very different flesh and skin share many properties with the image, both resembling something they are not.

> Only that which is abandoned to the image appears, and everything that appears is, in this sense, imaginary. The cadaverous resemblance haunts us. But its haunting presence is not the unreal visitation of the ideal. What haunts us is something inaccessible from which we cannot extricate ourselves. It is that which cannot be found and therefore cannot be avoided. What no one can grasp is the inescapable. The fixed image knows no repose, and this is above all because it poses nothing, establishes nothing. Its fixity, like that of the corpse, is the position of what stays with us because it has no place.[101]

This description of the body that does not see, cannot touch, only be touched, is the description of a body that is pure semblance, image, a presentation of itself. This defiant, no longer purposeful vessel of otherness doubles itself, is image of itself, its very own likeness. In this doubling, the corpse is more monumental, more striking, and infinitely other, establishing "a relation between here and nowhere."[102]

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100. Julia Kristeva. 'Stabat Mater' in *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p. 178.

101. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 259.

102. Ibid., p. 256.

Fig. I

In Joel-Peter Witkin's *Glassman*, careless imprecise stitches run the length of the corpse, holding together that which will no longer heal, skin that no longer has the function of containing. These piercing stitches roughly piece back together this unzipped, no longer containing body, excess seeping from every puncture wound in his decaying flesh. This piercing, wounding in a Barthesian sense breaks up the enclosure that is Barthes' studium, the state of a photograph as inert passive object which does not move us. There is a "second element ... which comes and breaks up the studium ... this time it's not me that goes after it ... it's it that goes off from the scene, like an arrow, and comes and pierces me."[103] Thus, the punctum is that within the photograph which ruptures the containing space of the studium, attacking the viewer violently, painfully, pleasurably.

> She thought of the seeping body lying next to her, the thick, waxy black threads circling its skull, zipping its torso. She thinks she remembers wanting to unzip this no longer familiar vessel open and climb inside its cavity, had thought about emptying out the no longer needed innards and organs to make space for her own body. Perhaps, if curled tightly, her too large self would fit into his damaged womb, and she could rest there, rather than rebuild a new skin without him.

"Skin peeling away, easy as paper",[104] is viscerally imagined in the too tightly, not quite symmetrically sewn together chest of Witkin's

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Fig. I Left, Sophie Ristelhuber. *Every One*. Fibre-based print, 106x70 cm, 1994. Right, Joel-Peter Witkin. *Glassman*. Silver-gelatin print. 80x65 cm, 1994.

103. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (19801), p. 26.

104. Sylvia Plath, *Face Lift, The Collected Poems*. Edited by Ted Hughes. New York: Harper, 1981

crucified, smooth Christ-like *Glassman*. This breaking down of the differentiation between outside and inside, between surface of image and skin surface, turns loss into presence. Witkin gouges, scratches, marks both negative and paper, almost to destruction before covering the print in a layer of wax which seals the damaged fragile skin making it impermeable and whole again; liquid, in flux like a living thing, as though a piece of his own skin, as described by Parveen Adams in an essay on the artist.[105] The photograph here becomes a skin whose surface can at best be described as thick, a space without depth. The artist's own skin melts into the skins of the images he labours over, at once a containing sack, a protective interface and a means of communication.

Surviving a violent unzipping is Sophie Ristelhuber's turned away female nude, *Every One*. Equally brutal stitches run the length of her spine, following its seductive curve, forcefully pulling skin back together in a mirroring of *Glassman's* torso. This unrelated couple, affect one another: she animating him, whilst he in turn makes her miraculous survival and abject beauty even more corpse-like and ungraspable. She displays her wound in a gesture echoing both classical and modernist femininity, as well as a language of forensic, medical documentation. His corpse is propped up on a metal contraption, half morgue gurney, half 19thC photographic device to hold the living still during long exposures. Sacrificial in gaze and pose, the dirtied, bloodied skin, inked fingers (presumably in an attempt to identify the body) and parted lips recall ecstatic saints, exhaling one last exhausted breath. Building an imaginary relationship between skin and the photographic surface, Jean-Luc Nancy talks about this inseparability between image and material surface, about the inability to remove the image from that which contains it:

> Such is the image: it must be placed outside and before one's eyes (it is therefore inseparable from a hidden surface, from which it cannot, as it were, be peeled away: the dark side of the picture, its underside or backside, or even its weave or subjectile). [106]

These breached skins made good within the smooth photographic print, recall the abject pleasure of opening small wounds. The pleasure and pain of peeling away one's skin, scratching fervently at the

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105. Parveen Adams. 'Se faire etre une photographie: The Work of Joel Peter Witkin' in Sublimation: *Art or Symptom*. London: Karnac, 2003.

106. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Ground of the Image*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 2.

surface, is both an aggressive attack on the self as well as an autoerotic need to confirm one's self-cohesion, testing the boundaries and limits of our skin.

The uncontrollable repetition compulsion results in the suppressed anger and anxiety becoming externally visible, inscribed upon the wounded skin, the aggressor no longer able to distinguish between physical and mental anguish. Perhaps the physical doing and undoing of the work of art functions much like the picking of scabs, offering the comfort of an averted threat, as the re-opening of the wound is conditional upon its having been repaired. The picking of scabs, and the need thereafter for the skin to mend its surface back to wholeness, could be understood as a fort-da procedure of playing with danger, absence or negativity in order to bind this risk to a kind of syntax.

Both seen literally in the peeling back of one's skin and metaphorically when thinking about the making and unmaking of the work of art (that moment when the artist knowingly and intentionally verges on the destruction of a work), this compulsion and almost involuntary need stems from the promise of the release experienced subsequently within the necessary gathering together of the self. This is not in the face of potential loss or trauma, but rather through it.[107] We find a parallel tension in Emmanuel Levinas' realization that "in a caress, what is there is sought as though it were not there, as though the skin were a trace of its own withdrawal, a languor still seeking like an absence which, however, could not be more there."[108]

The only placating mechanism is the touch of another's skin upon one's own, replacing the need for the destructive autoerotic touch. This touching of one skin with another eases the nervous anxiety, resulting from fears of abandonment by the other. The autoerotic touch involves part objects and fragmentation. This inability to apprehend the self as bounded and whole is the vestige of the first autoerotic skin of the infant, sharing an imaginary common skin with its mother, ownership yet to be decided. The second skin the infant passes into is based on the narcissistic fantasy of the gifted maternal skin. Through separation from the shared maternal skin, the infant perceives itself as contained, bounded and whole.

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107. Steven Connor. 'Integuments: The Scar, The Sheen, the Screen' from *New Formations,* issue 39, 1999, p. 40.

108. Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Existence.* Translated by Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1990 (1981[1]), p. 90.

Francette Pacteau describes the fantasy of being enveloped within the maternal skin:

> In putting the maternal skin on, over its own, the subject invokes the imaginary plenitude that preceded differentiation. This fantasy of the double-walled skin contains another: that of the stolen skin. The mother's gift of her own skin is a fantasy of reparation, in which the mother returns to the subject the skin she had stolen from it in early separations. It is in the narcissistic nature of the fantasy that the gift is conceived as one of boundless love. [109]

The passage from the autoerotic, fragmented into the narcissistic, contained skin requires the interiorization of the common skin, which is then able to act as a container for an inner world of thoughts, images and emotions.[110] During this movement, this passage, the surface image, the skin moves from fragmented to whole, from unbounded entity, to container. This transition is one which also requires an oscillation of distance and closeness, from the initial too close 'contact perception' between infant and mother, to the too far 'distance perception', when the withdrawal of the mother's breast and body forces contact to be held by the eye rather than the touch of skins.[111]

> The skin ego finds its support in the various functions of the skin ... . The primary function of the skin is as the sac, which contains and retains inside it the goodness and fullness accumulating there through feeding, care and bathing in words. Its second function is as the interface which marks the boundary with the outside and keeps that outside out; it is the barrier which protects against penetration by the aggression and greed emanating from others, whether people or objects.

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109. Francette Pacteau. *The Symptom of Beauty*. London: Reaktion, 1994, p. 158.

110. Didier Anzieu quoted in Francette Pacteau. *The Symptom of Beauty*. London: Reaktion, 1994, p. 154.

111. The *fort-da* game is recounted by Freud in his 1929 (1920[1]) essay 'Beyond The Pleasure Principle', in which he tells of a game invented by his grandson in order to master the child's loss of control over his mother's presence and absence. Throwing a wooden spool tied with string back and forth he would utter a lamentful '*fort*' when the spool was away, and a gleeful '*da*' when it was close to him, calming the anxiety of his mother's potential abandonment.

> Finally, the third function—which the skin shares with the mouth and which it performs at least as often—is as a site and a primary means of communicating with others, of establishing signifying relations; it is, moreover, an 'inscribing surface' for the marks left by those others. ... The skin shields the equilibrium of our internal functioning from exogenous disruptions, but in its form, texture, colouring and scars, it preserves the marks of those disruptions.[112]

This multivalent functioning described by Anzieu, is also seen in the simultaneous contradictions of skin being permeable and impermeable, solid and fragile. As the image disintegrates and tears when one attempts to peel it from the material that contains it, so skin also retracts and loses shape when peeled from the flesh that holds it stretched and smoothed. Suddenly brittle, it falls away, translucent film to dust. Looking at skin as a metaphor for the surface of the photographic image allows for another reading of the photograph, drawing it into the physical domain of penetrable fragility. And yet the surface of the photograph, as soon as it becomes object, becomes the untouchable. Its skin, like the stretched and hardened surface of the corpse, no longer a skin that invites touch, held at a distance now.

An image of skin, of the intimate surface of another, draws us towards it from a distance. Like the infant who knows the skin of its mother's breast and hands best, yet can only see this surface in part, like the lover whose skin is too close to focus upon, existing visually within the embrace only as fragmented surface, so the spectator negotiates the distance to the image surface. Touched not by another's skin, the image and corpse are touched only by our eyes, taut surface apparently available, yet prohibited. Only with the decay and softening of the corpse, does its skin fleetingly appear to return to life—penetrable, fragile, seeping. And just as tears cannot escape when under water from which they are indistinguishable, so the corpse is unable to release tears from its eyes, weeping instead, like *Glassman*, through pores and ruptures, water and viscous liquid filling in the words the body is no longer able to utter.

In its hard smooth surface, the newly formed corpse affirms our distance and exclusion, becoming as impenetrable as the refusing surface of the photograph. "The image gives a presence that it lacks—since it has no other presence than the unreal one of its thin, film-like surface—and it gives it to something that, being absent, cannot

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112. Didier Anzieu.*The Skin Ego*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 40.

receive it."[113] Jean-Luc Nancy describes this ambiguous, paradoxical image, which gives the illusion of excess and presence.

The fantasy of a luminous skin reducing the three-dimensional body to an immaterial light-reflecting surface, recalls the cinematic screen, the photographic surface, a mirror. This hardened shell-like skin locates sensation on its exterior, its armoured surface disallowing any sensation to permeate the interior, separating outside from inside, as opposed to the simultaneously internally and externally perceived skin as imagined by Didier Anzieu. Anzieu's view allows a slippage between perceiving touch to the skin and perceiving one's skin as though it were another. Rather than linking the unconscious to language as did Lacan, Anzieu thinks its structure is like that of the body; the imaginary or phantasmal body rather than the anatomical one, the body which first perceives sensory experiences.

These relationships between skin and narrative, skin and memory and our investment in the legibility of this deceptive, fantasmatic surface, parallel the projected cinematic image's ability to turn any surface into a screen, a skin.[114]

Anzieu translates Freud's idea of a projected bodily surface[115] as literally referring to the skin, the self/the ego. The skin-ego is thereby formed by our first experiences of our skin, shaped through touch and memory, in part perhaps memories of actual happenings, yet largely unconscious fantasies which form our psychic reality.

> The surface of the body allows us to distinguish excitations of external origin from those of internal origin; just as one of the capital functions of the ego is to distinguish between what belongs to me myself and what does not belong, between what comes from me and the desires, thoughts and affects of others, between a physical (the world) or biological (the body) reality outside the mind; the ego is the projection in the psyche of

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113. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Ground of the Image*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 66.

114. "Photographs, we dream, have been touched by the world, leaving its trace upon the surface of the photographic film." This film surface, reflecting images upon its sheen, recalls the dream-screen of the cinema. Steven Connor. 'Mortification' in *Thinking through the Skin*. Edited by Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. London: Routledge, 2001, p. 36.

115. Sigmund Freud. *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1984, p. 364.

> the surface of the body, namely the skin, which makes up this sheet or interface.[116]

Jean-Luc Nancy echoing Barthes describes a "photograph (as) a rubbing or rubbing away of a body."[117] One skin becoming momentarily another triggers a yearning for the lost skin and a confusion between presence and absence. "The gift is contact, sensuality: you will be touching what I have touched, a third skin unites us."[118]

Skin as both surface and container returns us to a prenatal existence inside the skin of another, the mother as place rather than person. For us to begin forming a skin-ego, a rupture of the phantasy of a common skin must occur. This phantasy of reciprocal inclusion, this confusion of bodies, between mother and child is repeated later within the lover's embrace. Here skins "wrap themselves in their two imaginary maternal skins",[119] bodies which are imagined as not quite differentiated from one another. To be contained is to be cloaked, covered, protected by a shell which becomes temporarily fused to and inseparable from the self, survival without the other no longer imaginable, the removal of this shell a literal flaying. The desire to be contained again inside of a common maternal skin, is the impossible promise lent by the lover's touch, and perhaps also by the work itself for the artist. In the caress of the other I become flesh and body, through blows I am reduced to flesh and body.

> The caress creates the other as flesh both for me and for themselves … in the caress what caresses the other is not my body as a synthetic form in action, but my fleshly body which creates the flesh of the other. By means of pleasure, the caress is able to create the body of the other both for them and for myself as a touched passivity, in the sense that my body becomes flesh in order to touch their body with its own passivity … . I make the other person taste my flesh through their own flesh in order to make them feel themselves being flesh. In this way possession is revealed as a double reciprocal incarnation … . [120]

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116. Didier Anzieu. *The Skin Ego*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 63.

117. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Ground of the Image*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 107.

118. Roland Barthes. *A Lover's Discourse*. London: Penguin Books, 1990 (1977[1]), p. 75.

119. Naomi Segal. *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch*. New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 75.

120. Ibid., p. 181.

There is no commonality then, but rather an awareness that we are made and unmade by the touch of the other, who is always surface, exteriority and epidermis, their alterity confounding itself paradoxically at its most extreme within the erotic encounter. Thus, the relation to the other is not one of ecstatic seamless fusion, but rather a relation to the unknown and unknowable. It is their exteriority and their alterity that constitutes their entire existence. Within this wrapping around and being enwrapped by the other, the lover becomes consumed, annihilated as other, becomes image, idol and disappears, encrypted within this movement.

Separated from the mother's skin, we demand from the other that they paradoxically be both periphery enveloping us, and incorporated object. This violent and destructive demand of desire, in which to possess the lover, his otherness eradicated in place of an image, parallels the inescapable movement of the photographic. As the image grasps the object, it is lost, forgotten and betrayed, possession and the real skin unable to coexist. The skin of the image envelops the artist, creating a shell, a hardened epidermis of survival. Yet this protective skin of images, the fortress created by the work of art, also excludes or problematizes the possibility of being enwrapped by another skin, closing the gap where another might be able to become that primordial membrane, that common skin. Naomi Segal describes this wish to be the for the loved other the object that is their existential membrane: "In terms of the skin-ego, it is the wish to reproduce the other's original common skin, as a reciprocal inclusion, holding and being held."[121]

> This time the flaying was one of betrayal rather than death, and again the girl, no longer really a girl, returned to her, that first skin. There she waited, folding her into her embrace, stomach and soft breasts upon back, sleep shuffling, turning, mirroring one another as she clung to her again.
>
> A decade ago she had come by plane and bus and train to wrap the girl within these arms. Now she was here again, trying to help her grown-up, child-again-girl to start over. Every night that whole summer, she held the girl, leaving the father to sleep alone.

121. Ibid., p. 201.

> Soon summer would end and the girl knew she would have to leave her childhood bed and return to pretending to be a woman again, would have to learn to sleep alone.
>
> For years his pain, anger and blows had, by day, reduced her to nothing but flesh. Yet within the night, within the miraculous, healing fall of sleep, he would wrap his skin around hers, rebuilding the world again.

The loss of this common skin through death and betrayal, leads not only to cannibalizing incorporation and thus the erecting of an encrypted tomb within one's psychic body space for the lost object, but also to a skin-formation, a second invisible shroud. The reproduction of the relationship to the love/lost object within the work of art, or rather as the work of art, within the process of making, seals it within another tomb, staging a second death, another loss, a masochistic revisiting of the first. Yet within this restaged loss there is also triumphant possession; I create you, recreate you in image in language and there you exist, secretly as my skin, inside me. By attempting the impossible, to awaken the lost gaze that anointed us and reconstruct the lost skin that protected us within and through the work of art, there is a desperate clasping to the self that has been lost through the disappearance of the other. The skin of the image then becomes a common skin, protecting in part from the flaying caused by the departed. This phantom, this phantasy, acts as an invisible crutch, memorial to a missing limb, to the whole body we once were and remember, now in pieces. In Naomi Segal's words,

> the love-object is the skin of our experience of the world: as well as holding or containing us, that skin also shapes our ability to feel. Once it is lost, our hand cannot touch or feel. If love enwraps, loss flays. ... Dream, mourning, creation: what they have in common is that they are all phases of crisis for the psychic apparatus ... Like the work of mourning, (creation) struggles with lack, loss, exile, pain; it incarnates an identification with the loved object that is gone, it awakens both dormant areas of the libido and self-destructive drives.[122]

The skin of the work here, not only attempts to preserve the flayed skin of loss, but also protects the memory of the lost object. Anzieu's theory of creativity is based upon the fantasy and desire to reproduce oneself not through communication with another, but

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122. Ibid., p. 228 f.

rather self reflexively, alone.[123] This reproducing of the self might however also function by the production and safe-guarding of a ruptured shared envelope; reproducing the self by reproducing the other.

Anzieu builds upon Freud's model of creativity beginning with the fantasy of masochistic or martyred heroism, and attempts to break down the process of creation into various stages. The relationship to the maternal skin as both a dangerous and addictive skin, which overwhelms with separation anxiety, is emphasized as a foundation for the work of creation. The first of Anzieu's phases is marked by shock in the form of a loss, which undoes the subject leading to a narcissistic overinvestment. This allows the ego to retreat and regress, as though observing the self from afar, in a desperate attempt at reparation of this fractured skin. This is a "psychotic moment, which is not pathological", which gives the subject the ability of "reconstituting, through the project of composing the work of art, a half-material, half psychical skin that will repair the breach."[124]

Within the second phase this initial isolation is no longer bearable for the process of making, and in turn the subject creates an invisible ideal person who encourages, recognizes and shares the work of art, silent addressee, accomplice, return of the maternal gaze. The third phase is one during which the work becomes a material skin around the psychic material, which is otherwise inexpressible, unthinkable, and unsayable. The work becomes a secret language carved out of the artist's flesh, recalling Kristeva's thinking of creative process as the artist's finding a new internal form of language to say what is otherwise unspeakable within the normal linguistic framework.

Anzieu's work on the skin-ego began with his thinking around the psychical function of the work of art. The artwork here functions like the containing skin-ego envelope, unifying temporalities and acting as protective membrane. The final stages are the most crucial: the fourth phase in which application and determination actually allow the work to come into existence materially until finally, in the fifth and last phase, the work is severed from the artist, and set into the world, lost but still cloaking invisibly, grieved for but let go, so as to start the necessary and continual process again. The next work is different from the last, whilst also inevitably involving a repetition.

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123. Didier Anzieu. *The Body of the Artwork*. p. 85 quoted in Naomi Segal. *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch*.
New York: Rodopi, 2009.

124. Ibid.

The function of the creative process, and the work itself, becomes a forever shifting *transitional object*[125] and was the basis for Anzieu's thinking about the skin-ego, in which the other's skin and gaze creates this protective membrane, initially the maternal skin, then the lover's. The artist has an interface with the work, like the child which fantasizes a skin common to the mother, mother on one side, child on other, a reciprocal containing without which survival would not be imaginable. This illusion is "revived in the experience of love, in which each, holding the other in their arms, envelops the other while being enveloped by them."[126] And yet these skins are always in danger of being torn away, the skin-ego ever under threat of leaving us vulnerably exposed.

The physical envelope of touch created by the mother's body for the infant, is later translated into a psychical envelope should the separation from the maternal skin within the adult be 'successful'. Without this separation, the infant's illusion of an existence dependent upon the skin of another, will persist as persecutory addiction in which the skin-ego does not function independently, but remains bound to contact with another standing in for the mother. In this sense it is not penetration by or of the lover that is desired, but enwrapment, the fantasy of permanent containment. "Other people's skins are both the only and the most dangerous place to want to be",[127] here, to be forever in the skin of another is that which is necessary for survival, yet simultaneously the inevitable loss thereof results in a repeated flaying of the skin-ego, a crumbling of the world. A non-addictive love thus requires the capacity to hold and be held without the illusion of a common skin.

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125. The idea of the *transitional object* was developed by Donald W. Winnicott referring to the bridging of the infant from the stage of *infantile narcissism* (the oral relationship with the mother) to one of object-love. The *transitional object* (such as a doll or piece of cloth) is perceived as halfway between himself and another person and belongs to the sphere of illusion: "This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work." Donald W. Winnicott. 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* issue 34, 1953, p. 97.

126. Didier Anzieu. *The Body of the Artwork*. p. 85 quoted in Naomi Segal. *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch*. New York: Rodopi, 2009.

127. Naomi Segal. *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch*. New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 60.

Maybe, just maybe she had never really seen him. Maybe, she thought, shame flooding her whole being, she had seen only her image of him, fixed unwavering, pinned fast. Maybe he had entered and disappeared into this picture, swallowed by the fantasy she, or was it he himself, had constructed. Stories of ceremonies and initiation rites, of witchcraft and a priestess grandmother, with whom she shared a name. Stories so removed from the life she knew before him, she could only take these bleeding shards and patch a quilt under which she tucked them in each night.

She had thought she had seen him, had known him, some form of truth that was essence, had thought they were the same and thus protected. Now she no longer knew anything, was sure of nothing.

She had known the sorrow that ran in oblivious rivers from closed eyes in sleep, had seen the joy that filled him, violently erupting in a stomping, jumping, softly graceful outburst. She would watch this dance, contagious happiness pulling her under, overwhelming the room, and would once again push aside the flood of accompanying dread.

In her essay 'The Pleasure of the Phototext',[128] Jane Gallop links the experience of the photographic *punctum* to that of a state of adjacency: "The piercing arrow brings us close to a tradition of a certain mystic discourse in which otherness enters you in some way that is ecstatic. Ecstasy etymologically derives from the Greek *ekstasis*, from *ex-*, 'out' + *histanai* 'to place'.Thus, it means something like 'placed out'. Ecstasy is when you are no longer within your own frame: some sort of going outside takes place." [129] This ecstatic taking outside yourself, is, in terms of *Camera Lucida's punctum*, a physical penetration of the self, a violation of the body, which places the viewer in passive adjacency, terrifying and wonderful at once. This viewing of an image is a form of erotic contact with alterity, driven by the desire to touch and encounter the real of the other. Photography and eroticism occupy a paradoxical, conflicting dynamic between outside and inside, not remaining within either, but rather slipping between the two.

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128. Jane Gallop. 'The Pleasure of the Phototext' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 49.

129. Ibid.

This slippage is one version of George Bataille's thesis that a state of ecstasy may only ever be reached when we are aware (if only peripherally) of death or annihilation.[130] This would explain the lure, the power of photography, which is predicated upon the "death" of the object in the moment of its being frozen as an image. In *Erotism* Bataille speaks of the discontinuity and distinct solitariness of man (and woman), and how paradoxically it is together, while touching, that this gulf of separation is most dizzyingly apparent. The gulf Bataille speaks of is that of death, which can only ever be our own—vertiginous, hypnotizing, it is strangely also what provides continuity. This play between birth into discontinuity and death leading to continuity intimately links the two. The desire for touching this continuity is, Bataille argues, a dominant element within eroticism. In the wrenching of the discontinuous subject into the continuity of death, eroticism lies within the domain of violence and violation.

> The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still. The transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists within the realm of discontinuity. ... The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives.[131]

The quest for the impossible and unobtainable, the promise of continuity which the body of the desired other offers, is, however, experienced closer to a suffering, turmoil and distress. "What we desire is to bring into a world founded on discontinuity all the continuity such a world can sustain."[132] Suffering alone tells us of the value and
importance of the beloved object (lover, mother or photograph), the potential of loss driving the desire to possess. Bataille goes on to describe,

> Only the beloved, so it seems to the lover—because of affinities evading definition which match the union of bodies with that

130. Georges Bataille. *Erotism—Death & Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1986 (1957[1]), p. 267.

131. Ibid., p. 17.

132. Ibid., p. 19.

> of souls—only the beloved can in this world bring about what our human limitations deny, a total blending of two beings, a continuity between two discontinuous beings.[133]

Within the destabilization of our subjectivity, we are both consciously questioning our own existence, intentionally falling away, letting ourselves dissolve, and identifying with the object losing its identity. "If necessary I can say in eroticism: *I* am losing myself."[134] This emphasis on the subject's *I*, implies a self awareness and simultaneous adjacency; *I* am falling, *I* am in the process of becoming lost, *I* desire this dissolution and am passively, yet with complete awareness allowing it to take place.

The urge toward love at its limit in a sense nears the urge toward death, the urge toward otherwise unattainable continuity. The body of the mother and the lover envelope these desires and urge to possess; fragmented image, ungraspable beings. The cadaver is equally complex, a tormenting object that is at once nothing and something (or as Battaile describes it, "is less than nothing and worse than nothing"[135]), which holds our gaze in awe and fascination, futural reflection, image of our own destiny, answer to our fear.

Bataille's eroticism, cloaked in solitary secrecy (as personal and private as Barthes' *punctum*), bound to the experience of violence, beyond or before language, is an eroticism, which commits us to silence. It is an eroticism of darkness echoing that of Blanchot's orphic night and Kristeva's maternal *chora*, encountered both literally and metaphorically within the darkroom.

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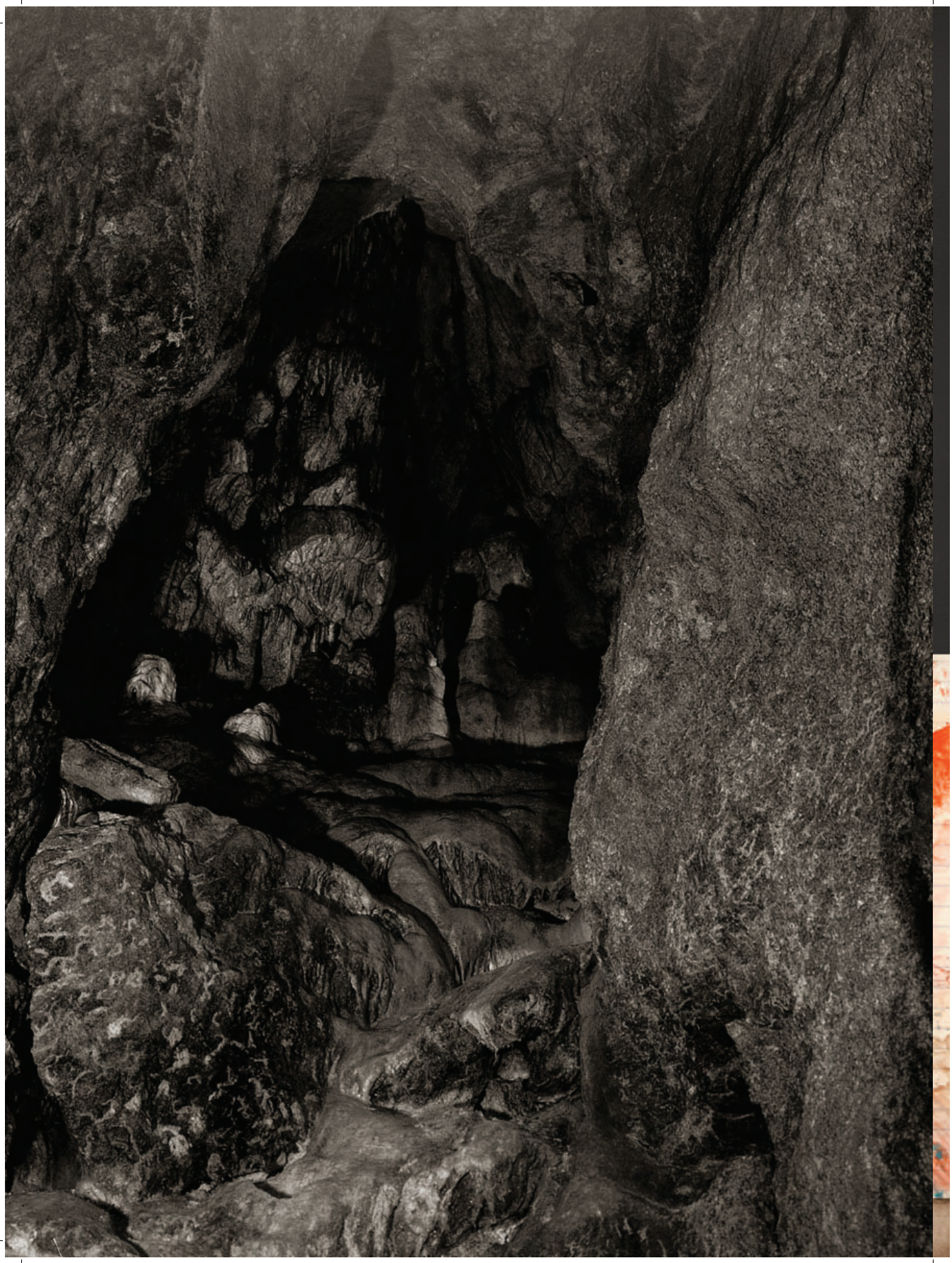
133. Ibid., p. 20.

134. Ibid., p. 31.

135. Ibid., p. 57.



Chapter IV

INVERTED PROJECTIONS

THE HALLUCINATORY SPACE OF THE DARKROOM

As soon as we are captured by optical instruments
that have no need for the light of day, we are already ghosts … .
In the nocturnal space in which this image of us, this picture
we are in the process of having 'taken', is described, it is already night.
Moreover, because we know that, once taken, once captured,
such an image can be reproduced in our absence, because we know
this already, we already know we are haunted by a future that bears
our death. Our disappearance is already there.[136]
Jacques Derrida

Ultimately—or at the limit—in order to see a photograph well,
it is best to look away or close your eyes. 'The necessary condition
for an image is sight' Janouch told Kafka; and Kafka smiled
and replied: 'We photograph things in order to drive them out of
our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes.' The photograph
must be silent … Absolute subjectivity is achieved in a state,
an effort, of silence (shutting your eyes is to make the image
speak in silence) … to shut my eyes, to allow the detail to rise of
its own accord into affective consciousness.[137]
Roland Barthes

THE DARKROOM GIVES birth to the material photograph within the space of a red night, within a space of liquid, altered temporality, an unstable space of inverted, luminous non-fixity; a feminine, maternal space. Like Abraham's and Torok's secret crypt of protected mourning, like the arms of the mother and the lover, the darkroom is an enclosed space we enter, stepping from the light of day and a linear temporality, into this other parallel modality of time.[138]

Here, past and present collapse into the futural. What seems about to appear and perhaps eclipse itself, appears only to disappear, promising a re-finding of that which has been lost, thus requiring a work of mourning at every moment. Bathed in the silent darkness of night, half-light of red liquid, we see differently here—half-blinded, there is clarity within the inverted, hovering projection, within the floating shivering movement of image appearing upon its material support.

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136. Jacques Derrida quoted in Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love and Photography' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen.
Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 133.

137. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 53.

138. See also Julia Kristeva. 'Women's Time' in *The Kristeva Reader*. Edited by Toril Moi. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 (1986[1]). "As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotypes shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extra-subjective time, cosmic time, occasional vertiginous visions and unnamable jouissance. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits: all-encompassing and infinite like imaginary space." Kristeva's feminine temporality here is one of the realm of the imaginary, a mythical, non-linear time.

Fig. II

Entering *Seizure*[139], Roger Hiorn's house of crystals, opens up a transformed space of both abject and mesmerizing growth. This cave of glistening blue shards and melted lunar puddles, acts as both metaphorical and actual crypt, in which the imaginary has literally taken hold of and overpowered the real. The crystals, liquid and cave like semi darkness make this space a photographic one, much like the experience of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's site specific installation, *Blue Hawaii Bar*[140]. Rather than filling a decaying modernist bedsit with copper-sulphate, drained off to form crystals, Blue Hawaii Bar was a drowned red world of liquid and melancholic sound. Viewers entered alone or in small groups in both installations, navigating these changed landscapes. In rubber boots viewers walk down steps into almost complete darkness, entering the knee high water the old reservoir has been flooded with. *Blue Hawaii Bar* is a dim, yet insistently glowing red. Viewers wade through arches, dragging feet at a slow rhythmic pace through rippling water, drawn towards the light source and direction of lamenting vintage tracks like *Blue Velvet*. Here too one is within an abandoned glistening world, encountering in the farthest arch of the reservoir crypt, a half drowned beach

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Fig. II Roger Hiorns, *Seizure*, 2009 and Janet Cardiff, George Bures Miller, *Blue Hawaii Bar*, 2007.

139. *Seizure* was an Artangel commission in London by artist Roger Hiorns. The artist grew blue crystals within a low-rise late-modernist development, which was cleared for demolition. 75,000 litres of copper sulphate solution were pumped into the council flat to create a strangely beautiful and somewhat menacing crystalline growth on the walls, floor, ceiling and bath of this abandoned dwelling.

140. *Blue Hawaii Bar* by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller was a site specific installation in the historic water reservoir from 1880 under the Mathildenhoehe museum, Darmstadt, Germany.

hut, a circular bar with a thatched palm roof. Half empty glasses and bottles adorned with slices of lemon and tiny umbrellas are all that remain of a party we have missed, the now too loud, repeating sound system menacing and similarly overwhelming as the too small crystal encrusted bathtub within *Seizure*. *Seizure* and *Blue Hawaii Bar* are installations, which evoke a different temporal experience, nocturnal dream rooms in which solid turns to liquid, both photographic spaces of maternal return, at once origin and destination.

Within the darkroom our eyes are half-open and sight is other, intensified, as we animate, project and enlarge the images we are trying both to remember and forget. The inverted, immaterial image of the lover is more precise, more alive and accurate than flesh, and so we breathe in and touch our insubstantial ghosts within this dream space of awakening.[141]

> Her mother had told her she had been born at full moon, the maternity ward so crowded that night, babies were born in hallways. She imagined the symphony of cries like baying wolves, the moonshine bathing the bulging bellies and writhing, blood-soaked-pink flesh in an opalescent blue.
>
> The honking trains speed past into the night, the moon shining so brightly she woke with a start, finding herself within its spotlight. Her mother had told her that everywhere she had lived as a little girl, growing up in America she could always hear trains, so that the sound became her sign of home. She lay back into the blue glow of the moon, listening to the lullaby of hurtling trains, joy spreading its way through every artery.

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141. The still image is reanimated within the space of the darkroom, much like the unpausable cinematic frame. Barthes voices his discomfort and frustration at the inability to stop the passing cinematic frame, preferring the fixed, permanent photograph in its place: "The cinema has a power which at first glance the Photograph does not have: the screen... is not a frame but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living: a "blind field" constantly doubles our partial vision. Now, confronting millions of photographs, ... I sense no blind field: everything, which happens within the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond. When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figure it represents does not move, it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies." Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard.
London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 55 ff.

The darkroom is not only a space of night and death where loss is encountered and resurrection possible, a space, like the cinema, to cry in, bathing in the image, but also one of erotic desire. Fainting, sagging into sleep within this (very real, yet always also imaginary) special room, we succumb and fall into ourselves. In this space of night within us, we become indistinguishable from this world and ourselves.

Fig. III

In Francois Ozon's short film of love and death, *La Petite Mort,* the darkroom occupies this space of possibility and re-finding, a parallel world of escape and discovery. The main protagonist, Paul, is a photographer who narcissistically and compulsively photographs himself and his lovers in a state of orgasm. After being coerced by his sister to visit his estranged dying father in the hospital, only to not be recognized by him, Paul returns home enraged and frenetically develops and prints his most recent images. Fragmented heads thrown back in ecstasy, contorted faces verging on pain, emerge on the blank photographic paper. Leaving his makeshift darkroom he enters the light of day in his apartment; bedroom, darkroom and studio become one space. As he sits at his desk, the wall behind him is covered in a montage of fragmented body parts, his body, and his lover's body entangled in indiscernible pieces. A grainy black and white image of the artist as newborn infant sits uncomfortably at the centre, only to be covered in a manic gesture with the newly developed print of his own head thrown back in tortured bliss. We then follow Paul as he returns alone to the hospital at dusk, camera in hand, and surreptitiously photographs his sleeping father's naked body in fragmented detail, removing the white hospital sheet to expose the older man's flaccid genitals. Once again within the space of the darkroom, Paul prints these violently taken images, only to see his father's face emerge with eyes wide open looking directly back at his son. Unable to sleep that night, Paul returns to the darkroom, and with a scalpel cuts out the eyes from the photograph of his father, slowly holding up the print-become-mask to his own face. His eyes merge with his father's face, as he stares back at this altered self in the cloaked red mirror of the darkroom. Having metaphorically blinded his father

Fig. III Francois Ozon, *La Petite Mort*, short film, 20 minutes, 1997.

and momentarily taken on his identity, Paul now gazes back upon himself through the eyes of his father. This newly developed photographic mask might be seen as a reparatory one, fusing lost father and son. The darkroom gives birth to a new transitional skin, redemptive for an instant.

The film ends with Paul meeting his sister who gives him a tin box his father had left for him. The box holds a stack of photographs with a small black and white print of Paul as a baby within his father's arms amongst them. Paul is held once again by his father—instead of by flesh, within the skin of his image. As Roland Barthes describes, the photograph repeats the impossible.

> In the final analysis, what I really find fascinating about photographs, and they do fascinate me, is something that probably has to do with death. Perhaps it's an interest tinged with necrophilia, to be honest, a fascination with what has died but is represented as wanting to be alive.[142]

This redemptive photographic moment follows the violence of the photographic transgression depicted within the hospital scene of *La Petite Mort*, of a son stealing images of his father's skin, is a necessary visual flaying so that Paul might be able to resuscitate the disappearing body within the tomb of his darkroom.[143] This imagined

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142. Roland Barthes quoted by Geoffrey Batchen. 'Palinode' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 9.

143. Rather than containing, we might also imagine the relationship between surface and depth of the skin as a two-dimensional opened-out surface to be inscribed upon, as the rolled out photographic or cinematic film. See also Jean—Francois Lyotard. *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, Steven Connor. 'Integuments: The Scar, The Sheen, The Screen'. *New Formations*, issue 39, 1999, p.39 and Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love and Photography' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 137: "This play between light and skin, between the photograph and emanations, can be registered in the French word for 'film': pellicule. From pellis, the skin pellicule and 'film' originally have the same meaning. a small or thin skin, a kind of membrane."

144. Howard Caygill, from a lecture at the Royal College of Art, March 2008.

peeling and evoked opening out of the skin echoes the violence of light upon the photographic surface, necessary to create an image.[144] Light must touch, sear and burn the light sensitive emulsion to leave its imprint, an inscribed image, in its wake. This searing does not break the surface of the film or paper—the image could be seen as scab or scar, recalling the force of light necessary for its existence.

Richard Avedon's description of his first encounter with the photographic is one of branding and imprinting an image of desire onto his own skin—a violent, tender and carnal response to the medium. In his autobiographical essay, 'Borrowed Dogs', he tells of a photographic tattooing, of burning an image of his muse, his sister onto his body.

> It was my father who taught me the physics of photography. When I was a boy he explained to me the power of light in the making of a photograph. He held a magnifying glass between the sun and a leaf and set the leaf on fire. The next day, as an experiment, I taped a negative of my sister onto my skin and spent the day at Atlantic Beach. That night, when I peeled the negative off, there was my sister, sunburned onto my shoulder.[145]

The strangeness of the photographic lies not only in its altered, other temporality, but also in its relationship and parallels to the experience of love (which for Barthes and Kristeva are always tied to loss and dissolution of the self): delirium, madness, ghostly survival, a haunting. The transformative quality of the photograph, is analogous to the experience of love and desire. As within the force of transformation, experienced within the liquid unfixed image of the darkroom, it is love that enables Barthes to remove and make the material of the photograph invisible, dissolving the support holding the image, erasing the weight of the image, so that he may access more immediately and uninterruptedly the object of his desire, the beloved's body.[146] What makes Barthes' meditation on love and photography so radical, is that he integrates photography's quality of fixing and preserving with what appears to be its contradiction, destruction and

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144. Howard Caygill, from a lecture at the Royal College of Art, March 2008.

145. Richard Avedon. 'Borrowed Dogs' in *Richard Avedon Portraits*. New York: Harry N. Abrahams, 2002.

146. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 12.

death. This disorganization and destabilization identified within the photographic is as Barthes would have it, identical to the experience of love.[147]

This exploration of the photographic can be seen not as an answerable question or theme, but rather as a wounding encounter that is also however always experienced with a degree of pleasure—the pleasure of the possibility, the promise that the photograph may conjure the material remainder of the referent's, the beloved's lost body. In this evocation of a material trace of the past, in this survival of the dead, the photograph slips between temporalities, conflating past and present, the living and the dead. The index in Barthes thus relates not to a photographic "truth" or "testimony", but rather to mourning and melancholia, to the body of the referent, a corporeal trace from the past, a fragment indicating that fleetingly we may possess that which has been lost; both promise and "catastrophe"[148] at once.

> From the perspective of its most absolute materiality—that is, as a chemical effect produced by light—photography acquires magical traits. The photographic index displays its magic, its alchemy, by joining—as it were 'a sort of umbilical cord'—the body that earlier marked that photographic plate or film with its presence and the body that holds the image in its hands and looks it over with its eyes.
>
> This is why, within the space of the photograph, the dead always are alive, and the alive always are dead without being dead.[149]

Flying, falling between home and nowhere she thought of him. Not by choice, not intentionally, an image, a bodily remembering appeared. She squeezed her eyes shut to keep the sensation from dropping away, afraid the tiniest distraction would erase it again.

She remembered the mattress on the floor, his weight upon her, the open window, warm breeze. She remembered the

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147. Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love and Photography' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 112

148. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 96.

149. Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love and Photography' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 120, p.125.

blue light from a neon sign outside making his pale skin luminous, a metallic clanking from some unknown source nearby.

She thought she had forgotten, was sure she had, but up here, above an ocean in the dark, she remembered. Then another image followed—the same but so very different glowing blue of his skin when they brought her to him. Lying stretched out on the cold metal, hardened skin glowed again in the flickering strip lit room, clothes cut off, covered only by a sheet. She had thought if she could climb up, cover him with her body, the blue would go away.

She sank back into the hum of the engine hoping they would never land.

Within this red, liquid space of the darkroom, the photograph like the corpse is a remnant; a fragment of what is now absent.[150] What remains however is a new totality born of photographic violence, a slice of reality best viewed cautiously, lids half closed, as one might view the sun.[151]

Barthes, quoting Kafka, describes the best way to see a photograph is to shut one's eyes, his writing, like Kafka's, a way of shutting his eyes, a way to re-find, re-dream his lost mother. In *Reading Boyishly,* Carol Mavor draws parallels between the darkened worlds of Barthes and Proust. The one closed his eyes so as to see better, the other lined his room in cork to block out any sound, the only source of natural light a dim blue, seeping through Proust's heavy blue satin curtains. By blocking out the real, it was to be imagined all the more

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150. See also Gaston Bachelard. *Water and Dreams.* Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983 (1942[1]), p. 92. "Water is then a substantial nothingness. No one can go further into despair than this. For certain souls, water is the matter of despair." Water contains not an image, but death, and in this way makes death el~~emental~~, as Gaston Bachelard writes.

151. See also Georges Bataille's *Blue of Noon,* a short story in which the narrator describes looking straight into the sun intentionally, wanting the sun to sear itself onto his retina, so he can experience the after-image, an explosion of red. Georges Bataille. *Blue of Noon.* London: Marion Boyars.1988. Bataille uses a similar metaphor of blinding violent light in his description of eroticism at its climactic shudder, "the blind moment when eroticism attains its ultimate intensity. ... Underlying eroticism is the feeling of something bursting, of the violence accompanying an explosion." Georges Bataille. *Erotism—Death & Sensuality.* Tanslated by Mary Dalwood.
San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986 (1957[1]), p. 40 and p. 93.

vividly within the womblike space of silent darkness. In Proust's words:

> Pleasure in this respect is like photography. What we take, in the presence of the beloved object, is merely a negative which we develop later, when we are back home, and have once again found at our disposal that inner darkroom the entrance to which is barred to us so long as we are with other people.[152]

The mystical and magical qualities of photography's beginnings, the inverted projection within the darkroom, were so real, so miraculous, that the first experiences thereof could only be grasped as some form of divinity. This appearing and disappearing illuminated version of reality contained the medium's inherent relationship to loss. Jay Prosser writes in *Light in the Darkroom*, "Photography makes real the loss. But then it makes possible the apprehension of this loss. This is my recovery."[153] Proust describes the uncanny madness of the photograph, its flat death, performing a deceptive likeness, a yearned for trickery:

> But if, instead of our eyes, it should happen to be a purely material lens, a photographic plate, that has been watching things, then what we see ... may prevent the intelligent devotion of our affection from rushing forward in time to hide from our eyes what they ought never linger upon, and outstripped by chance, they get there first, with the field to themselves, and start to function mechanically like photographic film, showing us, not the beloved figure who has ceased to exist, and whose death our affection has never wanted to reveal, but the new person it has clothed, hundreds of times each day, in a lovingly deceptive likeness.[154]

And so the photograph, like the dream, folds the real into the desired. When we fall into sleep we are no longer able to separate

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152. Marcel Proust. Within a Budding Grove: In Search of Lost Time. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff. London: Vintage, 2009 (1920[1]). Vol. 2, p. 617 and 227. See also Carol Mavor. *Reading Boyishly*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 288 .

153. Jay Prosser. *Light in the Darkroom*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 2.

154. Marcel Proust. *The Guermantes Way: In Search of Lost Time*. Translated by Mark Treharne. London: Penguin, 2005 (1920[1]). p. 135.

ourselves from the rest of the world, falling into dissolve. Within this falling, this falling away of the distinct, we can no longer grasp anything as other, as object or thought outside us. Inside and outside collapse into one another, sleep and consciousness fold inside one another; here like the dreamer, we think we are in the waking world, yet know equally well this is the dream world. This fall of sleep is therefore not a loss of consciousness, but rather as Jean-Luc Nancy describes in his little book on sleep, "the conscious plunge of consciousness into unconsciousness, which it (sleep) allows to rise up in itself as it sinks down into it."[155] We now belong only to ourselves, and yet Nancy continues, having mingled with the night, we become inseparable from it, unable to distinguish ourselves from that around us.

> The words and images come to her on the brink of sleep with such clarity that she is sure they will be waiting for her in the morning. Now, too far into the fall of night to be able to will her body and mind to return, she imagines getting up and writing these images down. She recites the stories again word for word, sentence by sentence, sure they are now memorized and will accompany her through the night. She traces the colours, the intensity of these half dreamed works. She falls asleep assured of their tangibility, having forgotten all the previous mornings, awaking to the loss of these perfect works.

A consensual fall, a fainting away, which within the fall loses its consent to become only and purely its own fall. Thus is the melting of sleep into night, of the darkroom into night, the world just moments away now beyond grasp and unthinkably other. This obsolecent darkroom, this crypt of spectral inversion already belongs to the past, defunct in the face of the iridescent contemporary screens of digital imaging; and yet it remains silently, invisibly within the present, tucked away in basements of academies, within the artist's studio. This womb of night only comes alive when the lights of the world are switched off, the red lamps activated, noxious chemistry poured into lapping basins. Like the sleeper who sees the eclipse itself, "not the fiery ring around it, but the perfectly dark heart of the eclipse of being,"[156] so the darkroom offers a different way of seeing. Jean-Luc

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155. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Fall of Sleep.* Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 8.

156. Ibid., p. 24.

Nancy describes this darkness of sleep not in terms of invisibility, but on the contrary in terms of clarity. And when we step back into the world, this darkness clings, as beads of sleep upon awakening, blurred coherency, altered sense, phantasm fading. These liquid images, of sleep, of dreams, encountered within the darkroom, cannot be brought into the light of day. Here, in the light of day, like the unfixed photograph, they fade away before we are able to hold onto them. What we see in the night of sleep is nothing but the absence of seeing, the absence of vision and visibility. In Nancy's words: "But seeing that we see nothing and that there is nothing to see, seeing sight clinging to itself as to its sole object, that is like seeing the invisible, surely, but is only like its other side or its negative."[157]

Blanchot talks also of sleep and night, drawing upon the relationship between the experience of the nocturnal and the work of art. This paradoxical relationship between appearing and disappearing, between the invisible becoming all that is visible, is the contradiction of what Blanchot calls the *other* night. This *other* night is not the one of sleep or death. This *other* night remains always outside, impenetrable and forever inaccessible. The first night of intimacy and touch, belongs to the world and thus to the world's truth. To sense this *other* night then, to hear its whispers echoing within the first night, (the night that is bound to day, the night from which we emerge, the night that poses a limit which must not be gone beyond), is to turn away from the self and the world.

> It is only in the day that the other night is revealed as love that breaks all ties, that wants the end and union with the abyss. But in the night it is what one never joins; it is repetition that will not leave off, satiety that has nothing, the sparkle of something baseless and without depth…The other night is always other, and he who senses it becomes the other. He who approaches it departs from himself, is no longer he who approaches but he who turns away, goes hither and yon. He who, having entered the first night, seeks intrepidly to go toward its profoundest intimacy, toward the essential, hears at a certain moment the other night—hears himself, hears the eternally reverberating echo of his own step, a step toward silence, toward the void. But the echo sends this step back

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157. Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Fall of Sleep*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 48.

158. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 169.

to him as the whispering immensity, and the void is now a presence coming toward him.[158]

This *other* night for Blanchot is the essential night, the night in which one gives oneself up to the inessential and the impossible, losing forever the possibility of emerging from it. To sense this other night then, is already to submit to it, even when one recognizes the risk it brings—the loss of all truth and attachment held by the world. To sense it then, is already to be towed under without the possibility of coming to the surface.

> She had seen a documentary once about the first Moon landings. The astronauts, now old men, spoke of their memories and how this experience had marked them, set them apart, thereafter a gap of some invisible kind always present between them and those who did not know what it was to look down at Earth from this celestial body. She remembered one man's words in particular, the tremble in his voice as he spoke of being the one chosen to remain in the shuttle alone, navigating the ship around the Moon whilst the other men stepped onto its surface. Clinical screenings had proven him to be the most calm, to have the steadiest nerves, necessary they had said for the duration during which he would orbit the side of the moon not illuminated by the sun. This entering into total blackness, unable to see the Earth, the Moon, anything at all could, could make the strongest of men crazy. He spoke of the plummeting loneliness of these hours in space and how it would change him forever. She wondered if you had to orbit the dark side of the moon to know.

This is the risk of creation, the risk the work demands. Giving oneself over to this other night demands that one gives up the work, that one forgets the work and its pursuit or achievement. Only in this turning away from the work and from oneself may its coming into being even be possible, yet it is precisely in this forgetting of the work that one also risks its loss. This desire to look beyond the limits of the work set by the day, is the impatience, imprudence and risk which Blanchot deems necessary for the failure and obscure violence that is inspiration. The work of art must reach this point of extreme uncertainty, must go beyond what assures it, must, in this moment of inspiration in which the work is forgotten completely in the face of desire, rub against the possibility of its own disappearance. It is here the work confronts its own origin and its own impossibility, here, at the very moment in which it is left behind. This binding of inspiration to desire shows us that in the very search for the work, the work itself is sacrificed—unknowingly and involuntarily let go, betrayed. This

impatience which desire demands is at the very centre of the patience required for the work; this impatience is "the pure flash which an infinite waiting, which the silence and reserve of this attention cause to spring from its centre not only as the spark which extreme tension ignites, but as the brilliant point which has escaped this mindful wait—the glad accident, insouciance."[159]

Blanchot expands upon this altered relationship to time demanded by inspiration. The artist, having to surrender her ability to produce the work, must learn to wait, to give in to time. Inspiration then demands a giving up of power, a giving up of the work, a wandering and lingering, a desperate patience. Here, the tools of production are suddenly of no use, and only by giving up the art object, the idea and waiting, will the marvellous crumbling world of inspiration to allow itself to become once again graspable, the work thereby reappearing. This is the risk of inspiration—its paralyzing duration may outlive us. Blanchot describes the one that is within the realms of pure inspiration as a subject that is "dispossessed" and "wandering", entirely without direction.

> One ought rather to say that there is a point where inspiration and the lack of inspiration are confounded, an extreme point where inspiration, this movement outside of tasks, of acquired forms and proven expressions, takes the name aridity and becomes the absence of power, the impossibility which the artist questions in vain, which is a nocturnal state, at once marvellous and desperate.[160]

To return to the work then, one must betray, must silence inspiration, and must turn away from the nocturnal, returning to the world in which sleep is possible again. The dream is a remnant of inspiration within sleep, a refusal to sleep within sleep, a reminder of the impossibility of sleep. Within the dream, everything becomes unfixed, visible only within the darkroom of sleep, eclipsed within the light of day. Desire then brings the work back, returns to the tools their productive powers, and draws the artist from the nocturnal into the world of the possible. Within this nocturnal realm of inspiration and fascination, of ungraspable dreams, time is absent, initiative impossible—it is a time without decisions or beginnings, where every object sinks into its own image and we lose our relationship to self. This

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159. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 176.

160. Ibid., p. 182.

ceaseless night "comes already and (is) forever past, so that my relation to it is not one of recognition, and this recognition ruins in me the power of knowing, the right to grasp. It makes what is ungraspable inescapable; it never lets me cease reaching what I cannot attain. And that which I cannot take, I must take up again, never to let go."[161]

Being and seeing within the space of the darkroom then, evokes these different nights; Nancy's surrendering and falling into sleep and Blanchot's impenetrable other night from which we cannot emerge, the night in which the invisible is the only visibility there is and time is absent. Here within this liquid world, parallel to the reality of day, nascent images hover. Here, seeing no longer means to be separate and other from the object, no longer demands distance, but rather, like Blanchot's description of fascination, becomes contact, a kind of touch, in which we become passive as the object now sunken into its own image becomes all that is visible.

The darkroom alters vision, changes time, takes us out of the present and away from the light of day. "But what happens when what you see, although at a distance, seems to touch you with a gripping contact, when the manner of seeing is a kind of touch, when seeing is contact at a distance? ... What is given us by this contact at a distance is the image, and fascination is passion for the image." Blanchot describes fascination as a state which robs us of our capacity to give meaning and makes sense. "Separation, which was the possibility of seeing, coagulates at the very centre of the gaze into impossibility."[162]

Separation no longer possible, within the embrace of the image we lose our sense of 'I', giving up body and vision to the image. Vision here is no longer seeing (which demands separation and distance), but rather a gaze without temporality, a gaze in which there can be no beginning or end. This remove from the world, in which the fascinated and the image by whom one has been grasped are one, speaks also of a violence unwittingly done to the object now collapsed into image. "Of whoever is fascinated it can be said that he doesn't perceive any real object, any real figure, for what he sees does not belong to the world of reality, but to the indeterminate milieu of fascination."[163]

This image one sinks into, falls into, within the darkroom, within the studio, also demands that what was there within the

161. Ibid., p. 31.

162. Ibid., p. 32.

163, Ibid., p. 32.

world, no longer exists within the world, is no longer itself and no longer other or separate. It has become image, and within this erasure of distance and difference, also becomes removed from itself, suddenly neutral, impersonal and indeterminate. The thing, the figure, the other, falls away, absent as the image emerges in its place. This is the violence of desire and fascination, this is the violence done to mother and lover, the violence of photography. Blanchot speaks of the force of the maternal figure being exactly this force of fascination, as childhood is a time in which one lives within this gaze of fascination. Perhaps some of this ruthless, enchanted way of seeing is what lingers within the artist's relationship to seeing—a liquid world of conflation where objects sink into their image involuntarily.

Blanchot differentiates between the world and the imaginary in terms of things being transformed in the first instance into useful, graspable objects, whereas within the realm of the imaginary this transformation is one from recognizable objectness into that which is ungraspable and of no use, released from its previous existence.[164] This withdrawal of the object from sense in fascination as it becomes image, this oscillation and collapsing, between proximity and distance, is also then the paradox of the photographic—the desire to abolish distance lying at the heart of the medium, only leads to more distance. This is the promise and the betrayal of the medium, this is its trap.[165]

What is brought close to us with the image is not the thing itself, but really something else alltogether. This interruption and removal of the subject in front of the camera as it is folded into its own image, negated in the process, is the inevitable embalming process of the photographic, a force which removes that which it desires, that which fascinates and that which it is trying to preserve.

Photography makes real this always present grief within our relationship to the other. Photography as a mode of bereavement, as a process of mourning, returns to us that which is always already lost, whilst also taking it away. The photographic encounter and image is an acknowledgement of the separation to come, of the losses to survive, a repeated and murderous farewell in desire's gaze. This haunt-

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164. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 141.

165. Also see Heidegger's 1947 lecture, '*The Thing*': "What is least removed from us in expanse, through the image in film ... can still remain remote. What in terms of expanse is unimaginably far removed can be very close to us. Reduced distance is not in itself closeness. Nor is great distance remoteness."

166. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 254 ff.

ing of the photographic, this being toward death of the image, is perhaps why Blanchot draws parallels between image and corpse.[166] The strangeness of the corpse is also that of the image, the power of both being that of death. The photograph and the corpse are both likenesses that speak only of what they are unlike; this is the sometimes silent, yet often piercing pain these ungraspable and impossible objects emit. This is the deception and infidelity of the corpse and the image—promising proximity to that which has already been lost, whilst telling only of the irredeemable distance to the thing itself. The photographic process and image on the one hand deceive and disappoint, whilst simultaneously delivering a mastery of these losses, taming and pacifying them.

With desire's gaze, that which has reached out and grasped me is destroyed in its separate subjectivity, becoming image and thus distance. Simultaneously, I have fallen into this image, have lost myself, fallen away from my own body and being, now one with image; a double loss then of subject and self, unified within the flash of desire from which the image is born. Within the cloaked night of the darkroom this image hovers unfixed, and within the spotlight of the studio it is projected onto the camera's ground glass, desired subject already image, already absent and removed. There is a double negation of the subject-become-image, firstly within fascination's gaze, then repeated within the photographic fixing onto light-sensitive surface. There is thus a mourning for that which is to come, yet has already occurred within the photographic look and act.

Within these enclosures of hovering images in which both my own body and those I desire are lost to me, I am able to speak not only of my own but also of their death before the event. This is the horror of desire, which I am unable to stop, the terror the photograph insists upon; "it certifies that the corpse is alive, as corpse: it is the living image of a dead thing."[167]

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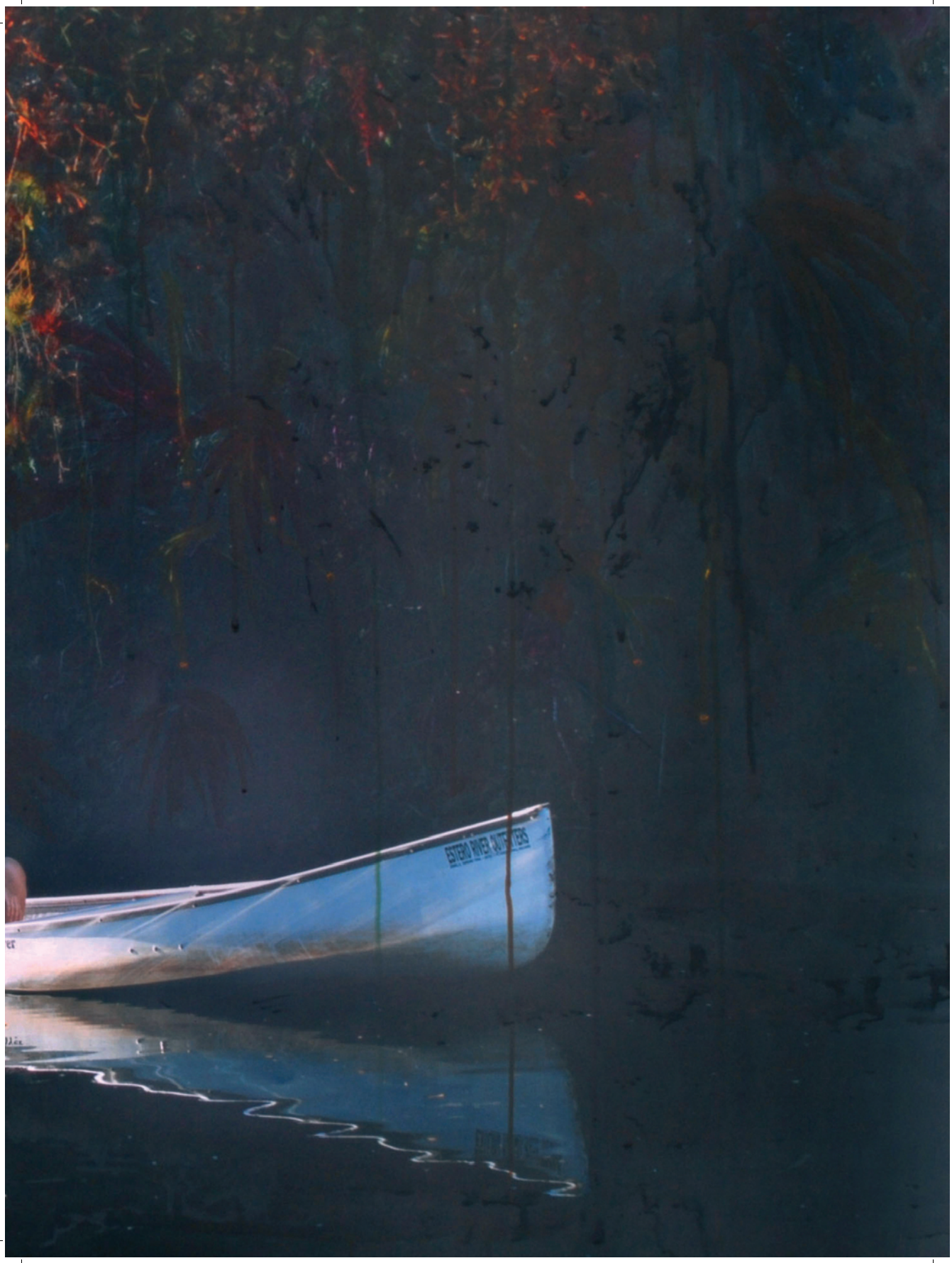
167. Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 1993 (1980[1]), p. 78 f.


Indian River


ESTERO RIVER ADVENTURES

Conclusion

FALLING INTO PHOTOGRAPHY

THE WORK OF ART AS ENDLESS FALL

In order to write a single line, one must have exhausted life. And now, the other answer: to write a single line one must have exhausted art, one must have exhausted one's life in the search for art. These two answers share the idea that art is experience because it is experimental: because it is a search—an investigation, which is not undetermined but is, rather, determined by its indeterminacy, and involves the whole of life, even if it seems to know nothing of life.[168]
Maurice Blanchot

Literature appears to me as the privileged place where meaning is elaborated and destroyed, where it slips away when one might think it is being renewed.[169]
Julia Kristeva

It is, very simply, through the work and play of sign, a crisis of subjectivity, which is the basis for all creation, one which takes as its every precondition the possibility of survival. I would even say that signs are what produce a body, that—and the artist knows it well—if he doesn't work, if he doesn't produce his music or his page or his sculpture, he would be, quite simply, ill or not alive.[170]
Julia Kristeva

WHILST THE DARKROOM resurrects, in front of the camera animate becomes inanimate, corpse and desired body at once. Here, as photographer, the subjects of my desire, the bodies that fascinate and decentre my own being, become petrified under my gaze. Turned to stone, the deferred caress of my wildly intimate and at once distanced mechanical gaze becomes a blow, strikes the subject; touch without touch. Barthes speaking from the position of the 'photo-*graphed*', describes this transformation, this undoing;

> The photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity. ... I am neither subject nor object, but a subject who feels he is becoming object: I then experience a micro-version of my own death. ... I am truly specter. [171]

In my desire to fix the body of the subject, to hold it as object, it is dissolved as subject, held midair in a hovering after-image by the photographic *flash* illuminating darkness. For Barthes, this *flash*, this momentary illumination is equivalent to the mystic's light of revelation. This magical potential is described by Elissa Marder as light writing, alchemically transforming light into *flesh*:

> In this transformation, photography becomes a maternal medium that magically reconnects the body of the viewing subject to the body of the referent, by an umbilical cord. This umbilical cord, in turn, creates a new corpus that envelops both the viewing subjects and the photographed object under a common skin. In the act of transforming light into skin, photography transubstantiates the body of the referent and transports it through time and space. [172]

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168. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 89.

169. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p.279.

170. Julia Kristeva quoted in Kelly Ives. *Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva: The Jouissance of French Feminist Philosophy*. Maidstone: Crescent Moon, 2007, p.133.

171. Gordon Hughes. 'Camera Lucida, Circa 1980' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 198.

172. Elissa Marder quoted in Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortes-Rocca. 'Notes on Love' in *Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes' Camera Lucida*. Edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 128.

Like the darkroom, the lit studio set becomes a space of unfixity, not just for the subject being undone, dissolved into object, but more acutely for the artist.[173] Cloaked by the blanket of the camera, my body is no longer tangible—I have fallen, molten into the image, the body with which I now share a common skin. The image, as in the darkroom, comes into being when branded by light. It also however hovers, lingers within the darkness, shrunken on the inverted ground glass of the camera, seared momentarily on our retina in the aftermath of the flash's burst, palimpsest. The photographic studio during the act of creating an image, is also a space of transformation and transubstantiation, in which subject becomes object, life is stilled to death and the world is fragmented and inverted—turned on its head, luminously projected on the ground glass plate.

Absorbed within the projected image of my subject within this theatrical set, I relinquish my position at the centre of the world, gladly subordinating myself to that with which I am faced. No longer guardedly protecting my self-interest, my fascination for the other-as-

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173. In Carol Mavor's *Pleasures Taken*, Julia Margaret Cameron's images are examined in their relationship to the haptic: both the touch occurring within the frame, especially between mothers and daughters, between artist and subject, but also the artist's touch upon the image plates and prints within processing. Cameron not only allowed the physical traces of the manual process to remain visible, leaving fingerprints, strands of hair and dust to settle on the plates and leave their imprint on the image, but actually scratched into the surface of the plate, combining and layering the utmost delicate of touch with a more violent, painful one. Mavor speaks of the flesh within Cameron's 'altered Madonnas', sexuality glimmering under the skin of the photographs. Mavor argues that these altered Mother Madonnas appear more real than mythical through the use of the photographic medium. Cameron's Madonnas embody both the sexuality and loss integral to motherhood, integral to the relationship between mother and child.

"Like a photograph, the child is always connected to its referent: its mother. A photograph carries its referent with it, just as a mother carries her child with her body, even after birth." Carol Mavor. *Pleasures Taken*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 53.

image causes my 'unselfing'.[174] Thus it is impossible to place oneself on the plane of the aesthetic and that of realistic physical possession simultaneously.[175]

In Maurice Blanchot's essay 'The Essential Solitude', he describes this fascination accompanied by an absence of time and space as joined to the state of adjacency:

> It is the time when nothing begins, when initiative is not possible, when, before the affirmation, there is already a return of the affirmation. Rather than a purely negative state, it is,

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174. See also Elaine Scarry. *On Beauty and Being Just*. London: Duckworth, 2001 (1999[1]), p. 117. "It is as though one has ceased to be the hero or heroine in one's own story and has become what in a folktale is called the 'lateral figure' or 'donor figure'. It may sound not as though one's participation in a state of overall equality has been brought about, but as though one has just suffered a demotion. But at moments when we believe we are conducting ourselves with equality, we are usually instead conducting ourselves as the central figure in our own private story; and when we feel ourselves to be merely adjacent, or lateral (or even subordinate), we are probably more closely approaching a state of equality. In any event, it is precisely the ethical alchemy of beauty that what might in another context seem like a demotion is no longer recognizable as such: this is one of the cluster of feelings that have disappeared. ...The non-self-interestedness of the beholder has—to return to the subject of adjacency—been seen in a number of ways: first, in the absence of continuity between the beholder and the beheld (since the beholder does not become beautiful in the way that the pursuer of truth becomes knowledgeable); second in the radical decenteredness the beholder undergoes in the presence of something or someone beautiful; third, in the willingness of the beholder to place himself or herself in the service of bringing new beauty into the world, creating a site of beauty separate from the self."

175. See also: Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of the Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1995 (1940[1]), p. 225. Sartre, as opposed to Elaine Scarry, believes that the perceiving of beauty is not one of fascination and does not inspire selflessness, although unselfing. The beauty that he speaks of is therefore not one-which would inspire creation, as the object in sight slips away beyond grasp due to its perfection. Sartre argues that due to this impossible coexistence of perceiving beauty and simultaneously perceiving our own physicality, desire which is at the heart of physical existence, cannot be experienced at the same time as aesthetic contemplation of beauty. "The object at once appears to be behind itself, becomes untouchable, it is beyond our reach; and hence arises a sort of sad disinterest in it."

> on the contrary, a time without negation, without decision, when here is nowhere as well, and each thing withdraws into its image.[176]

Here fascination is linked to the impersonal and to the indeterminate presence of an unknown other. Blanchot describes how we are unable to see in the normal sense when fascinated ("blinded by absence"), as we are overwhelmed by the proximity of the object whilst simultaneously being held at an absolute distance. These descriptions of unselfing echo Kristeva's comparison of the similarities between the symptoms of love and those of fear, as well as her description of the encounter with the work of art. The artist is she who seeks this falling, runs towards this rush, desires this state of bewildering otherness, this "*vertigo of identity, vertigo of words*",[177] knowing the cost of this folly.

Maurice Blanchot's short novel, *Thomas the Obscure*, describes a man who seeks self-oblivion, making real that universal, yet unrealisable desire to merge with something outside ourselves. Entering the sea, Thomas allows the currents to take him and shape him within the sea's "utopic deluge". Momentarily within a state of ecstatic adjacency, he attains this dissolution. Thomas soon realizes however that this attempt to escape the isolation of existence simply returns him to himself. Emerging from this struggle with the sea, returning to his own body and separateness, Thomas is able to recall only traces of the event, met with an overwhelming deluge of fragmented images instead. This fantasy of primordial boundlessness, in which subjectivity and ego are shed and euphoria soon turns to terror and liquid assimilation, throws Thomas back into a state of fragmented subjectivity.[178] Here too image dissolves only to be violently reconstituted in pieces that refuse to create a coherent whole.

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176. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 30 and p. 33.

177. Julia Kristeva. *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p. 3.

178. See also Mircea Eliade. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1993 (1958[1]), p. 194. "... in water everything is 'dissolved', every 'form' is broken up, everything that has happened ceases to exist."

And Gaston Bachelard. *Water and Dreams*. Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983 (1942[1]), p. 55. "... waters fulfill an essential psychological function: to absorb shadows, to offer a daily tomb to everything that dies within us each day. Thus, water is an invitation to die; it is an invitation to a special death that allows us to return to one of the elementary material refuges."

The air has cooled now that the sun has set, the humidity having given way to a tepid breeze. Walking into the water, it feels as though she is lowering herself into something thick and warm. It sucks her in, pulling every limb under its cloak. Beneath the still membrane of the lake's surface boils a viscous liquid, covering every cell, no longer clear whether it is her own blood pumping she is hearing or the lake's pulse. Diving deeper and deeper, farther into its centre, warmth gives way to cooler temperatures, and the complete darkness of night shifts to an even denser shade of black.

These waters were her refuge, to which she escaped, cycling through the night on the old bike she left at her parents' house, pedalling as fast as she could through the forest centre that hid it. Every village here in the Rhine valley, at the bottom of the Black Forest, had a lake like this dredged along its outskirts. But none were like hers. She knew every corner, could bike with her eyes closed, sometimes did daring herself how long she could keep them shut, counting the seconds between turns in the path.

She dove further, lungs burning, no longer sure whether her eyes were open or closed or how long or how far she had been swimming downwards. Finally her body demands she turn back, pushing her out towards the surface, against every instinct to continue.

The layers of gradually heating liquid stroke travelling limbs, until her head breaks the surface, the night air hitting her face. Gasping to fill her lungs, the bottom half of her body remained within the lake's warm grasp. She let herself be pulled under once more, one last embrace. Emerging once more, she moves slowly towards the water's edge, her body heavier with every step, denser, once again her own. She thinks about turning and running back in, diving into its comfort, but she is tired and thinks about the ride back home, and accustomed to her separateness again, the body she was moments ago feels suddenly distant and impossible.

The metaphors of light and dark and fragmentation are also found in Blanchot's use of the myth of Orpheus to discuss creativity, thresholds and risk:

> When Orpheus descends to Eurydice, art is the power that causes the night to open. Because of the power of art, the night welcomes him, Eurydice is the limit of what art can attain; concealed behind a name and covered by a veil, she is the profoundly dark point towards which art, desire, death and the night all seem to lead. She is the instant in which the essence of the night approaches as the other night.[179]

Eurydice, Orpheus' object of desire is always displaced, beyond reach, forever concealed both within absolute darkness and again within the blinding of light. The only space where he can possess her, the only place in which she is graspable, is within the work, yet it is also at the threshold of the work where the artist's control is undermined, where his subjectivity and difference are dissolved. Thus, even within the work Eurydice remains lost, and Orpheus himself risks his separate subjectivity:

> In the song Eurydice is also already lost and Orpheus himself is the scattered Orpheus, the 'infinitely dead' Orpheus into which the power of the song transforms him from then on. He loses Eurydice because he desires her beyond the measured limits of his song, he loses himself too, but this desire, and Eurydice lost, and Orpheus scattered are necessary to the song.[180]

Moving from the real into the imagined, Orpheus is able to cross the boundaries of light and life, moving towards his lost Eurydice, with the force of desire fuelled by, and necessary for, the work of art. Rendering this dark point, the lure of desire, (where the artist's control is undermined and madness and grief threaten to overpower), is the work towards which Orpheus must move. In moving towards desire, in turning towards his lost love and consuming her image once more, Orpheus knows he will lose Eurydice entirely. Her bodily disappearance becomes the loss that is recuperated by the compensatory gift of Orpheus' song, the work of art, which requires this loss and the following dissolution of Orpheus' subjectivity.

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179. Maurice Blanchot. *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Barrytown: Adams Sitney, 1981, p. 99.

180. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 173.

The Gaze of Orpheus is derived from the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Following his descent into the Underworld, Orpheus disobeys Hades' and Persephone's condition for release of his wife Eurydice. Orpheus' gaze is more a matter of desire and yearning and Orpheus' role in the upper world is to use his creativity and artistic talent to transform his desires into a recreated form.

This necessary or involuntary forsaking of the real object in favour of the image, is also explored by Marc Cousins. He describes a subject bound to an image, who loves an image more than the object of the image. This image then, although at first seemingly a portrait, an image depicting a someone, is not one, as it does not refer to an object, is not a portrait of, but rather an image referring to another image, standing in the name of. Cousins looks at this relationship to the '*image of loss*' in respect to its temporality. As this image is not a representation of a person, but rather an image of an image, it belongs on the side of desire, thereby always futural. Paradoxically it also however stands in place of the object, functioning as memorial. This love of an image as though it were an object, this pursuit of an ideal image, destroys the object in order to keep the image alive. Cousins describes the impossible time of this image:

> 'About to appear' and 'already departed,' exhausting the possibilities of time. The image bears upon the future and the past, and nothing else. Above all, there is no present. None, not a split second, just the split. This is the condition of the image as the image of loss, and it gives rise to its characteristic affect—that intermingling of longing and melancholy. The object of longing no longer arrives, any more than the object of melancholy dies.[181]

This subject separates the object from the image, draining away whatever lies on the side of the object, this being "what it means to suffer and indeed to love images."[182]

> She desired the darkness and mysteries the black of his skin holds, the scars and blue of his teenage tattoo that tell her of places she has never been, of a life before this one. His closed pores, his hardened back, turn away, shutting her out. She knows that she will never be sure of his return, forever waiting with subdued nausea, relieved each evening the key turns, his footsteps echoing on the stairs.
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> His anger always takes her by surprise, yet it should not, barely visible, but always there beneath the surface. At night this same taut skin, this smooth dry rock, weeps and weeps, soaking sheet after sheet in sweat and tears. And it is then, in the darkness

181. Marc Cousins. 'The Insistence of the Image' in *Art: Sublimation or Symptom*. Edited by Parveen Adams. London: Karnac, 2003, p. 21.

182. Ibid., p. 17.

and silence of night, that he holds on to her as though in fear of her leaving, as though she, not he, were the one turned away, ready to go. She pretends to sleep, letting him wrap himself around her, dripping legs and arms clutching her stomach and breasts, wet belly and chest soaking her back, until they are stuck together and she could not escape should she have wanted to.

The hills here look like the Taita hills in southern Kenya, red earth breaking the surface of the rolling green. She wondered if she will ever return there, to your home. For a brief moment she thought she might have found hers. For the first time she had felt on arriving that she already knew the land, had maybe always known. It was not the people, who intimidated her with their gaze that seemed to be curious and disdainful at once, whose absolute stillness in the heat of the day, slumbering under trees terrified her, and whose total abandon within the night was both exhilarating and exhausting, difficult to marry with the resigned depression that seem to haunt the land by day. No, it was the earth, the ground, the curve of these rolling hills that felt with delirious relief like she was certainly home. Now she was no longer certain. It seems, she thought, she may have mistaken your home for one she could make her own. 'I may need to go back, without you now, just to make sure' she whispered to herself.

To love images, to chase images, to turn away from the light of day, living instead amongst spectres and fictions, is to turn from the visible towards the imaginary. This perpetual movement towards that image which will always disappear as it appears, is what the work demands of the artist. Within this seeking there is aliveness. Within this, at times desperate, search lie long drawn out, dormant, heavy periods of waiting. The search therefore consists mainly not in service of the work, but rather, as a psychical and physical necessity to interrupt this stagnation with moments in which we are nothing more than sense. It is these fleeting instances from which the work is born, these moments in some way the essence of the work, even the work itself. And so I seek this falling, this falling apart, into and out of. Not as a choice, but as the only movement possible, taking apart myself and the world, the mother and the lover, in order to reassemble the pieces. Only rarely does the work shock as desired, as needed. When it does, it is horrifying, terrifying and utterly delightful at once, but must be looked at only in glimpses, sideways and at an angle. To love images more than reality is to live among the dead, in a half-sleep and perpetual falling. Jean-Luc Nancy describes the falling into actual sleep in similar terms:

> By falling asleep, I fall inside myself: from my exhaustion, from my boredom, from my exhausted pleasure or from my exhausting pain. I fall inside my own satiety as well as my own vacuity: I myself become the abyss and the plunge, the density of deep water and the descent of the drowned body sinking backward. I fall to where I am no longer separated from the world by a demarcation that still belongs to me all through my waking state and that I myself am, just as I am my skin and all my sense organs. I pass that line of distinction, I slip entire into the innermost and outermost part of myself, erasing the division between these two putative regions. ... sleep comes from elsewhere. It falls onto us, it makes us fall into it.[183]

This description of a falling into actual sleep echoes the metaphoric and physical gesture within Francis Alys' work, *Tornado*. The artist chased twisters over a ten-year span in his adopted home of Mexico. With a camera strapped to his body, he repeatedly runs into wind tunnels, seeking this loss of physical distinction. Appearing for only several days a year, the tornados move across open plains churning dark clouds of ash and dust. As viewers, we enter this darkness with Alys, clinging to him. Heavily, yet without hesitation the artist runs towards the looming spiral, pummeled, thrown, sucked into its centre and as swiftly, expelled with equal force. Too brief, too little, we and he desire more and so, exhausted, he runs towards the next tornado looming on the desert horizon, giving himself up entirely to this violence, seeking the helplessness it reduces him to.

Fig. IV

Fig. IV Francis Alys, *Tornado,* 2000-2010, single channel video projection, 39 min, color, 5.1 surround sound

183 Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Fall of Sleep*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 5 and p. 29.

Like Julia Kristeva's transported body of love, Alys enters another tornado, and we follow. The artist thus seeks that moment when he is consumed by the image, the instant when a certain intensity and focus makes all else but image melt away, like lovers fleetingly losing themselves once again.

> A body swept away, present in all its limbs through a delightful absence—shaky voice, dry throat, starry eyes, flushed or clammy skin, throbbing heart. ... Would the symptoms of love be the symptoms of fear? Both a fear and a need of no longer being limited, held back, but going beyond. Dread of transgressing not only proprieties or taboos, but also, and above all, fear of crossing and desiring to cross the boundaries of the self. ...The meeting, then, mixing pleasure and promise or hopes, remains in a sort of future perfect. It is the noontime of love that, both instant and eternity, past and future, abreacted present, fulfills me, abolishes me, and yet leaves me unsated.[184]

The creative process demands within its structure a process of mourning as the production of the work culminates in the separation from it. One produces the work of art to let go of it, to place the now autonomous work within the world. Its achievement coincides with its abandonment. With its completion, it may also be lost and discarded. The production of the work of art is the production of the ideal, yet unachievable and unattainable object. Always beyond grasp for the artist, it thus remains forever unfinished and infinite. What is begun in one work is repeated or destroyed in the next. To make this ideal object is to let go of it, to lose an intimacy with it. This separation from and loss of the object is not just a by-product, but perhaps the very condition of this practice of making. The work opens a space, in which one cannot linger. This inability to see, read, know one's own work is a necessity, the artist already absent, having moved on to another work, a repetition of the last. "No one who has written the work can linger close to it. For the work is the very decision, which dismisses him, cuts him off, makes of him a survivor, without work. He becomes the inert idler upon whom art does not depend."[185] The endless task of work and the correlating on-going process of mourning, are part of the cycle of production. Repetition inevitable, it is a

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184. Julia Kristeva. *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987 (1983[1]), p. 6.

185. Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 24.

process without end, which continuously demands returning to the beginning, to one's starting point.

> The obsession which ties him (the artist, the writer) to a privileged theme, which obliges him to say over again what he has already said—sometimes with the strength of an enriched talent, but sometimes with the prolixity of an extraordinarily impoverishing repetitiveness, with ever less force, more monotony—illustrates the necessity, which apparently determines his efforts, that he always come back to the same point, pass again over the same paths, persevere in starting over what for him never starts, and that he belong to the shadow of events, not their reality, to the images, not the object, to what allows words themselves to become images, appearances—not signs, values, the power of truth.[186]

Blanchot speaks here of this repetition, which is necessary and inevitable within the artist's relationship to the work. Never complete and never accessible to the artist, the work demands a continual and incessant revisiting and reworking without beginning or end, the artist thereby preserving himself within this process.

This repetition within the production of the work of art and the psyche of the artist is a continual attempt to rediscover the lost unity, forsaken with the emergence of self as bounded subject. The work of art then, both in its making and in the experience thereof, offers the promise and possibility of opening a utopian space, in which that which is coming into being is not purely dreamed nor entirely of this world, allowing for a different temporality in which I am momentarily no longer a contained subject separate from another. The image in this instance offers the impossible fantasy of a reunion with the maternal space, interrupting and reorganizing the familiar, which

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186 Maurice Blanchot. *The Space of Literature*. Translated by Lydia Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982 (1955[1]), p. 24. See also p.205: "(The work of art) ... is neither productive nor destructive but stagnant; it is that which has never come, which is neither staunched not spurting forth but coming back—the eternal lapping of return. It is in this sense that in art's milieu there is a pact contracted with death, with repetition and with failure. Beginning again, repetition, the fatal return—everything evoked by experiences where estrangement is allied with the strangely familiar, where the irremediable takes the form of an endless repetition, where the same is posed in the dizziness of redoubling, where there is no cognition but only recognition—... what is first is not beginning, but beginning over, and being is precisely the impossibility of being for the first time."

allows us to "experience the infectious auto-eroticism we encounter when we construct a sensory fiction."[187]

This encounter, like that with the lover, offers the possibility of taking me outside of the container of my bounding skin, opening up time and space. For an ecstatic instant, I am at a threshold between the symbolic and semiotic, between language and the drive. An experience of freedom, a birth to self-expression, the image, "perhaps our only remaining bond to the sacred."[188]

Both origin and goal, this primal return offered by the work of art removes the work's context, allowing us to enter a realm of pure sense. This briefest of moments, this new beginning, is repeatedly sought without end. A return to the (m)other as lover— desired, impossible and always promised within the photographic.

> She knew when he had left her and she in turn him before either had spoken the words. It was the photographs that told her so. She had tried one last time to picture him, yet he escaped the image, was nowhere to be seen. They had both been angry that evening. Sitting silently in the studio separated by much more than the apparatus. This time the fantasy constructed was a lie, and they both knew as much. She was no longer drawn in and seduced by the image he projected, by the miniature glow of his skin on the ground glass. She willed herself to fall into the image once more, to fall into him, yet his skin, his image expelled her, no vertiginous melting took hold of her limbs. They remained entirely separate and she knew that she would never print this picture, would never inhale it within the darkroom, would never wrap herself in it. Right here within the magical transformative space of the studio, photography had told her that even the power of the image was unable to help them now. No image possible then without love.

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187. Julia Kristeva. *Time and Space: Proust and the Experience of Literature*. Translated by Ross Guberman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 241.

188. Julia Kristeva, quoted in Elaine P. Miller. 'Primal Phenomena and Photography' in *The Oxford Literary Review,* Volume 32, Number 2, 2010, 'The Truth in Photography', edited by Micheal Naas, p. 222.

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Esther Teichmann, September 2011

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