Bleached Out: Photography and the Aesthetics of Loss, Forgetting and Erasure

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Abstract

This thesis examines the aesthetic representation of memory and forgetting through the use of photographic and other visual metaphors. By exploring the aesthetic characteristics of such representation, it develops a critically informed practice and reflects upon the processes of loss, forgetting and erasure, in relation to the hastening structures of temporality that have accompanied the rise of modernity.

While the processes of photography and the materiality of the photograph itself form the main focus of the research, the secondary metaphors of the book and the sea, as represented through photography, also form a significant part of the investigation. The abstract and intangible nature of the processes of memory has engaged many thinkers in trying to fathom the complexity of its vast structure.

Since Plato, there has prevailed a perception of memory as being formed of images that are imprinted onto a receptive surface. With reference to literary and philosophical writers, such as Freud, Proust, Bergson and Barthes, the thesis examines how the characteristics of photography have provided a model upon which to project, and about which to articulate, our understanding of the processes and sensations of remembering and forgetting.

The body of practice-based work visually examines specific notions of the "bleaching out" of memory through processes of remembrance and forgetting. In doing so it reveals the extended structures of temporality and decay that exist within photography, the book and notions of the sea, as metaphorical and material repositories of memory.

The thesis concludes with the idea that through the use of specific metaphors, memory is seen as having particular aesthetic properties and structural characteristics. When viewed through the prism of photography,

the processes of remembering and forgetting take on a similar appearance, the latent image that gains visibility and solidity through development, gradually fading again and melting back into the invisibility from which it was formed.

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Introduction

This practice-based research project examines the aesthetic representation of memory and forgetting through the use of photographic and other visual metaphors. By studying the work of a group of inter-related writers and theorists from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, all of whom were interested in the relationship between theories of memory and the emergence of photographic technologies and culture, I aim to establish a productive interrelationship that helps to contextualize and drive my own practice-based work and theoretical writing.

I will argue that the intangible and abstract nature of memory requires the use of visual metaphor in order to imagine and grasp its sensations and structure. The processes of photography and the materiality of the photograph itself form the main focus of my studies. I will examine how the characteristics of photography have provided a model upon which to project, and about which to articulate, our understanding of the processes of remembering and forgetting. Through the development of these ideas I will produce a body of practice-based work that visually examines notions of the "bleaching out" of memory through the processes of loss, forgetting and erasure. The secondary metaphors of the book and the sea, as represented through photography, also form a significant part of my investigation.

Central to my research is the figure of Marcel Proust, whose writing on memory in his major work *In Search of Lost Time*, has dominated much discussion of the concept through the twentieth century and beyond. I have chosen this approach rather than an empirical scientific modeling of the workings of psychology because these are powerful ideas that have had an important influence upon the aesthetic understanding of photography. This will enable me to examine how ideas associated with photography are not only engrained in our thinking about the workings of memory, but how photography has become one of the main cultural

tropes through which to explore memory.

Thus I hope to relate my theoretical studies to a range of practice-based aesthetic principles within photography, enabling an analysis of specific areas of established photographic practice, and assisting in the production and analysis of my own work. The work itself is offered as a visual study that, through visual metaphor, incorporates many of the ideas discussed in the written thesis.

I will be using the concept of *metaphor* as a form of rhetorical trope that does not simply offer an arbitrary linguistic representation of one thing in terms of another, but an insight into the underlying structures of cultural thought. Roland Barthes observes, "no sooner is a form seen than it must resemble something: humanity seems doomed to analogy."[1] Such rhetorical forms are fundamental in framing and shaping the "reality" to which they refer. As Daniel Chandler observes, in discussing the work of Lakoff and Johnson, "our repeated exposure to, and use of, such figures of speech subtly sustains our tacit agreement with the shared assumptions of our society."[2] Thus consistent occurrences of metaphors (systemic clusters) are seen as pointing to deep structures of thought embedded in our culture, rather than just being abstract elements of linguistics.

Although I will refer to the term metaphor in its widely used form (which can include other figures of speech) in relation to my discussion of photography and literature, technically speaking, metaphor is just one type of rhetorical trope. Giambattista Vico identified four basic tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony, while Roman Jakobson proposed that all language was based on two operations or tropes: metaphor and metonymy. Jakobson's later approach has been influential

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[1] Roland Barthes cited in Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2007. Print. P125.

[2] George Lakoff/ Mark Johnson cited in Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The*

[2] George Lakoff/ Mark Johnson cited in Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2007. Print. P124.

among more recent theorists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan. Metaphors, unlike metonyms, are based on a sense of unrelatedness. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."[3] Metonyms, in contrast, are based on *indexical* relationships between signifieds, substituting one thing for another (for example, effect for cause, substance for form, place for person, etc). For David Macey, a "Metaphor transfers the meaning of a name or descriptive phrase to an object by analogy or substitution, and is typified by the elision of the comparison ('as', 'like') characteristic of a simile… In metonymy… an attribute of a thing stands for the thing itself ('the deep' for 'the sea')."[4]

The role of metaphor in my research is therefore to help interrogate the culturally embedded structures of thought that determine our understanding and representation of remembering and forgetting.

While remembering and forgetting are by their very nature opposites, I will examine how the formation and disintegration of memory, when viewed through the optics of photography, take on a similar aesthetic appearance. I will propose that the metaphors we use to describe the workings of the psyche, dictate our understanding and representation of it. In particular, within photography the emergence of the latent image through the use of developer (remembering) creates an inverted mirror image of the process of "bleaching out" (forgetting) that occurs through the action of light and contaminants over time. The instability and faintness of the photograph-like image at the point of entering or departing memory, what Henri Bergson refers to as "flashing out," also creates a close resemblance between the processes of remembering and forgetting. This being said, the main thrust of my research is concerned

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[3] George Lakoff/ Mark Johnson cited in Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2007. Print. P127.

[4] Macey, David. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London: Penguin, 2001. Print. P250.

more with the processes of forgetting and the accompanying sense of loss, than it is with remembering. The disintegration of the photographic image does not just take place through the appearance of fading; discolouration, fragmentation and physical destruction all form characteristics of the photographic aesthetics of forgetting, that distinguish it from the appearance of remembering, and this forms an important area of investigation in my research.

By interrogating the underlying theories and metaphors that have established our understanding of photography as a mnemonic medium, I intend to examine the mournful quality of loss, forgetting and erasure that permeates photography's attempts to bring back the past. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister note that:

> As a visual medium, the photograph has many culturally resonant properties that it shares with no other medium. Above all, the photograph is widely held to be a record, a piece of evidence that something happened at some time, somewhere – in the time and the place in front of the camera. Unlike cinema, the photograph holds this recorded moment in stillness, capturing and offering up for contemplation a trace of something lost, lending it a ghostly quality. In this sense, the photograph confronts us with the fleeting nature of our world and reminds us of our mortality. In seeming to capture times and places lost in the past, the photograph can disturb the present moment and the contemporary landscape with troubling or nostalgic memories and with forgotten, or all too vividly remembered, histories.[5]

Since its inception, photography has been put to work mediating reality. The camera creates its own version of experience, producing its own events and offering its own intrinsic way of generating perception. To consider something through the intervention of the camera is to consider

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[5] Kuhn, Annette and McAllister, Kirsten Emiko. *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts.* New York/ Oxford: Berghahn, 2006. Print. P1.

it in a particular manner that is determined by the characteristics of the medium of photography. As Vilém Flusser observes, "Apparatuses were invented to simulate specific thought processes."[6] What we look through to see the world determines what we see, but it has also determined how we *describe* and *explain* the processes of perceiving and remembering events.

At the start of her book *Memory*, Anne Whitehead quotes Andreas Huyssen's pronouncement that contemporary Western culture is "obsessed with the issue of memory."[7] She goes on to observe that "Cultural obsessions with memory represent what Huyssen has termed a 'reaction formation' against such accelerated technical processes, an 'attempt to slow down information processing' and to anchor ourselves in more extended structures of temporality. As such, he regards the current memory boom as a 'potentially healthy sign of contestation' against the waning of historical consciousness."[8] Whitehead also points to the work of David Lowenthal in highlighting "the importance of 'massive migration' that has characterized the latter half of the twentieth century, and which acts to 'sharpen nostalgia.'"[9] She considers how "A renewed interest in memory followed from the popularization of discourses of virtual memory, prosthetic memory, and the electronic memory of computers."[10] Finally she notes the proliferation of archives and the need to deal with traumatic memories such as those arising out of the painful legacy of war.

In recent years, where the technologies of speed that were introduced in the Victorian period, have developed into virtual and global technologies with greater emphasis on ideas of immediacy and real-time experience, the processes of remembering and forgetting appear to be gathering

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[6] Flusser, Vilém. *Towards the Philosophy of Photography*. London: Reaktion, 2000. Print. P31.
[7] Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. Print. P1.
[8] Ibid. P1-2.
[9] Ibid. P2.
[10] Ibid. P2.

pace at a previously unparalleled rate. As virtual technologies increasingly mediate and replace artifacts and material traces from the past, and mobile communications devices change our perception of the present, while providing unprecedented access to vast archives of digital content, at no point has photography played a more influential role in establishing the aesthetic by which we visualize past time. In this thesis I have chosen not to engage directly with an analysis of these new technologies, but to look back to the point at which photography was introduced into widespread cultural use. Today, when the photographic darkroom and the use of film have largely been superseded by digital technology, my research considers how reactions to the introduction of the medium, and metaphors arising out of this period, still have enduring influence on our understanding of photography's relationship to the aesthetics of memory. In her essay *Reinventing the Medium*, Rosalind Krauss talks about Walter Benjamin's idea of "the onset of obsolescence as a possible if momentary revelation of the utopian dreams encoded within the various forms of technology at the points of their inception."[11] Likewise, I use the onset of obsolescence to reflect upon the underlying metaphors particular photographic technologies have established in determining our conception of memory.

The period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is of particularly importance to contemporary notions of memory. This is due firstly to the founding of the concept of the unconscious mind and its relationship to memory, and secondly to the impact of new technologies on the processes of perception. Fundamental to the formation of these ideas are the writings of Sigmund Freud and Proust in establishing metaphorical links between photography, memory and the unconscious, and Henri Bergson in relating photography to notions of time and memory. Freud's conception of memory being like a child's toy called the Mystic Writing-Pad, relates back to Plato's description of memory being

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[11] Krauss, E Rosalind. "Reinventing the Medium". *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 25, No 2, Winter, 1999. "Angelus Novus": Perspectives on Walter Benjamin. The University of Chicago Press. Print. P304-5.

like impressions made in a wax tablet. By extension, this metaphor links memory to the imprint of words and images in books and impressions made by light in photographic emulsion. Freud also compares the latency of the undeveloped photographic image to the unseen memories stored in the unconscious, which finds its parallel in Proust's idea of involuntary memory.

New communications technologies and mechanized forms of transportation had a profound effect on the perception of space and time. New sensations of speed changed the relationship between sight and movement, and increased mobility led to a more uprooted sense of place. Photography not only reflected these changes, but was itself an integral part of them, contributing to an increased sense of 'time-space convergence.'

The certainty of memory came under question in relation to its dependence on the workings of the unconscious with Freud's notion of repression and screen memories. Proust too points to a displacement in remembered events, in which a myriad of multiple perspectives are invoked, like those represented by photography, none providing a true picture of the past. The narrative representation of memory became fragmented, large sections being hidden in the depths of the unconscious or screened off and fused with other past events to produce displaced fictions.

Stemming from the legacy established by Freud, Proust and Bergson, in developing an aesthetic representation of memory and forgetting through the use of metaphor, I will examine how later writers continue to reflect upon and reinterpret such thinking. The importance of place in the formation and possession of memory is investigated by writers such as Georges Poulet and Gaston Bachelard. Sara Danius analyses Proust's use of technology in determining his perception of the world in the narration of *In Search of Lost Time*. While Paul Connerton reinforces this view of technology as creating new modes of perception which change

the nature of the relationship between the perceiver and what is perceived. Victor Burgin and Lorna Martens consider how media images and 'media objects' add to the irretrievability of the past, merging with lived experience to form new narratives, sometimes functioning in a similar way to involuntary memory. In particular, Barthes' exploration of the relationship between the materiality of the photographic surface and indexical trace it purports to contain, provides an important examination of the processes of memory and loss in relation to photography.

In order to relate some of these more abstract and literary theories back to aesthetic principles within existing photographic practice, I will examine how they are manifest in the work of Robert Frank, Ori Gersht and J H Engström. By analysing different visual strategies within particular bodies of their work, I will identify links between the literary use of visual metaphor and the photographic characteristics that evoke such ideas in art practice. This, in turn, will inform the analysis of my own practice-based research, allowing me to draw from both theorists and practitioners in order to reflect upon and contextualize my work within wider artistic debate.

My overall intention is to undertake a study that examines how the use of visual metaphor, particularly in relation to photography, plays a fundamental role in constructing an understanding of memory and forgetting. By exploring the aesthetic characteristics of such representation I hope to create a critically informed practice that reflects upon the processes of loss, forgetting and erasure, in relation to the hastening structures of temporality that have accompanied the rise of modernity.

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:
Dated:

Chapter 1: Theories of Loss, Forgetting and Erasure

(i) Imprint and Erasure

The Origins of Imprint and Erasure

From the origins of Western philosophy, the metaphor of the wax tablet was used as a means of visualizing and understanding the processes of memory as well as the processes of forgetting. The concept of memory as an imprint in wax can be traced back to an ancient Greek heritage.

> We make impressions upon this (wax tablet) of everything we wish to remember [mnemoneusai] among the things we have seen or heard or thought of ourselves; we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and take a stamp from them, in the way in which we take the imprints [marks, semeia] of signet rings. Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image [eidolon] remains in the wax; whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed, we forget [epilelesthai] and do not know[12]

This statement, made by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus,* associates memory with the idea of the imprint, and forgetting with the erasure of the trace. As Paul Ricoeur remarks "Let us note that the metaphor of the wax conjoins the problematics of memory and forgetting."[13] At the same time as providing a metaphor for memory, the wax tablet provided a means of recording the impressions of perception and memory, in the form of

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[12] Plato's *Theaetetus* cited in Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting.* Trans. Pellauer, Kathleen Blamey/ David. Chicago/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print. P9.
[13] Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting.* Trans. Pellauer, Kathleen Blamey/ David. Chicago/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print. P9.

writing and images. It also emphasized a sense of impermanence in the materiality of the record, the wax enabling impressions to be repeatedly refashioned, each new inscription overlaying and erasing the one that went before. As Whitehead observes "In introducing the model of the wax tablet, on which marks were temporary and could easily be erased, Plato was thus as intimately concerned with the nature of forgetting as with the nature of remembering."[14]

It is important here not just to think of inscriptions in terms of written marks. Plato used writing to communicate the essentially oral nature of his stories to a wider audience, but still considered speech to be superior to writing in the transmission of cultural tradition. For Aristotle, there was a two-stage process in the production of memory, based on an empirical notion that physical impressions are received by the sense organ, the sense image produced, then being transferred into a memory-image that is imprinted on the soul. But the presence of the absent represented by the *eikon*[15] also introduces difficulties in terms of whether the memory-image and initial impression form a resemblance, or as Aristotle believed, a copy or imprint. A complex relationship can accordingly be perceived between images formed by the imagination (and possessing the element of fantasy) and those recollected by memory. Ricoeur observes "Plato had approached this difficulty by taking as his target the deceit inherent in this kind of relation, and in the *Sophist* he had even tried to distinguish between two mimetic arts: the fantastic art, deceitful by nature, and the eikastic art, capable of veracity."[16] While imagination and memory have as a common trait the presence of the absent, Ricoeur differentiates them (in a tradition of Western philosophy inherited from the ancient Greeks and their variations on the term eikon), in terms of, on the one hand, "the

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[14] Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. Print. P17.
[15] A word used in the *Theaetetus,* commonly translated as *image.*
[16] Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Pellauer, Kathleen Blamey/ David. Chicago/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print. P19.

vision of something unreal,"[17] and, on the other, "the positing of an earlier reality."[18] In my discussions here of the unconscious, narrative and memory, we will see that any simple adherence to this distinction will be difficult to sustain.

We can see that the view of memory as firstly being imprinted onto a receptive surface, and secondly, being formed of images, was established from the outset of Western thought. A fundamental connection with photography (of light making an impression on a photographic plate) and with hand/ mechanical printing (marks being made onto the printing plate and then transferred onto paper) can therefore be traced back to this point. Of the two, the connection seems greater with the processes of printing, because of the physical nature of the imprinting of impressions. Indeed, we can start to establish a lineage of technological development, linking the wax tablet to the printed book and most recently to e-readers and tablet computers. If we consider the book, in its wide range of forms and varied technological incarnations, through the ages, it has a particularly privileged place in the metaphorical modeling and physical storage of memory.

Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad

Like Plato, Freud used the metaphor of the writing tablet, indeed one using a wax slab, to receive impressions, as an analogy for the workings of memory in his essay *A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'*. He starts the essay by talking about the use of chalk on slate to produce a temporary trace, which can be wiped clean whenever a new perception is to be recorded, and ink on paper as providing a "permanent memory-trace." These methods he describes as producing a "materialized portion" of the "mnemic apparatus." He then goes on to discuss the Mystic Writing-Pad, describing it as:

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[17] Ibid. P44.
[18] Ibid. P44.

A small contrivance that promises to perform more than the sheet of paper or the slate. It claims to be nothing more than a writing-tablet from which notes can be erased by an easy movement of the hand. But if it is examined more closely it will be found that its construction shows a remarkable agreement with my hypothetical structure of our perceptual apparatus and that it can in fact provide both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it.[19]

Memory and forgetting are hence seen in terms of the production and erasure of impressions or traces on a receptive surface, a similar system to that described by Plato. However Freud's metaphor also introduces the idea of layers in the construction of memory, the layers of celluloid and waxed paper (the covering sheet) corresponding to the conscious mind and the underlying wax slab corresponding to the realm of the unconscious. The breaking of contact between the covering sheet and the wax slab constitute a "periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system" within the conscious mind, wiping clean the impression from the sheet, while the underlying wax slab, the unconscious, retains the impression. In this way, Freud claims "the greater part of what we call conscious knowledge must… be for very considerable periods of time in a state of latency, that is to say, of being psychically unconscious."[20] This account of human memory entails a continual process of inscription and erasure within the conscious psyche, while in the realm of the unconscious, memories are obscured by a state of latency. The unseen impressions in the underlying wax slab can therefore be seen as being *latent images*, which require the action of the cover sheet to become visible to the conscious mind. The least visible recesses of memory again yielding the most significant revelations. Continuing with the photographic metaphor, latent images are those that, in the darkroom, start to faintly

[19] Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Mystic Writing-Pad'". 1925. *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis : Beyond the Pleasure Principle; the Ego and the Id and Other Works*. Ed. Angela Richards, James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991. Print. P431.
[20] "The Unconscious". 1915. Ibid. P168.

emerge and gain visibility from the imperceptible impressions hidden within the photographic substrate. They are images from the past that are brought to life in the present moment.

While Freud considered any shortcomings of the Mystic Writing-Pad of little importance to its overall value as an analogy for the workings of memory, in his essay *Freud and the Scene of Writing,* Jacques Derrida questions Freud's representations of psychical content in the form of text and the structure of the psychical apparatus in the form of a writing machine. As Derrida notes, Freud bases his hypothesis on a metaphorical model rather than a neurological description.

> We shall not have to ask if a writing apparatus – for example, the one described in the "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad" – is a *good* metaphor for representing the working of the psyche, but rather what apparatus we must create in order to represent psychical writing; and we shall have to ask what the imitation, projected and liberated in a machine, of something like psychical writing might mean. And not if the psyche is indeed a kind of text, but: what is a text, and what must the psyche be if it can be represented by a text?[21]

In deconstructing Freud's metaphorical model, which Derrida views as foregrounding the primacy of writing in our experiencing of the world through memory, Derrida considers the materiality of the writing pad itself in determining and limiting our understanding of the psyche. He suggests that similarities between memory and technology might now be better represented by the more sophisticated devices that have been developed, rather than the writing pad. He asks:

> Is the psychic apparatus *better represented* or is it *affected differently* by all the technical mechanisms for archivization and for

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[21] Derrida, Jacques, and Alan Bass. "Freud and the Scene of Writing". *Writing and Difference.* London: Routledge, 2001. Print. P250.

reproduction, for prostheses of so-called live memory, for simulacrums of living things which already are, and will increasingly be more refined, complicated, powerful than the 'mystic pad' (microcomputing, electronization, computerization, etc.)?[22]

Derrida thus calls into question not just the *representative value* of models of the psychic apparatus, but whether advances in technology, such as changes to their spatial architecture and economies of speed, may affect the very structure of the psychic apparatus. The recent emergence of the tablet computer (subsequent to Derrida's writing) represents one such device that has created a far more sophisticated form of auxiliary memory. Having a lineage stretching back to Plato's wax tablet, it increases greatly the complexity of its resemblance to memory, opening up the metaphor to the expanding realm of the Internet. Indeed the tablet's importance as a metaphor and mobile auxiliary repository of memory, in its rapidly evolving technological forms, is gaining in significance at an incredible rate.[23]

Derrida considers the further point of the essential difference between any inner form of psychical writing and actual script in terms of potential meanings. He questions the possibility that unconscious thoughts can be translated into signified conscious content, hence posing a fundamental doubt about what the psyche actually is if it can be represented by text.

If Plato and Freud both felt the need to resort to the physical model of the writing tablet to enable their exploration of the psychical functioning of memory, then, as Derrida observes, the metaphors and forms of

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[22] Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Prenowitz, Eric. Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print. P15.
[23] Douwe Draaisma speculated, back in 1995, that if Freud were to be transported to the present day, it might be the computer rather than the Mystic Writing-Pad he might choose for his metaphor. Draaisma, Douwe. *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print. P21.

representation used are central to the nature and limitations of any resulting meaning or understanding. It is important here to note that the Mystic Writing-Pad was in no way limited to the recording of traces of phonetic writing, the consideration of which forms the central thrust of Derrida's critique. As Mary Ann Doane observes "given the fact that the Mystic Writing-Pad is, after all, a child's toy (and as Derrida himself points out, more sophisticated technologies of recording were readily available at this time), it might be more likely to receive iconic representations or nonsense."[24] Images, and not just writing, are of fundamental significance to the representation of memory and forgetting through the processes of imprint and erasure. Doane goes on to suggest that in Freud's use of vocabulary and metaphor to represent the nature of memory, "it is not their relation to any concept of writing but their resolute materialism"[25] that is most notable.

Douwe Draaisma notes that Freud used metaphors and analogies from a diverse range of sources, including mythology, science, technology and archaeology, changing and refining them in line with developments in his thinking.

> The metaphor must have been of great importance to Freud not only as a rhetorical instrument, but also as a heuristic aid in formulating a theory. What is the strange effectiveness of this tool based upon? A metaphor like that of the Mystic Writing-Pad is a 'verbal' phenomenon, but also contains a reference to a concrete object and hence has a pictorial aspect. Like the Mystic Writing-Pad itself the metaphor is an instrument with two layers, a unification of word and image.[26]

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[24] Doane, Mary Ann. *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive.* Harvard University Press, 2002. Print. P40.
[25] Ibid. P40.
[26] Draaisma, Douwe. *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About the Mind.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print. P9.

Draaisma considers Freud's use of this metaphoric association as a form of filter, directing and guiding attention to particular aspects of understanding, while reducing the emphasis on others. The vision of the Mystic Writing-Pad becomes the way in which aspects of the psyche are seen or obscured. He notes that Freud recommended to alternate metaphors as frequently as possible: "if each filter makes a different aspect visible, it is only from a combination of metaphors that the most complete image of reality can be expected."[27] This literary approach to scientific writing, relying on the power of the metaphor as a go-between linking analogous and semantic forms of thought, we will later see, resembles closely the approach taken by Proust in his fictional accounts of the nature of memory and perception. Likewise, Freud's reliance on a form of apparatus in order to develop his metaphorical models is something that is evident repeatedly in Proust. In the next section of this chapter I will be considering the processes of memory through another metaphorical model, that of the latent image in photography.

(ii) Latent Images

Freud - Latent Images and the Unconscious

With the invention of photography, a new form of physical image came into being: the *latent image*. This invisible image was produced by the action of light and only became visible as the result of chemical development. It was an image that, while possessing the potential to yield memory, required the agency of a further element to bring it to realization, thus providing a rich metaphorical model for ideas about the relation of the unconscious to memory.

In analogue photography, the latent image is first formed with the exposure of the negative, at the point of the camera's encounter with the

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[27] Ibid. P20.

world. The development of this image usually takes place in the either partial or total darkness of the darkroom, so it is rarely witnessed. There is however a second stage of development of the latent image, when the fully processed negative is projected onto photographic paper in the darkroom, and the positive image starts gradually to emerge in the developer under the dim glow of the safe light. It is this second stage, because of its greater visibility, that is usually associated with the photographic image materializing slowly out of the blank white paper, representing its emergence from its latent state. The metaphor of latent images in photography being related to latent images in memory can sometimes merge the two stages, but there is an important difference; the first stage has to do with the recording of an event in the world, while the second is about reversing a negative image into a positive one.

It is also important to note that the appearance of the latent image in the developer mirrors in reverse the process of fading that the final print undergoes as it ages over time. The bleaching out of the print by light and contaminants takes place imperceptibly over an extended period of time. It is not something that can be witnessed, like the momentary transformation that takes place in the developer, it is something that happens over many years, like the fading of human memory. The metaphor of the faded photographic image can therefore be interpreted in two ways: one being the emergence of memory and the other being the fading and erasure of memory.

Around the start of the twentieth century, photography's increasing accessibility became a source of fascination for many writers interested in the effects of new technologies of perception on our everyday lives. In *A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis* Freud discusses the idea of "latent conceptions," stating, "if we have any reason to suppose that they exist in the mind – as we had in the case of memory – let them be

denoted by the term 'unconscious'."[28] The unconscious can thus be seen as a vast repository of latent conceptions that are present, although "in what shape… we have no means of guessing."[29] But Freud goes on from this discussion of latency to make explicit reference to the photographic process in the selection and printing of the negative.

> Every psychical act begins as an unconscious one, and it may either remain so or go on developing into consciousness… A rough but not inadequate analogy to this supposed relation of conscious to unconscious activity might be drawn from the field of ordinary photography. The first phase of the photograph is the 'negative': every photographic picture has to pass through the 'negative process': and some of these negatives which have held good in examination are admitted to the 'positive process' ending in the picture.[30]

In the metaphor of the photographic negative, the potential for both the resurrection and erasure of memory are present. A process of selection is undertaken whereby certain images are chosen to be 'remembered' through the process of printing. The idea of latency with which Freud starts the essay is not extended into an analogy with the latent photographic image, which in some ways might seem more appropriate, since it is invisible until processed, but with the already processed image of the negative. The analogy invites you into the 'photographic darkroom' of the psyche, where so many images are assigned to oblivion, or, at best, to the possibility of some future re-evaluation, while out of the darkness emerges the final print, into the light of consciousness. Sarah Kofman comments, "the positive image, the double of the negative, implies that 'what is at the end is already there at the beginning.'

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[28] Freud, Sigmund. "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis". 1912. *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis : Beyond the Pleasure Principle; the Ego and the Id and Other Works.* Ed. Angela Richards, James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991. Print. P50-1.
[29] Ibid. P50.
[30] Ibid. P55.

Development adds nothing: it only enables darkness to be made light."[31] Freud uses the metaphor again when describing how a child's early experiences exert a lasting impression on later life, "the process may be compared to a photograph, which can be developed and made into a picture after a short or long interval."[32] The photographic metaphor, to which Freud returns, appears to run into problems as we start to reveal the limits of the analogy.

Proust - Latent Images and Involuntary Memory

In Proust, the metaphorical uses of the photographic apparatus and processes of photography were embedded in the overall concept of his work, and integral to key passages of his book. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* contains numerous metaphors comparing the processes of perception and memory to those of photography. Although there have been many writers who have discussed Proust's use of photography as a metaphor for perception and memory, George Brassaï's observations in *Proust in the Power of Photography* are of particular interest due to his in depth understanding of both Proust and the medium of photography.

> In the light of photography a new Proust has been revealed to me as a sort of mental photographer who used his own body as an ultrasensitive plate, managing thereby to capture and register in his youth thousands of impressions, and who, starting from the search for lost time, dedicated his own time to developing and printing them, thereby making visible the latent image of his entire life in that gigantic photograph constituted by In Search of Lost Time.[33]

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[31] Kofman, Sarah. *Camera Obscura, of Ideology*. London: Athlone, 1998. Print. P26.
[32] Freud, Sigmund, and Katherine Jones. *Moses and Monotheism*. Vintage Book. New York: Vintage Books, 1939. Print. P162.
[33] Brassaï, Georges. *Proust in the Power of Photography*. Trans. Howard, Richard. Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print. Pxii.

It was these latent images, stored up in the body, that would in later years be developed at night in his cork lined bedroom, like a photographer at work in his darkroom, closed off from the world.

This embodied use of the metaphor positions the seeing subject in direct physical relation to the impression being registered. Proust's subjective vision, characterized by that of a camera, can also be seen as a reflection of the increasing availability, miniaturization and portability of cameras over the period of Proust's life time. It is interesting to note Jonathan Crary's observations on the historical basis for the changing character of perception: "From the beginning of the nineteenth century a science of vision will tend to mean increasingly an interrogation of the physiological make up of the human subject... It is a moment when the visible escapes from the timeless order of the camera obscura and becomes lodged in another apparatus, within the unstable physiology and temporality of the human body."[34] Proust (1871-1922) would have seen the introduction of the first Kodak box camera to the mass market in 1888, introducing a radical expansion in the photographic vision of everyday life.

This monocular view of perception is echoed by Bergson who describes it as being "a kind of photographic view of things, taken from a fixed point by that special apparatus which is called the organ of perception – a photograph which would then be developed in the brain-matter by some unknown chemical and physical process of elaboration."[35] In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson distinguishes between two types of memory, "the memory of habit" and "pure and spontaneous memory." Although Proust denied Bergson's influence, there remains a clear correlation with Proust's conception of "voluntary" and "involuntary" memory. Bergson describes involuntary memory: "this spontaneous recollection, which is masked by the acquired recollection, may flash out at intervals; but it

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[34] Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1992. Print. P70.
[35] Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004. Print. P31.

disappears at the least movement of the voluntary memory."[36] As Roger Shattuck observes "Bergson makes memory the central principle of his psychology, very nearly the equivalent of Freud's unconscious."[37] Thus Freud, Bergson and Proust, despite differences in their terminology and the detail of their metaphors, all correspond in their use of photography to describe the processes of memory.

In the introductory quotation to *Proust in the Power of Photography*, Brassaï uses the following passage from *Within a Budding Grove*: "Pleasures are like photographs: those taken in the beloved's presence no more than negatives to be developed later, once you are at home, having regained the use of that interior darkroom, access to which is "condemned" as long as you are seeing other people."[38] Immediately we are confronted by the metaphor of the darkroom as a psychical space in which latent images can be processed and the true experience of an event can be fully appreciated. It also resembles a form of private archive where past impressions can be retrieved and made visible for further scrutiny. There is an element of voyeurism implicit in this passage, whereby the object of desire can only be contemplated, and hence possessed, alone in the privacy of a darkened space when others are no longer present.[39] Shattuck identifies in Proust's central character, the "eternal desire to spy on people, to be simultaneously present and absent."[40] The latent image remains invisible to others until it has been developed in this interior space. There is a sense in which intimacy can only be achieved through representation in memory, through a lack of physical proximity with the subject. As Shattuck explains "Proust saw our

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[36] Ibid. P101.

[37] Shattuck, Roger. *Proust's Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print. P115.

[38] Brassaï, Georges. *Proust in the Power of Photography*. Trans. Howard, Richard. Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print. Pv.

[39] Martin Jay also makes note of the voyeuristic gaze in Proust's vision in Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994. Print. P183.

[40] Shattuck, Roger. *Proust*. Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1974. Print. P103.

image-making faculty as a means both for grasping the world and for detaching ourselves from it, the essentially double process of consciousness."[41] The same dilemma is expressed when Proust's narrator Marcel spies on family events from a secluded spot under a chestnut tree in a hooded wicker chair "hidden from the eyes of anyone:"

> When I saw an external object, my consciousness that I was seeing it would remain between me and it, surrounding it with a thin spiritual border that prevented me from ever touching its substance directly; for it would somehow evaporate before I could make contact with it, just as an incandescent body that is brought into proximity with something wet never actually reaches its moisture, since it is always preceded by a zone of evaporation.[42]

Consciousness acts as a barrier to experiencing things directly and it falls to different forms of technology to act as metaphorical models by which perception can be mediated and events be properly understood. The use of photography as such a metaphor, enables Proust to 'record' a scene with a level of detachment and lack of emotional engagement, so that the 'darkroom of memory' can later develop the latent images into something meaningful and in doing so provide a sense of proximity to the scene that was absent at the time. As Áine Larkin observes

> temporal latency characterizes Marcel's processes of perception and of voluntary and involuntary memory. Impressions recorded on a camera film are each the repository of a potential creative art work – or, at the very least, a tangible record of a fleeting moment. However, withdrawal to and hard work in the darkroom are necessary for the creation of these possible art works. Taking the

[41] Shattuck, Roger. *Proust's Binoculars: A Study of Memory, Time and Recognition in a La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Print. P21.

[42] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way (Vol I)*. Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P98.

photograph is only one of a fixed series of actions which must be completed if the potential of the latent impressions is to be realized.[43]

The camera also provides access to what Walter Benjamin terms the optical unconscious: "Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye… The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."[44] Photographic vision allows a scene to be interrogated after the event, revealing "entirely new structural formations of the subject"[45] and bringing to light aspects of the world that are imperceptible to the human eye. This notion of the optical unconscious is also something Barthes picks up on in *Camera Lucida*, as Mary Bergstein notes "The optical unconscious for Barthes included material that was unintentionally included in the perceptual margins."[46] She goes on to ask if unconscious material is present in all photographs: "If we accept the premise that unconscious material resides in photographs whether it motivates the composition, seeps in unintentionally at the margins, is nested in the nearly invisible minutiae, or is revealed in chronometric views, then the answer is yes."[47] This is an important point because Proust's 'optics' allow for a detailed retrospective analysis of events uncovering the unconscious impulses of his subjects. The optical unconscious, made visible through the development of the latent image, enables an interrogation of all those aspects that were overlooked in the original scene.

But the insertion of this technologically enhanced consciousness brings with it a paradox in the form of both, an intensification of experience that

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[43] Larkin, Áine. *Proust Writing Photography : Fixing the Fugitive in a La Recherche Du Temps Perdu.* Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2011. Print. P55.
[44] Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". *Illuminations.* Ed. Arendt, Hannah. London: Pimlico, 1999. Print. P230.
[45] Ibid. P230.
[46] Bergstein, Mary. *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art.* Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print. P18.
[47] Ibid. P18.

provides a new proximity, and a profound spatial and temporal displacement, thus emphasizing a lack of proximity. To quote Sontag: "to possess the world in the form of images is, precisely, to re-experience the unreality and remoteness of the real."[48] If there is a delay or 'displacement' needed in order to appreciate the true meaning of an event, then the greatest truths can only be discovered through the action of involuntary memory and this requires a considerable passage of time separating the occurrence of the past event and its resurrection in the present moment. Moreover, it requires the past event to have been forgotten. Brassaï observes that, "'Involuntary memory' and 'latent image' are phenomena closely linked in his (Proust's) mind."[49] Latent images lie dormant in the far recesses of the mind and it is only by virtue of a chance event in the present that they can be restored and their relevance be realized.

> No memory, and no latent image, can be delivered from its purgatory without the intervention of that deus ex machina which is the "developer," as the word itself indicates. For Proust, this will habitually be a present resemblance which will resuscitate a memory, as a chemical substance brings to life a latent image. The role of the developer is identical in both cases: to bring an impression from a virtual to a real state.[50]

We can see here a similar metaphorical use of the idea of the latent image as my previous discussion of Freud's *A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis*. The printing process becomes one of selection or rejection of memories, but the 'developer' in this case is a moment in the present that resembles the 'latent image' in memory. Brassaï goes on to state "the important thing – as much in the darkroom as in the realm of

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[48] Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Aylesbury: Penguin, 1979. Print. P164.

[49] Brassaï, Georges. *Proust in the Power of Photography*. Trans. Howard, Richard. Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Print. Pxi. Addition of parenthesis my own.

[50] Ibid. P139.

writing – is to immobilize and solidify them."[51] Bergson also acknowledges the importance of fixing the fugitive nature of these impressions when he states, "this spontaneous recollection, which is masked by the acquired recollection, may flash out at intervals; but it disappears at the least movement of the voluntary memory."[52] The involuntary memory, like the latent image, has no true solidity or being until it is developed and fixed.

(iii) The Effects of Space and Motion

The Art of Memory and the Use of Space

There are long established links between notions of memory and place; the Romans used a place system called the 'art of memory' in order to aid the process of memorization for the oration of rhetoric. As Whitehead notes, in the *Ad Herennium*, the only complete surviving account, it describes this process as a:

> Place system in which the individual memorizes a set of places, for example a street or building with a series of rooms, which act as background images. Onto this background are then placed a second set of images which symbolize what is to be remembered, for example the points of a speech… The 'art of memory' is thus concerned not with remembering past experiences but with storing away what has been learnt for future recall.[53]

As with Freud's description of the Mystic Writing-Pad, the anonymous writer of this book saw the process of memorization as being a form of

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[51] Ibid. P139.
[52] Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004. Print. P101.
[53] Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. Print. P29.

artificial memory. Francis Yates notes that all understandings of the classical art of memory "must be mainly based on the memory section of *Ad Herennium.*"[54] He goes on to observe that "artificial memory is established from places and images… the stock definition to be repeated down the ages"[55] and likens it to a form of inner writing where the places are like wax tablets and the images are like letters. Using the central metaphor of Plato's wax tablet, a fundamental connection is established between places and the images, or impressions, which are 'inscribed' into, or overlaid upon them. This process of memorization is one in which memory is conceived of as space, or a form of projected, or imagined space.

Embodied Memory and Space

Unlike the classical art of memory, which tried to store away learnt passages for future recall, Proust's involuntary memory is based on the idea of resurrecting *past experience* from the depths of the unconscious and can only be triggered by chance. Furthermore, as I have already established, Proust's notions are based on an embodied form of perception, where space is encountered in terms of a bodily relation to the external world. As Bergson puts it: "Here is a system of images which I term my perception of the universe, and which may be entirely altered by a very slight change in a certain privileged image, *my body*. This image occupies the centre; by it all others are conditioned."[56]

In the opening section of the *Search*, Proust locates the body as the centre of the universe from which all else can be perceived.

> My body, still too heavy with sleep to move, would endeavour to
> construe from the pattern of its tiredness the position of its various

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[54] Yates, Frances A. *The Art of Memory*. London: Pimlico, 1992. Print. P21.
[55] Ibid. P22.
[56] Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004. Print. P12.

limbs, in order to deduce therefrom the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to piece together and give a name to the house in which it lay. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, its knees, its shoulder-blades, offered it a series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept, while the unseen walls, shifting and adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirled round it in the dark.[57]

If the body is central to Proust's conception of space, then his sense of memory is embedded in a succession of remembered places brought together through juxtaposition with his current location. For Proust, the identity of the seeing subject, Marcel, is reconstructed through a fragmented recollection of habitual bodily movements experienced relative to the rooms in which they have taken place. Proustian memory is thus not fixed in any one static physical place, but is reliant on its surrounding to form a reaction. Poulet describes this process in relation to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity: "An object can be described as located somewhere and in certain motion only in reference to what is about it. And so it is also with memories and experience."[58] Marcel, upon awakening must recover consciousness of his existence and thereby of his identity. As Poulet puts it: "Who is he? He no longer knows, and he no longer knows because he has lost the means of relating the place and moment in which he now lives to all the other places and moments of his former existence"[59] The comprehension of any moment is therefore dependent upon the sum of all previous remembered moments and it is from this that any true sense of self can be formed. As with the place system of memory set out in the *Ad Herennium*, Proust uses a set of rooms to reconstruct memory, but unlike the Roman system, this is a

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[57] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way (Vol I)*. Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P4.

[58] Shattuck, Roger. *Proust's Binoculars: A Study of Memory, Time and Recognition in a La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Print. P43.

[59] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian Space*. Trans. Coleman, Elliott. Baltimore/ London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Print. P8.

reconstruction based on the subjectivity of 'body memory.'

Bachelard proposes a similar relationship between body memory and place. In *The Poetics of Space*, he suggests that if we return to the *actual places* of memory after a significant period of years, it is in the reaction between the recollections of bodily movement embedded in the psyche and the places in which they were enacted that memory resurrects itself. "The successive houses in which we have lived have no doubt made our gestures commonplace. But we are very surprised, when we return to the old house, after an odyssey of many years, to find that the most delicate gestures, the earliest gestures suddenly come alive, are still faultless."[60] These are latent memories, buried within the unconscious, requiring an interaction with place to be developed into consciousness.

Memory's Attachment to Places and Things

As well as embodied memory, another key element of the Proustian psyche is his attachment of memory to places and things. Martens identifies this as a theme, not only central to Proust, but common to childhood narratives in general, familiar places and things providing both comfort, and a form of self-extension. "The habitation of space (having one's places) is important to humans as it is to animals. So is the possession of things. Having one's terrain and one's things gives one certainty, self-definition, and a sense of continuity. One's places and one's things extend the self into the world, the living and changing being into more lasting forms."[61] Martens refers to D W Winnicott as identifying the importance of "transitional objects" in "helping infants bridge the gap caused by maternal absence."[62] It is important to remember that Proust narrates much of the early part of the *Search* through the eyes of a child,

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[60] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon, 1994. Print. P15.
[61] Martens, Lorna. *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollection and Its Objects in Literary Modernism*. Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print. P44.
[62] Ibid. P43.

so the preoccupations of the places and things depicted relate to a child's perception of the world.

> Childhood is a privileged locus for this connection of memory and metaphor through *things*, for metaphor (which renders the child's way of seeing), and especially metaphors involving objects (objects that are moreover taken from the child's fields of interest), become memory's artistic route to childhood. The process of pulling things out of things – spaces out of space – by metaphor, or alternatively by recording instances of involuntary memory, motivates Proust's use of time and gives it telos: the conversion of momentary insights into the space of a multivolume work.[63]

The most famous scene in the *Search*, that of the narrator tasting a piece of tea soaked madeleine and being overwhelmed by involuntary memory, reconstructs the town of Combray by unfolding memory and projecting it as space. The importance of Combray, as one of the most treasured places in Proust's childhood recollections, is emphasized by the vivid sense in which it is resurrected using a process, as Martens suggests, in which a metaphor is used to pull "space out of space."

> And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking

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[63] Ibid. P98.

shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea."[64]

This scene, which invokes the experience of involuntary memory, portrays a tightly compressed unconscious trace, repressed and therefore diminished in scale, unfolding and thereby expanding to monumental scale and in the process taking on a solidity, which asserts its true material reality. All the constituent parts of the town are reassembled from the narrator's childhood and unified into an amalgam of past and present time projected in the form of space. Poulet describes the scene as memory rising "up in the void of consciousness, like a world destroyed and suddenly recreated,"[65] and in doing so points to Proust's conception that it is only memories that are on the point of oblivion, that have not been fully registered at the time of their conception, which can later re-emerge as involuntary memories.

Motion, Displacement, Perception

Modernity led to the creation of a vast range of new technologies that radically changed our conception of space and motion, and therefore our modes of experience. As William Carter observes, "Proust's era, 1871 – 1922, which he depicted in the *Search*, was one of the most exciting and momentous in history" [66], it witnessed the arrival of new forms of mechanized transportation; indeed Proust "characterized his era as the 'age of speed'."[67] At the same time, other forms of communications technology such as the telephone and motion picture were compressing our perception of space, and, of course, still photography, which had been the preserve of the wealthy few, was adopted by the masses during

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[64] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way (Vol I)*. Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P54-5.
[65] Ibid. P54-5.
[66] Carter, William C. *Marcel Proust: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. Print. Pxii.
[67] Ibid. Pxii.

this period. Jeremy Stein notes that, "The railway was intimately associated with developments in communications technology, particularly the electric telegraph and the telephone. These technologies inaugurated simultaneous communication and a phase of 'time-space convergence.'"[68] The combination of these technologies changed people's perception of everyday life, shrinking their conception of the world and gradually transforming the etiquette and nature of social interaction and communication. Anne Friedberg observes that, "In the nineteenth century, machines that changed the measure of space and time (machines of mobility, including trains, steamships, bicycles, elevators, moving walkways, and, later, automobiles and airplanes) changed the relation between sight and bodily movement."[69] She associates the mobilized gaze with the notion of the *flâneur*, as a walker and traveller, experiencing the spectacle of the new urban spaces of the city, with an accompanying sense of detachment. "The city itself redefined the gaze. New means of transportation provided an unprecedented urban mobility, the broadened boulevards produced unimpeded forms of urban circulation."[70] The nature of the way in which urban space was perceived was being redefined by the tide of modernity.

With the increased mobility resulting from mechanized forms of transportation, life became less located within the confines of one particular place and memories were likewise uprooted. Transportation created a greater distance from the past by encouraging migration, which introduced new realms of forgetting through the fading and erasure of memory. If, as Gaston Bachelard suggests, "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are"[71],

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[68] Stein, Jeremy. "Reflections on Time, Time-Space Compression and Technology in the Nineteenth Century". *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*. May, Jon, Thrift, Nigel (Eds), ed. London: Routledge, 2001. Print. P109.
[69] Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994. Print. P3.
[70] Ibid. P38.
[71] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon, 1994. Print. P9.

then the loss of memory must form the natural consequence of such upheavals in our surroundings.

Mechanized travel led to a fragmentation of people's lives, bringing a new sense of proximity between places. This made the juxtapositon of places a more intense outcome of travel. It not only made journeys between places faster, it also created new opportunities for exploration and tourism. Proust reflects on how travel enabled the juxtaposition of places:

> After all the specific attraction of a journey lies not in our being
> able to alight at places on the way and to stop altogether as soon
> as we grow tired, but in its making the difference between
> departure and arrival not as imperceptible but as intense as
> possible, so that we are conscious of it in its totality, intact, as it
> existed in us when our imagination bore us from the place in which
> we were living right to the very heart of a place we longed to see.[72]

Mechanized transportation not only resulted in an increased spatial dislocation from the places in which memory was located, it also changed the nature of perception, and thereby changed the nature of our memory of things.

Sara Danius proposes, that by the early 1900s, "the automobile had become a viewing instrument on the order of, say, the Claude glass."[73] New forms of transport opened up new vantage points from which to view the world, while framing the fleeting impressions gained through multiple inbuilt windows. It created the possibility of experiencing a place, while being enclosed within an apparatus that sealed one off from it. Places were registered as ephemeral impressions, indistinct blurs, or fragmentary snapshots, and our memory of such places began to exist in

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[72] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Within a Budding Grove (Vol II)*. Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P255.
[73] Danius, Sara. *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*. Ithaca/ London: Cornel University Press, 2002. Print. P136.

this form. Landscapes became depicted as a series of named stopping off points. Whole new landscapes of in-between or non-places emerged having no true identity other than existing between other named places. As Connerton observes in discussing the emergence of the railway:

> We witness here a new mode of perception – which precipitates a new relationship between the perceiver and the object-world, where the perceiver, instead of belonging to the same space as the perceived object, sees those objects through the mechanical apparatus which moves the perceiver through the world; here the motion produced by the machine is integral to the act of visual perception itself in the sense that the perceiver can only see things in mechanized motion.[74]

This new apparatus of transportation itself became an apparatus of vision, determining both what is seen, due to the route taken and vantage point given, and how it is seen. The traveller became a captive spectator to an ever-changing succession of places, their exteriority being emphasized by the cocooning nature of the machine from which they were perceived and the speed at which their presence was endlessly discarded. Friedberg likens tourism to the experience of being in the cinema:

> The subjective effects on the tourist are not unlike those of the cinema spectator. Tourism produces an escape from boundaries; it legitimates the transgression of one's static, stable, or fixed location. The tourist simultaneously embodies both a position of presence and absence, of here and elsewhere, of avowing one's curiosity and disavowing one's daily life.[75]

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[74] Connerton, Paul. *How Modernity Forgets*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print. P109.
[75] Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994. Print. P59.

The displacement from everyday life that occurs both in being a tourist, and being in the cinema, creates a sense in which the tourist/ spectator feels "out of place," immersed in the narrative of the journey.

Similarly, Danius notes that, "In Proust… the railway compartment moves through the landscape like a projector apparatus. Naturalizing the deliciously fragmented representation of the narrator's visual activity, the window frames permit the spectacle to come into being. In short, the train emerges as a framing device on wheels."[76] An example of this is when Proust's narrator, Marcel, is on the last section of his journey to stay at the seaside in Balbec:

> The course of the line altering, the train turned, the morning scene gave place in the frame of the window to a nocturnal village… I was lamenting the loss of my strip of pink sky when I caught sight of it anew, but red this time, in the opposite window which it left at a second bend in the line; so that I spent my time running from one window to the other to reassemble, to collect on a single canvas the intermittent, antipodean fragments of my fine, scarlet, ever-changing morning, and obtain a comprehensive view and a continuous picture of it.[77]

The scene is thus remembered like a collage of framed and fragmented images, taken from numerous perspectives. The constant motion of the train continually changes the window from which the exterior view can be apprehended and it is therefore necessary to collect many fragments in order to make the one "continuous picture" that might have been captured in a single frame had the spectator been stationary. Poulet explains "It is no longer a question here of binding two objects together: it is a question of bringing them nearer in such a way that both of them, which are

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[76] Danius, Sara. *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics.* Ithaca/ London: Cornel University Press, 2002. Print. P113.
[77] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Within a Budding Grove (Vol II).* Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P268.

opposite, fragmentary, and bounded in time as in extent, form a totality and a continuity."[78]

While Danius likens the railway carriage to a projector apparatus, it can also be likened to a camera. The prolific gaze of the camera, framing the world and cutting out predefined pieces, has proven to be an ideal means to keep up with the rapid motion of modernity. The train journey becomes a photographic journey, the memory of motion becomes like a series of photographic snapshots. Motion is stilled into a form of optical unconscious, so that when the fragments are reassembled into a single coherent picture, as with the latent image, a new level of detail is revealed that could not have been perceived at the time.

This proliferation of fragmented snapshots of memory has created a virtual world that, as Bergson says, juxtaposes "our states of consciousness in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously."[79] Collections of photographs, like memories, allow vast spaces to be traversed instantaneously and juxtaposed in new spatial relationships. Poulet describes this process:

> The whole Proustian work is full of… changes of place. They have a role at least as important as memories. Besides, between the memories and the travels there is an incontestable analogy… They create a point of departure in transporting the human being outside the material or spiritual place in which it seemed compelled to live. Above all, travels and memories connect abruptly regions of the earth or of the mind that, heretofore, were without any relation.[80]

Travel therefore becomes another metaphor for the workings of memory, that make it into a form of virtual space, crossing both physical distance

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[78] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian Space*. Trans. Coleman, Elliott. Baltimore/ London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Print. P80.
[79] Bergson cited in ibid. P3.
[80] Op. cit. P73.

and time, so as to produce a psychical space that juxtaposes diverse and unrelated events into a unified picture. As Poulet puts it, "juxtaposition is the contrary of motion. It is an assemblage of objects that remain in their place."[81] Motion is stilled by juxtaposition, and in this way can be fixed in place as memory.

(iv) Lost Narratives

Screen Memories and Displaced Fictions

Freud describes the substitution that takes place in the formation of what he terms *screen memories*: "instead of the memory image that was justified by the original experience, we are presented with another, which is to some extent associatively *displaced* from it."[82] These fictional narratives, which may fuse childhood memories with remnants of memories from later periods in life, often seem of a relatively trivial nature in comparison to the far more significant memories they obscure or screen off. These significant memories are *repressed* because of their "objectionable" or traumatic nature and are replaced by something in their "spatial or temporal vicinity."[83] Freud describes the essence of repression as simply "turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from consciousness."[84] In this process of repression, totally different narratives and meanings are attached to memories, assigning important areas of our past to oblivion unless they can later be resurrected by the conscious mind. In fact, Freud goes further, to say that:

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[81] Ibid. P95.
[82] Freud, Sigmund. "Screen Memories". *The Uncanny*. Ed. Angela Richards, James Strachey. London: London: Penguin, 2003. Print. P7.
[83] Ibid. P7.
[84] Freud, Sigmund. "Repression". 1915. *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis : Beyond the Pleasure Principle; the Ego and the Id and Other Works*. Ed. Angela Richards, James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991. Print. P147.

It is perhaps altogether questionable whether we have any conscious memories *from* childhood: perhaps we have only memories *of* childhood. These show us the first years of our lives not as they were, but as they appeared to us at later periods, when the memories were aroused. At these times of arousal the memories of childhood did not *emerge*, as one is accustomed to saying, but *were formed*, and a number of motives that were far removed from the aim of historical fidelity had a hand in influencing both the formation and the selection of the memories."[85]

These revisions of memory point to a form of loss or irretrievability of any true past. If, in the process of calling up a memory, it is transformed into something new by its reaction with the present moment, then the process of remembering, itself results in a form of erasure. It is only through representation that the unconscious can be experienced and this creates a new narrative that is an interpretation of the past mediated and transformed by the present.

In Proust, we can see the emergence of a repressed childhood memory in the passage where the narrator discovers by chance a copy of the book *François le Champi* by George Sands in the Guermantes' library, which his mother had read aloud to him many years before:

This was a very deeply buried impression that I had just encountered, one in which memories of childhood and family were tenderly intermingled and which I had not immediately recognised. My first reaction had been to ask myself, angrily, who this stranger was who was coming to trouble me. The stranger was none other than myself, the child I had been at that time, brought to life within me by the book, which knowing nothing of me except this child had

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[85] Ibid. P21.

instantly summoned him to its presence, wanting to be seen only by his eyes, to be loved only by his heart, to speak only to him.[86]

It is not the actual story in the book that is of consequence here, but the surrounding narrative about the circumstances in which the book was read. As Proust explains "a book which we read at a certain period does not merely remain for ever conjoined to what existed then around us; it remains also faithfully united to what we ourselves then were."[87] The rediscovery of the book conjures up the intimacy Marcel felt with his beloved mother, and the sole possession he had of her, during the one particularly treasured night when she read it aloud to him almost until morning. This was the first novel his mother had read aloud to him and it was where his love of literature was conceived. The passage describes the emergence of another self, a ghostly fragment, at first so deeply buried that it was unrecognizable to the present self. The object of the book stands in for these times, and, through the action of involuntary memory, is able to bring them back to life from the grave. Indeed, in the lead up to this passage, as Richard Terdiman notes, Proust invokes the idea of death: "(in a remarkably odd metaphor) he compares the experience to the shock felt by a child whose father's funeral is interrupted by the sound of a band striking up a "fanfare" outside the mortuary chamber – an interruption whose purpose turns out not to be to mock, as the son had feared, but rather to honor the deceased."[88] Whitehead suggests, in discussing Terdiman's writing on Proust, "This reawakening of the memory of Combray represents for Terdiman a 'final evocation of anguish', for it returns the narrator to the pain of the bedtime drama. This is clearly signalled by Proust's invocation, in his description of the memory, of the figure of the split self, which he deploys throughout

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[86] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Time Regained (Vol VI)*. Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P240.

[87] Ibid. P242.

[88] Terdiman, Richard. *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print. P232.

In Search for Lost Time at moments of acute pain or crisis."[89] So trauma, through the appearance of the split self, leads to the creation of two narratives: the story of the past being told to the narrator through his own eyes as a child, and the way in which he mediates this experience in the present moment within the *Search.* To Terdiman, such episodes of involuntary memory, or hypermnesia, as he refers to it, do not act in the celebratory way suggested by Proust, but instead only succeed in calling back the trauma more exactingly so as the pain is suffered again. Thus Proust is seen as screening off, or purposely forgetting, the more negative side of involuntary memory, as a form of defence against the pain it may inflict. We see here the double process of Proust's involuntary memory: it brings back the times that are most treasured and desired from the past, to be lived again with an overwhelming sense of euphoria, but in the process, this fleeting victory over time, exposes the narrator to the same trauma by which the memory was repressed in the first place, and reinforces the true material absence and loss of these times.

Burgin in his essay *The Remembered Film*, draws from Freud's idea of screen memories to make a direct comparison between the processes of memory and our experiencing of media images, pointing to a blurring of the distinctions between the memory of direct experience and that mediated through photography: "In its random juxtapositions of diverse elements across unrelated spatial and temporal locations, our everyday encounter with the environment of the media is the formal analogue of such "interior" processes as inner speech and involuntary association."[90]

He introduces the term "sequence-image" to describe the fragmentation of the remembered moving image into a form "of such brevity that… (he) might almost be describing a still image."[91] The nature and origin of such remembered images can be so vague as to make it unclear whether they

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[89] Whitehead, Anne. *Memory*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. Print. P112-3.
[90] Burgin, Victor. *The Remembered Film*. London: Reaktion, 2004. Print. P14.
[91] Ibid. P16.

were derived from a passage in life or film. "Mental images derived from films are as likely to occur in the form of involuntary associations, and are often provoked by external events."[92] It is this amalgam of direct conscious experience, dreams and media exposure that, when processed by the workings of the unconscious, constructs the latent sequence-images of memory that inhabit the archives of the psyche.

Burgin considers here the technologies of the present day in the way that Proust used those of his own age to consider their impact on everyday perception and the formation of memory. Although the latent image, in the form of the still photograph, may provide an important metaphor for the workings of memory in Proust, it is in the succession of images, recording movement through space, that many of his studies evolve. This slowing down of time, into a succession of frames, allows for an analysis of microscopic detail to be told from the changing viewpoints of the narrator. This form of narration relies on the perspective of the author's central character, Marcel, and it is his relative position in space, which determines the complexion of the narrative to be told.

There is an important distinction to be made here between Proust's involuntary memory, based on a chance encounter with objects and places from the past, and Burgin's sequence-images, that while being provoked by external events, are based on exposure to the media. As Martens suggests, "The media, by representing the event-to-be-remembered in a certain way, embed a considerable degree of intentionality and coding in the cue… Memories provoked by objects are… a much more private and personal affair."[93] If, as Freud believed, it is questionable whether we can retrieve any true memories of childhood, then in more recent times, the integration of what Martens terms "media objects," such as diaries, photographs, films and videos, into the equation,

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[92] Ibid. P17.
[93] Martens, Lorna. *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollection and Its Objects in Literary Modernism*. Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print. P204.

makes for an even greater sense of irretrievability of the past, and for personal experiences to be modified by the shared cultural memory of media representation. Indeed, in the same way that new encounters with places and objects of significance from our past may lead to revisions of the original impressions we hold in memory, exposure to media objects, brought about through the agency and interpretive perceptions of others, may also cause such revisions. The fleeting nature of media fragments, absorbed unthinkingly into consciousness, may unknowingly permeate into the same realm as those impressions we have experienced through our own direct perception; media narratives and personal narratives thus becoming entwined.

Disintegrating Narrative Fragments

Aside from the loss of personal narratives through processes of forgetting and displacement in the psyche, the material traces that reside in objects and places providing auxiliary aids to memory, are prone to physical deterioration and loss. From the moment of origin, objects start to deteriorate, as time begins to erode the unblemished condition of their inception. Freud was fascinated by archaeology, especially in the ethnographic mysteries to be revealed by ancient Egyptian and Roman ruins, and likened the processes of psychoanalysis to "an archaeologist's excavation of some dwelling-place that has been destroyed and buried,"[94] the analyst, like the archaeologist, then piecing together the fragments in an act or reconstruction.

> But just as the archaeologist builds up the walls of the building
> from the foundations that have remained standing, determines the
> number and position of the columns from depressions in the floor
> and reconstructs the mural decorations and paintings from the
> remains found in the débris, so does the analyst proceed when he

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[94] Freud, Sigmund. "Constructions in Analysis. 1937. Cited in Lewkowicz, Sergio, et al. *On Freud's "Constructions in Analysis"*. London: Karnac Books, 2011. Print. P11.

draws his inferences from the fragments of memories, from the associations and from the behaviour of the subject of the analysis. Both of them have an undisputed right to reconstruct by means of supplementing and combining the surviving remains.[95]

The photograph was used to document the treasured fragments from archaeological finds, and in Freud's time (1856 – 1939), through its reproduction in books, helped to fuel the fantasy of the Grand Tour and of possessing the actual artifacts. Freud's personal library (much of which is still in existence today) contained "an extensive collection of volumes on archaeology, and all aspects of the world of antiquity."[96] But aside from documenting such discoveries, the photograph was itself a form of trace, an object that offered evidence in the reconstruction of the past. "Photographs were latent (negatives) and manifest (prints) just as buried objects were latent, and excavated material manifest, in archaeology and the psychoanalytic process."[97] Photographs, having a relatively short lifespan compared to the ancient artifacts they displaced, were able to freeze the deterioration of the original artifact in time, while transferring that deterioration to themselves, in the new life of the photographic object.

Geoffrey Batchen reminds us that "memory is always in a state of ruin; to remember something is already to have ruined it, to have displaced it from its moment of origin."[98] He refers to Derrida's observation that "Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze."[99] Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart assert the materiality of the

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[95] Ibid. P11.
[96] Freud Museum London website: http://www.freud.org.uk/archive/library. Accessed 24/03/2013.
[97] Bergstein, Mary. *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art.* Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print. P274.
[98] Batchen, Geoffrey. *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance.* New York: Princetown Architectural Press; Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2004. Print. P78.
[99] Derrida, Jacques. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins.* Cited in ibid. P68.

photographic object, demonstrating a different way of considering the medium from traditional histories involving the connoisseurship of the fine print and the transparency of the medium as a window on the world. "Photographs are both images *and* physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience… they occupy spaces, move into different spaces, following lines of passage and usage that project them through the world."[100]

Photographs, both as original prints and in terms of their reproduction in books, possess a temporality that has often been overlooked. If one of the main impulses underlying the duplication of the original, in photographic form, is preservation from loss, then this is to forget that loss is inherent in the very process of photographic reproduction. There is firstly the loss of the aura, or presence, of the original.[101] In the presence of the photograph, we are always reminded that the original is absent. Then there is the introduction of the transformational aesthetics of photography that, not only reduce the original from three dimensions into the surface of the photograph, but also, due to properties such as framing, lighting and printing, transfigure the appearance of the original. Finally, there is the fact that the photographic object has a life of its own and can itself deteriorate, fade, or be destroyed and lost. If we consider the photograph in these more transient terms, then we may question the aptness of André Bazin's assertion that photography, in freeing "the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness,"[102] could inherit from them a mummy complex akin to the practice of embalming the dead.

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[100] Edwards, Elizabeth, and Janice Hart. *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print. P1.
[101] Aura is a term Walter Benjamin uses specifically in relation to the work of art in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, but I am using it here in the wider sense that the photograph can always be seen to highlight the lack of presence of the original.
[102] BAZIN, André. The Ontology of the Photographic Image. 1967. Cited in Trachtenberg, Alan Ed. *Classic Essays on Photography*. Leete's Island Books, 1980. Print. P240.

If the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation. The process might reveal that at the origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex. The religion of ancient Egypt, aimed against death, saw survival as depending on the continued existence of the corporeal body. Thus, by providing a defense against the passage of time it satisfied a basic psychological need in man, for death is but the victory of time.[103]

Carol Armstrong, in contrast, considers the materiality of the photograph in relation to its inclusion in books in the mid nineteenth century. By studying in detail the original editions of some of these early photographically illustrated books, she is able to identify the imperfections, individuation and impermanence in the nature of the printing technologies used.

Now, sitting in musty libraries, hushed rare book collections, or spotless study rooms, looking back through old books with photographs pasted into them, we frequently find those photographs spotted, stained, and faded with age, having lived lives like other natural things and on their way, dust to dust, to the grave, if not already in it…. True, permanence was always sought, right from the beginning; photographs were private monuments to the past, as Barthes reminds us. But they were peculiar paradoxical monuments, too, a bit like footprints, traces in the eroding sand. They were ruins of a sort, the natural remains of Nature's things. There was, I believe, a certain nineteenth-century sensitivity to that fact, not only to the alchemical arising of the photographic image… but also to its fundamental instability, its

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[103] Ibid. P237-8.

fragility, its fading and disappearance, and the potential for its
ghostly return to invisibility. [104]

While Armstrong pays homage to Barthes in *Scenes in a Library*, it is
perhaps most fitting to conclude this discussion of the materiality of the
photograph by looking at Barthes' references to the subject in *Camera
Lucida*, his most personal book about the nature of photography and loss.
While still in a state of mourning over the death of his mother, Barthes
attempts to "find" his mother by searching through old photographs of her.

> There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at
> these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp,
> gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the
> face I had loved. And I found it.
>
> The photograph was very old. The corners were blunted from
> having been pasted into an album, the sepia print had faded, and
> the picture just managed to show two children standing together at
> the end of a little wooden bridge in a glassed-in conservatory, what
> we called a Winter Garden in those days.[105]

In this one photograph, Barthes was re-united with his mother, and he
immediately likens it to Proust: "For once, photography gave me a
sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one
day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him
his grandmother's true face."[106] Barthes terms this property of the
photograph, the *punctum*: what the "photograph may contain that
engages and – Barthes's verbs – 'pricks' or 'wounds' or 'bruises' a
particular viewer's subjectivity in a way that makes the photograph in

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[104] Armstrong, Carol M. *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875*. Cambridge, Mass; London: October/ MIT, 1998. Print. P16.
[105] Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage, 2000. Print. P67.
[106] Ibid. P70.

question singularly arresting to him or her."[107] But as Michael Fried observes, this is not what Proust would have termed an involuntary memory, because this was a scene Barthes had never personally experienced (as it took place before his birth) and so it could not have been an event which he observed but had escaped his conscious attention, as it would have to have been for Proust's understanding of involuntary memory. Furthermore, this scene, since Barthes had never experienced it first hand, clearly relates to other memories he had of his mother, so must be a form of displaced or screen memory.

For Proust, photography provided an inspiring and effective metaphor for the processes and structure of memory, but he considered the photograph itself to be inadequate as a trigger for involuntary memory, believing its detached and mechanical nature to be inferior to certain chance encounters arising from the senses of smell, taste and body memory. But for Barthes, in this state of mourning, and in contrast to much of the thrust of his earlier writings, he finds the "truth" of the mother he had loved, in a single, particular photograph.

However, this truth is short lived; some pages on in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes contemplates the materiality of the photograph and the mortality of this medium resigned to the endeavour of keeping memory alive.

> The only way I can transform the Photograph is into refuse: either the drawer or the wastebasket. Not only does it commonly have the fate of paper (perishable), but even if it is attached to more lasting supports, it is still mortal: like a living organism, it is born on the level of the sprouting silver grains, it flourishes a moment, then ages… Attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away.[108]

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[107] Fried, Michael. "Barthes's Punctum". Batchen, Geoffrey (Ed). *Photography Degree Zero*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 2009. Print. P141.
[108] Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage, 2000. Print. P93.

But this photographic object, this image through which Barthes finds his mother, turns out to offer a very fleeting reunion. As Barthes looks back on this moment, some pages on in the book, the door of this time machine of photography closes, the imaginings are over, and all we are left with is the deteriorating paper likeness that will itself, in time, turn to dust.

> To scrutinize means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side… Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image for the sake of its substance; and if I do not enlarge, if I content myself with scrutinizing, I obtain this sole knowledge, long since possessed at a glance: that this indeed has been: the turn of the screw had produced nothing. In front of the Winter Garden Photograph I am a bad dreamer who vainly holds out his arms towards the possession of the image.[109]

We come back to this dual characteristic of the photographic medium, which Edwards and Hart assert, of photographs being both "images *and* physical objects."

The photograph, which purports to capture and store memories, turns out simply to transform and prolong them, before succumbing, to the ultimate fate of forgetting and erasure. If memory can only be revived in the form of an image, then forgetting and erasure are linked to the notion of invisibility. However, Freud's idea of the unconscious, and Proust's notion of involuntary memory, blur the distinction between remembering and forgetting, because vast numbers of memories, which are stored in the depths of the unconscious, remain invisible to consciousness, making it difficult to know whether memories have truly been erased or are stored in a latent form awaiting potential development and re-emergence into

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[109] Ibid. P100.

consciousness.

The photographic metaphor leads to the conclusion that erasure and loss of memory can only take place when latent images are never developed into visibility, or that the developed physical photograph fades or disintegrates to the point of invisibility. There is also the case where the photograph is destroyed or thrown away, rendering it invisible, or never taken in the first place, reminding us that majority of experience is lost. Ultimately, using the metaphor of photography to examine memory leads us to consider it in a particular way that relates to the properties of the medium, and it is this that defines the character and limits of such a vision.

(v) A Photographic Aesthetics of Memory

Memory and Imagination

At the start of this chapter I considered how the origins of Western thought saw ideas of remembering and forgetting as analogous to the imprint and erasure of marks on a wax tablet. Ricoeur observes: "It does appear that the return of a memory can only take place in the mode of becoming-an-image,"[110] and it is here, with the idea of the eikon, the introduction of a memory-image that stands in for the presence of the absent, that uncertainty is introduced in distinguishing the real from fantasy, memory from imagination. Ricoeur traces this complex distinction, starting off with the ancient Greeks, then taking us through a line of thinkers, including Bergson who asserts:

> To *imagine* is not to *remember*. No doubt a recollection, as it
> becomes actual, tends to live in an image; but the converse is not
> true, and the image, pure and simple, will not be referred to the

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[110] Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Pellauer, Kathleen Blamey/ David. Chicago/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print. P7.

past unless, indeed, it was in the past that I sought it, thus following the continuous progress which brought it from darkness to light.[111]

Ricoeur identifies a similar position in Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Psychology of the Imagination*, from which he quotes: "there is… an essential difference between the theme of a recollection and that of an image. If I recall an incident of my past life I do not imagine it, I *recall* it."[112] Finally Ricoeur concludes his examination of the differentiation of memory and imagination with the provisional response that:

> The theory of memory passes on to the theory of history. This is the question of the reliability of memory and, in this sense, of its truth. This question stood in the background of our entire investigation concerning the differential feature that separates memory from imagination. At the end of our investigation, and in spite of the traps that imagination lays for memory, it can be affirmed that a specific search for truth is implied in the intending of the past "thing," of *what* was formerly seen, heard, experienced, learned. This search for truth determines memory as a cognitive issue. More precisely, in the moment of recognition, in which the effort of recollection is completed, this search for truth declares itself.[113]

In contrast to Ricoeur's differentiation between memory and imagination, Freud's ideas on repression and the revisions of memory, point to a form of loss or irretrievability of any true past. The distinction between memory and imagination becomes unclear. As unconscious experience is always

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[111] Ibid. P52. Note: I have used Ricoeur's revised translation of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* here because of his choice of the words 'to imagine' rather than 'to picture', at the start of the quotation, which corresponds more appropriately with Ricoeur's and my own choice of terminology.
[112] Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Psychology of the Imagination.* Cited in ibid. P53.
[113] Ibid. P54-55.

mediated through the process of representation, and thus transformed by the fantasies and desires of the present, a new narrative is created removing the possibility of any true fidelity to the past. Burgin's sequence-images suggest, further to this, that in recent times, our everyday exposure to media images evoke involuntary associations rendering it unclear whether our memories were derived from a passage in life or from film.

As I have shown, the difficulty concerning the differentiation of memory from imagination is a long-standing one in Western thought. While Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, based on his conception of involuntary memory, stands as one of the great literary endeavours to regain the *truth* of the *past*, and to give purpose to life, even here the work is presented as an autobiographical *fiction* where the lines are blurred between reality and fantasy. George Painter, in his highly detailed biography of Proust, says that, "As he grew older, his memories of Illiers became ever more vivid and more vague, like the landscape of a dream. Geography changed, space was altered by time. In what street was the house of Aunt Elisabeth, at which end of Illiers was the Mall?"[114] The complex psychic structure of memory defies any clear or definite distinction between reality and imagination. In the reproduction of the past, fantasy and forgetting prevent any pure truth from emerging, and memories are seen to be subjective constructs, merging conscious and unconscious content to form *images* of what has been.

The Process of Photography as a Metaphor for Memory

In the introduction to his book *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Martin Jay demonstrates how embedded visual metaphors are in our everyday use of language and

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[114] Painter, George D. *Marcel Proust: A Biography (Vol I)*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1959. Print. P39.

points to a complex mirroring between perception and language.[115] If we take Ricoeur's view that we remember only as images, then it is unsurprising that visual, and more particularly photographic, metaphors, have had such a significant impact on writing concerning memory from the nineteenth century onwards. The processes and technology of photography have not only provided productive metaphors for the processes of memory, but have become one of the cultural tropes by which to explore it.

Soon after its invention, photographic technology replaced the camera obscura in providing a central metaphor for the processes of perception. As Crary observes, "for over two hundred years it (the camera obscura) subsisted as a philosophical metaphor, a model in the science of optics, and was also a technical apparatus used in a large range of cultural activities."[116] The characteristics of the camera obscura promoted the idea of an exterior world and an interior representation, the observer being enclosed in a darkened chamber, and the object of perception existing outside, projected in the form of an image onto the interior space. This was not a device that encouraged the mobilization of perception. Early manifestations of this apparatus were constructed in the form of rooms, determining a fixed position from which the world was seen. However, the most significant thing it lacked, was the mechanization of reproduction. "The movement and temporality so evident in the camera obscura were always prior to the act of representation; movement and time could be seen and experienced, but never represented."[117]

Photography, in contrast, enabled the production of an automated record of the subject of its perception. In so doing it eclipsed the role of the

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[115] Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994. Print. P1-2.
[116] Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1992. Print. P29. This refers to the period from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s.
[117] Ibid. P34.

camera obscura to become the dominant model for visual perception in the machine age of modernity. The fixing of the photographic image created a means of turning an impermanent optical perception of the world into a process for the production of a memory.

When Bergson describes perception as, "a kind of photographic view of things,"[118] this represents a way of thinking that can be traced through much writing from the nineteenth century up to the present day. Freud and Proust each use images and metaphors drawn from the processes of photography to explore their theories on the structure of perception and memory. While Freud's most significant metaphor for memory may be seen as the Mystic Writing-Pad, he turns to the development of the photographic negative, and its subsequent printing, to help describe the processes of making unconscious memories visible in consciousness, making analogous the notion of latency in both photography and psychoanalysis. In *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography and the History of Art*, Bergstein gives a detailed account of Freud's fascination with photography. She describes photographs in Freud's time as being:

> still "invisible" to the extent that they seemed to communicate in a direct documentary style, without the intervening vagaries of representation. Authorship more or less vanished under the searching gaze of the beholder. Photographs… were apprehended, like dream images, as an exquisite visual residue, as traces "taken" from the continuum of lived experience. In a metaphoric sense, photographic images could be received as involuntary mirror images, or memories.[119]

Freud's photographic metaphors accept photography as comparable to memory and do not form a critique of its weaknesses or inadequacies. As

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[118] Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004. Print. P31.
[119] Bergstein, Mary. *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art.* Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010. Print. P15.

Bergstein observes, "Freud's theoretical work, which was so frequently visual in its language, was closely allied with the photographic culture that prevailed across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[120] Proust in contrast returns repeatedly to metaphors of photography to express the alienating detachment of experience and the unfulfillment of memory. He describes the scene as Marcel arrives to visit his beloved grandmother, she being unaware of his presence:

> Of myself – thanks to the privilege which does not last but which gives one, during the brief moment of return, the faculty of being suddenly the spectator of one's own absence – there was present only the witness, the observer, in travelling coat and hat, the stranger who does not belong in the house, the photographer who has called to take a photograph of places which one will never see again. The process that automatically occurred in my eyes when I caught sight of my grandmother was indeed a photograph. We never see the people who are dear to us save in the animated system, the perpetual motion of our incessant love for them, which, before allowing the images that their faces present to reach us, seizes them in its vortex and flings them back upon the idea we have always had of them, makes them adhere to it, coincide with it… I saw, sitting on the sofa beneath the lamp, red-faced, heavy and vulgar, sick, day-dreaming, letting her slightly crazed eyes wander over a book, an overburdened old woman whom I did not know.[121]

The traumatic nature of Marcel's revelation, regarding the declining state of his beloved grandmother, is relayed to him as an image. The detachment of the photographic process enables the scene to take place through the dispassionate eyes of a stranger, ultimately turning his

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[120] Ibid. P19-20.
[121] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: The Guermantes Way (Vol III).* Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P155-156.

grandmother into an unflattering photograph, by which she will be remembered. The event becomes that of a photograph; thus the photographic process provides a means by which to describe and analyse the alienating characteristics of perception, and, by extension, the way in which memory is formed through a photographic view of things. Siegfried Kracauer gives the following account of the scene:

> Proust starts from the premise that love blinds us to the changes which the beloved object is undergoing in the course of time. It is therefore logical that he should emphasize emotional detachment as the photographer's foremost virtue. He drives home this point by comparing the photographer with the witness, the observer, the stranger – three types supposed not to be entangled in the events they happen to watch. They may perceive anything because nothing they see is pregnant with memories that would captivate them and thus limit their vision. The ideal photographer is the opposite of the unseeing lover. He resembles the indiscriminating mirror; he is identical with the camera lens. Photography, Proust has it, is the product of complete alienation.[122]

When Marcel finally comes to kiss Albertine, it is a photographic metaphor that provides the way of portraying this experience, and the memories it evokes:

> Apart from the most recent applications of photography – which huddle at the foot of a cathedral all the houses that so often, from close to, appeared to us to reach almost to the height of the towers… I can think of nothing that can to so great a degree as a kiss evoke out of what we believed to be a thing with one definite aspect the hundred other things which it may equally well be, since each is related to a no less legitimate perspective. In short, just as

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[122] Kracauer, Siegfried. "Photography". Trachtenberg, Alan Ed. *Classic Essays on Photography*. Leete's Island Books, 1980. Print. P258-9.

at Balbec Albertine had often appeared different to me, so now –
as if, prodigiously accelerating the speed of the changes of
perspective and changes of colouring which a person presents to
us in the course of our various encounters, I had sought to contain
them all in the space of a few seconds so as to reproduce
experimentally the phenomenon which diversifies the individuality
of a fellow creature, and draw out one from another, like a nest of
boxes, all the possibilities it contains – so now, during the brief
journey of my lips towards her cheek, it was ten Albertines that I
saw; this one girl being like a many-headed goddess, the head I
had seen last, when I tried to approach it, gave way to another. At
least so long as I had not touched that head I could still see it, and
a faint perfume came to me from it. But alas – for in this matter of
kissing our nostrils and eyes are ill-placed as our lips are ill-made
– suddenly my eyes ceased to see, then my nose, crushed by the
collision, no longer perceived any odour, and, without thereby
gaining any clearer idea of the taste of the rose of my desire, I
learned, from these obnoxious signs, that at last I was in the act of
kissing Albertine's cheek.[123]

The multiple perspectives provided by the process of photography
become like the multiple mental images of a person that constitute our
memory of them, and thereby, their identity. As photography can reveal
new perspectives in the relationship of apparent scale and proximity
between buildings, so the metaphor of photography can be used to
traverse the psychological space of perception and memory that
separates people. The space between Marcel and Albertine, the "space
of a few seconds," becomes the space of memory, where perceptions in
the present moment are relentlessly modified by the process of motion,
by the "snapshots" of memory that flash up so long as they as they do not
make contact. This motion, as we have already seen in Proust's
description of his railway journey to Balbec, is once again recorded as if

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[123] Ibid. P420-421.

through the lens of a camera. Mieke Bal likens the visual effect in the passage to that of using a zoom lens. He observes:

> Thus photography is capable of transforming "reality", and close-up vision, far from closing the gap between the image and the focalizer's subjectivity, has rather the effect of widening it. The estrangement or alienation effect, which is suggested by phrases such as "in changing position," "a different pair of cheeks," "as though through a magnifying glass," "modified," is precisely the photographic effect achieved by a zoom lens.[124]

Proust uses the metaphor of photography to point to the separation of consciousness from experience and the inadequacy of memory to reveal truth. Poulet describes this "defeat of experience":

> Now we see that in the very act by which beings are brought together, they are divided in two; they are increased tenfold; they produce a great variety of appearances, from the one to the other of which the mind is ceaselessly thrown back. In the very measure by which beings reveal the inexhaustible diversity of the aspects within them, they escape all observation. The more they reveal themselves, the more completely they disappear. Albertine multiplied tenfold is already Albertine vanished. The true image is lost in the midst of the crowd of masks. Is there even a true image?[125]

Like photography, which has multiplied inconceivably the number of images we possess of the past, memory is seen to produce a multiplicity of images, which, rather than revealing one true aspect, present an

[124] Bal, Mieke. *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997. Print. P202-203.
[125] Poulet, Georges. *Proustian Space*. Trans. Coleman, Elliott. Baltimore/ London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. Print. P87.

overwhelming array of resemblances where truth and artifice become indistinguishable.

The Materiality of the Photograph as a Metaphor for Memory

The materiality of the photograph, both in terms of its production, function and deterioration, is bound into ideas of memory and forgetting through deeply embedded metaphorical tropes. If we consider Albertine's disappearance being due to the overwhelming quantity of equally legitimate views that make up her individual existence, each one consisting of a photograph, drawn out "one from another" from "a nest of boxes," then the process of memory can be seen to resemble the production, use and archiving of photographs. The difficulty is that of an excess in the production of images, each providing its own perspective, that leads to a problem in the authentication of truth.

If we consider this scene again, the act of intimacy portrayed can also be read as a form of scientific experiment, in which Marcel uses the past data of the "various encounters" with Albertine in order to construct and possess a model of her true identity through the use of photography. In his laboratory of the psyche, which doubles as a photographic studio and photographic archive, he seeks to contain all the various encounters, "all in the space of a few seconds so as to reproduce experimentally the phenomenon which diversifies the individuality of a fellow creature." Again, like in the "interior darkroom" of his bedroom, which I discussed earlier, where he develops the negatives of his "beloved's presence," he turns to photography in his desire to possess Albertine. As Sontag suggests, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed."[126] Although the psyche stores memory in the form of images, they have no tangible physical actuality. The materiality of photography gives memory a form of empirical reality that can be possessed.

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[126] Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Aylesbury: Penguin, 1979. Print. P4.

The inception of photography came about as the result of the profound desire to fix the image of the camera obscura to produce a physical record of perception. The craving for a material record of appearances is thus engrained in the raison d'être of photography. The Daguerreotype was often referred to as a "mirror with a memory", while the first commercially printed book of photographs, published by William Henry Fox Talbot, was called *The Pencil of Nature*. Photography was seen as an unmediated empirical record of events and a material repository of memory.

Because of the intangible and abstract quality of the psyche, it has always proven difficult to represent without the use of metaphor. The photograph objectifies memory, providing a way of possessing it in a material form, allowing us to imagine it and create metaphors for its structure, as if it was a physical thing. This has resulted in the photograph becoming a dominant aesthetic model for imagining the appearance and sensation of memory. The life of the photograph, from inception to erasure, has become a metaphor for the life of memory. As we have seen, influential thinkers such as Barthes, Bergson, Freud and Proust have used photographic metaphors in order describe the processes of memory. Indeed this heritage of the objectification of memory can be traced back to Plato's wax tablet. Ultimately, in order to imagine and grasp the appearance and sensation of memory, we have to transform it into an *image* that takes on a *material form*.

Chapter 2: Practices of Remembrance and Forgetting

(i) The Importance of Remembrance and Forgetting in Photographic Practice

Debates on Photography, Remembrance and Forgetting

The current interest within photography concerning the representation of memory should be seen in the context of wider cultural debates, such as those proposed by Whitehead, Huyssen and Lowenthal in my introduction. But there is also something specific to the medium of photography linking it to notions of memory. In 2010, *Photographies* journal ran a special issue titled *Photography, Archive and Memory*, which highlighted some of the current theoretical debates. The editorial introduction stated:

> Photography, archive and memory are intimately connected. Memory and photography both involve the process of recording images that may be used to recall the past. Memory itself is often characterized as an archive: a store house of things, meanings and images. This gives the impression that one can appeal to memory in order to recover the past. Memory, however, does not take material or physical form in the way that photographs and archives usually do. It is not a photograph or a series of images to be gazed upon and it is not a library or database where records might be retrieved. Rather, memory, as we prefer to see it here, *is* mediation. It is the set of processes through which the past comes to us, but not just the uninterrupted transit of the past to the present. Memory is, in a sense, designed and shaped by the laws and practices of the present, which provide the structures for

remembrance to take place.[127]

As I have shown, photography has been associated with ideas of memory from its inception, and its function as a mnemonic aid and metaphor are now firmly embedded in our cultural understanding of the structure and processes of memory. To take up on the last point in the introduction to *Photographies*, if memory is "designed and shaped by the laws and practices of the present," then, the current period of rapid technological and social change, has become one in which the understanding of the memory is not static, but being constantly reinterpreted in line with the present. In Robert Frank's film *Home Improvements* (1985), he states, "I am always looking outside, trying to look inside, trying to say something that is true. But maybe nothing is really true except what's out there and what's out there is constantly changing."[128] In the traumatic flux of modern life, memory becomes a way of trying to understand and reassure ourselves about the present, as Whitehead says, "to anchor ourselves in more extended structures of temporality." Photography acts as a machine for the production of appearances that create a simultaneous sense of both proximity to, and absence of, the past. It is this paradoxical relationship that has formed an underlying theme in much contemporary photographic practice dealing with ideas of remembrance and forgetting.

(ii) The Practices of Robert Frank, Ori Gersht and J H Engström

Three artists in particular have dealt with ideas of photography in relation to the bleaching out and disintegration of memory - ideas which underpin

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[127] Cross, Karen and Peck, Julia (2010) 'Editorial: Special Issue on Photography, Archive and Memory', *Photographies*, 3: 2. Print. P127.

[128] Frank, Robert. *Home Improvements.* Cited in Sarah Greenough. "Blowing Down Bleecker Street: Destroying the Americans". Greenough, Sarah, and Stuart Alexander. *Looking In: Robert Frank's the Americans*. Washington, [D.C.]: National Gallery of Art in association with Steidl; London: Thames & Hudson [distributor], 2009. Print. P323.

the basis of my own practice. Robert Frank and J H Engström have produced highly personal bodies of work that explore the aesthetics of memory so as to examine their own past and its representability through photography. While Gersht's work examines the limits of photographic technology in perceiving the world and its inability to reveal the past. All employ forms of manipulation of the photographic process so as to foreground the temporality and physical deterioration of the photographic print, pointing to parallels between the psychic structures of photography and memory. Photography thus functions as both a prompt for remembering past experience and as a visualization of the psychic process of that recognition, producing a material manifestation of the image of memory.

Robert Frank: Fragments of Loss

I will focus on Frank's later work, from the early 1970s onwards, which takes the form of an introspective examination of his personal life, concentrating mainly on his relationships with his daughter Andrea and son Pablo (both of whom died tragically), and his wife June Leaf and various of his friends. The incorporation of existing archive material from his earlier stills and films, combined with the overlaying of text, immediately establishes a sense in which he is interrogating the past in order to find meaning. For Frank, perception and memory are not fixed, the past is in constant motion because it is perceived and continually reinterpreted through the present, and the present, "what is out there," never stands still.

His book *The Lines of My Hand* proved to be pivotal in determining the direction of Frank's later work. It set in motion his exploration of photography as a means of revealing an aesthetic structure of memory that blurred the boundaries between the still and the moving image. As Sarah Greenough observes, "Like Roland Barthes in his seminal study on the nature of photography, *Camera Lucida*, Frank continued to explore

the relationship between photography and memory and between the obvious symbolic meaning of a photograph and its personal significance to him and his family."[129]

The strategies Frank employs in the manipulation of his images are largely destructive ones, using scraps and fragments of recollection to point to the disintegration, disunion and incompleteness of memory. The death of his daughter provides a recurring theme in which scenes are staged and archive material is inserted to produce an amalgam of documentary and fabricated fiction. The psychic processes of memory are revealed through the physical properties of the photographic print. Thus the material processes undertaken in the production of the work provide a fundamental link to many of the established cultural tropes I have already explored relating ideas of memory to ideas of photography.

Ideas of the imprint and erasure of memory play a significant role in Frank's photographic methodology. He combines negatives by printing two or more together in the darkroom onto a single sheet of photographic paper, then inscribing his narrative by scratching words into the emulsion of the negative or painted them onto the surface of the prints in a frenetic and irreverent fashion, as in *Sick of Goodby's*, 1978 (figure 1). Like a wax tablet with overlaid impressions, some of which are clear, others partly effaced, the surface of Frank's prints present multiple layers and register marks resulting from different modes of inscription. The layers of the image are analogous to layers of memory, and together they create juxtapositions that refer to anxieties, fears and hopes emerging from the unconscious. Like the repressed images Freud describes as residing in the recesses of the unconscious mind, Frank's images combine different times and places to produce ambiguous and often disturbing overall impressions of the past.

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[129] Ibid. P320.

As Doane indicates, Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad was likely to receive not just writing but a range of different marks and impressions. Like memory, Frank's Polaroid images comprise a range of imperfectly registered impressions, including a degree of damage caused by his rough handling of a medium, where processing marks and scratches are easily introduced through its inherent fragility. Philip Brookman describes Frank's process:

> The Polaroid instant prints were used to make handcrafted maquettes for new work. Sometimes they were pasted on boards and sometimes combined in notebooks. Also to be had from this distinctive brand of commercial film were the negatives that developed with the prints, which Frank then handworked and printed together in carefully edited sequences on large sheets of photographic paper.[130]

A sense of ruination and decay in the materiality of the photographic object are intrinsic in the process of its creation. The chemical running, smudging and scratching of the emulsion, that are so evident in these photographs, point to a sense of instability and damaged beauty analogous to the ravages of time and eventual erasure of memory. Like eroding ruins, the material nature and substance of Frank's photographs, and the fragility of the memories they preserve, is revealed in the disfigurement of their surface; the occasional blurs of ink or paint, rendering memory illegible beyond the point of recognition. These works acknowledge a desire to forget the past just as much as a desire to remember it.

Frank's use of language is direct and acts like the use of narrative in his films to overlay interior thoughts or psychological anxieties onto the appearance of what he sees. As W. S. Di Piero remarks, "The picture

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[130] Brookman, Philip. "The Silence of Recognition: Exhibiting Robert Frank's Americans". Ibid. P328.

registers what is outside, the stylus records what is inside,"[131] going on to observe that "In the later pictures Frank consciously lays into the grain of the image his own frantic, intimate declarations."[132] These declarations add a spontaneous, yet still contemplative and often melancholy, "voice" to the photographs, like a form of Freudian free association or stream-of-consciousness writing. The words, as Brookman puts it, allow Frank to "merge(s) his memories, which are often disturbing, with his perceptions of the present."[133] This results in a set of displaced fictions, like half remembered fragments, or screen memories stemming from the unconscious. Brookman observes, "Often shooting into mirrors, frames, windows, or open landscapes, and writing his thoughts directly on his negatives or prints, Frank had found a new way to combine his pictures in montage like narratives to express fragments of ideas that were layered together like images in dreams."[134] Frank's symbolism in his use of mise-en-scène combines with his metaphoric use of photographic processes to create a visual aesthetic of remembrance and forgetting by which to interrogate the past from the ever-moving vantage point of the present.

A Memorial to Andrea

Like the persona of Albertine presented by Proust, Frank assembles the remembered fragments that form the image of his daughter Andrea. Two collages: *Andrea*, 1975 and *Andrea, Mabou*, 1977, effectively demonstrate Frank's use of photography to visualize the aesthetic processes of memory.

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[131] Di Piero, W.S. "Hold Still- Keep Going: The Later Photographs". Frank, Robert, et al. *Moving Out.* New York: National Gallery of Art, Washington/ Scalo, 1994. Print. P273-4.
[132] Ibid. P275.
[133] Brookman, Philip. "Windows on Another Time: Issues of Autobiography." Ibid. P142.
[134] Brookman, Philip. "The Silence of Recognition: Exhibiting Robert Frank's Americans". Greenough, Sarah, and Stuart Alexander. *Looking In: Robert Frank's the Americans.* Washington, [D.C.]: National Gallery of Art in association with Steidl; London: Thames & Hudson [distributor], 2009. Print. P328.

Andrea, 1975

Unlike his earlier photographs from the period of *The Americans*, Frank
no longer tries to sum things up in a single image. He uses a Proust-like
juxtaposition of fragmented images from different perspectives, over time,
in order to present some sort of truth. Thus his daughter's memory is
projected spatially, represented through a collage of postcard-like
fragments in *Andrea*, 1975 (figure 2). In the first image, his daughter is
depicted smiling, presumably how he would like to remember her. The
next image is a mountainous snowy landscape, with hand written text "for
my daughter Andrea who died in an airplane crash at TICAL in
Guatemala on Dec 23 last year. She was 21 years and she lived in this
house and I think of Andrea every DAY." Then there are two blank
images, painted over with what appears to be white paint with slight greys
and browns rubbed in, giving a time worn effect. These appear to
represent erased memories and time that is missing. Next there are two
images of Frank's house in Nova Scotia, where his daughter lived, and
one of the sea below. The images of the house have what appears to be
an incomplete fragment of a diary entry written across them, with some of
the words and letters obscured. These images are again separated by
further blank images, and are partly erased by paint, giving the
impression of indistinct memories. The whole set of photographs is
mounted onto what appears to be torn paper or card, again painted over,
as if worn away by time. The use of paint, especially in the way it is
added to the surface of the actual photographs, also gives a more
fictional quality to the narrative; the photographs are not only obscured by
the paint, their claim to objectivity is also altered and fictionalized by the
paint's interaction with their surface.

Andrea, *1975*, is a memorial to Frank's daughter, but it can also be seen
as a visualization of memory itself. If we consider it in terms of the wax
tablet and the Mystic Writing-Pad, it refers to ideas of imprint and erasure,
combining memory as writing, with memory as image. The backing board
and blank spaces, where photographs appear to have been painted over,
refer to the signs of previous use, like past traces in wax that have been

erased. While in Proustian terms, it presents the memory of a person's identity from multiple perspectives, looking back over time, while also presenting it as fragmented and incomplete. It portrays the memory of his daughter as a series of snapshots emerging from the unconscious, in a state of only partial visibility. But what is so clearly evident about *Andrea, 1975*, is the quality of impermanence and ruin in the materiality of this narrative about loss: the last disfigured fragments echoing the transience of the life they depict.

Andrea, Mabou, 1977

Again using the backdrop of the sea, *Andrea, Mabou*, 1977 (figure 3), consists of four combined Polaroid enlargements representing the shifting landscape of memory. The sea is frozen over in the first image and the word Andrea is just legible, scratched into the surface of the negative. A mosaic of cracked ice stretches out to sea like the scattered fragments of Andrea's memory suspended in psychic space. The next shows an ethereal multiple exposure where the ice is now melting to form a transitional space. In the third, the mood has changed again; the sky is now dark and an indecipherable wooden sculpture stands like a monument in the foreground. The last image shows a friend holding up an old framed painting of a sailing boat out at sea. The work is like a montage of memory, with the sailing boat offering a symbolic mode of transportation into the past. The liminal space depicted, on the edge of land and sea, contrasts the solidity of home (outside Frank's house in Mabou) with the infinite unknowable expanse of the sea beyond. This conception of the sea as a metaphoric space of the psyche is reinforced by the text used to accompany *End of Dream*, 1992 (figure 4) in his book *Moving Out*, in which he states: "Every year the ice melts, the winds and tides take the broken pieces out to sea. It is also the portrait of a man waiting for another spring another spring another vision… another dream…"[135] In *Andrea, Mabou*, 1977, his daughter's memory is projected onto the unapproachable space of the sea, thus the sea is used, in

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[135] Frank, Robert, et al. *Moving Out.* New York: National Gallery of Art, Washington/ Scalo, 1994. Print. P266.

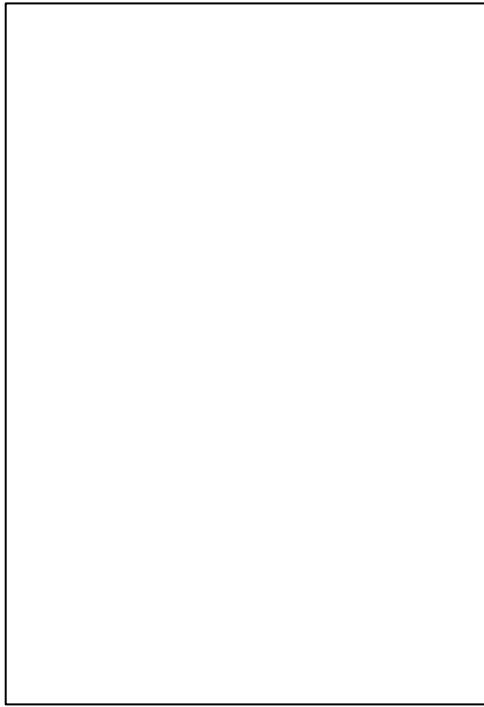combination with photography, to provide an aesthetic representation of memory.

Figure 1: Robert Frank, *Sick of Goodby's*, 1978 (Removed due to copyright)

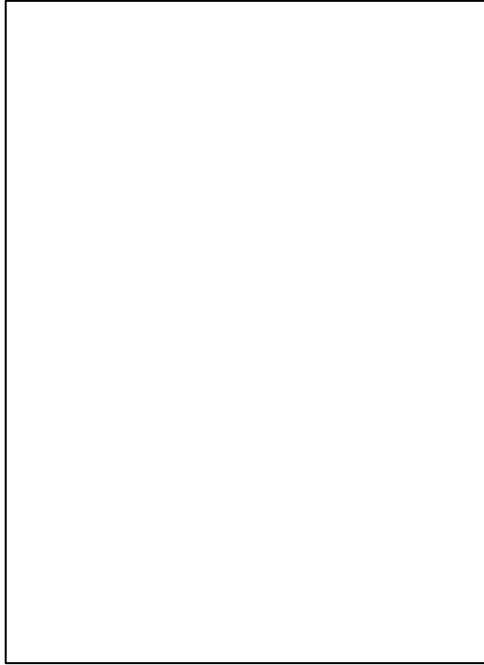Figure 2: Robert Frank, *Andrea*, 1975 (Removed due to copyright)

Figure 3: Robert Frank, *Andrea, Mabou*, 1977 (Removed due to copyright)
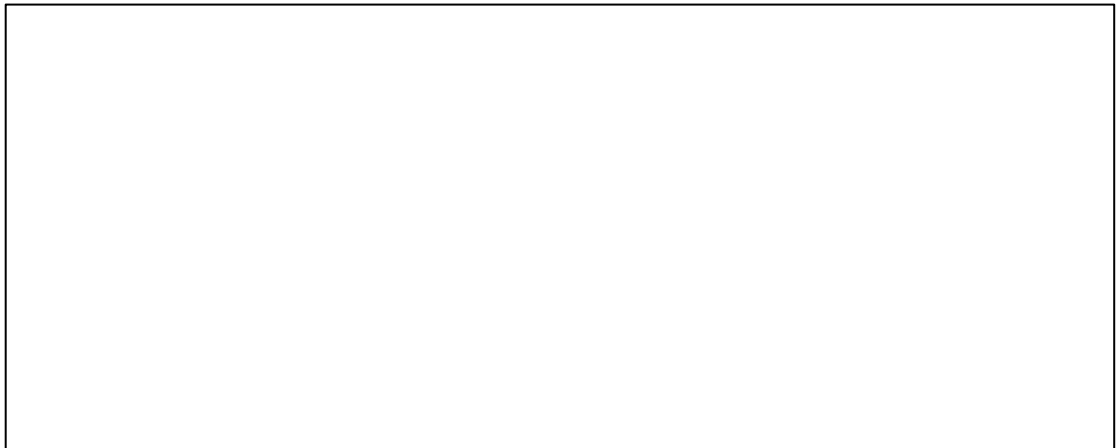
Figure 4: Robert Frank, *End of Dream*, 1992 (Removed due to copyright)

The Bleaching Out of Memory: Ori Gersht and J H Engström

Ori Gersht

Since the 1990s Gersht has produced a varied range of work within the genres of landscape and still life. One of the themes Gersht explores repeatedly is to do with the limits of photographic technology in perceiving the world. While photography is commonly celebrated for its ability to preserve the past, Gersht considers the degree to which the past remains

inaccessible to the camera. This is often expressed through technical experimentation at the limits of what photographic technology is able to record, particularly in his later work in terms of digital technology. The aspect of his work I will focus on here is to do with his use of extreme over exposure and the ability of the film to still register an image under these conditions. A second, and closely related concern, is to do with the landscape as a witness to history and photography's inability to record events after they have passed, due to its reliance on objects and events to be present in front of the lens at the moment of exposure. This reliance on the physical presence of the subject in order to make a photograph is in stark contrast to artistic mediums such as literature or painting, where the subject can be depicted from the imagination. Gersht's work, while referring to the process of memory, is largely to do with the process of forgetting through the fading and erasure of traces.

His work *Ghost* consists of a series of images of ancient olive trees, with their colour washed out and distorted through the use of extreme over exposure of the negative (figures 5 & 6). As Hilarie M. Sheets writes in the New York Times:

> He first made prolonged exposures in 2003, photographing ancient olive trees in Palestinian villages in Israel. The intense midday light seared the film, and from his blackened negatives Mr. Gersht coaxed haunting, otherworldly prints of the gnarled trees. "The trees were there before the Ottoman occupation and British Mandate and before the current conflict and somehow retain within them this memory," he said. He compared the accumulation of light over time on the film, which continually eroded the clarity of the images, to the idea of forgetting.[136]

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[136] Sheets, Hilarie M. "Beauty, Tender and Fleeting, Amid History's Ire". *The New York Times.* Published: August 23, 2012. *http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/26/arts/design/ori-gersht-history-repeating-at-museum-of-fine-arts-in-boston.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.* Accessed 1/4/2013.

The duration of time these trees have witnessed is evidenced by the distortions and gnarling of their trunks, but the history they have seen is invisible to the camera. The fog of over exposure registers an excess of time, the bleaching out of the film echoing the bleaching out of memory witnessed by the landscape. The sense of permanence and stability of the trees is rendered temporal and unstable by the process of photography. The trees become *ghostly* in appearance, making reference to the unseen past that haunts them. In a reversal of the role of photography as preserving the past, Gersht's ghostly fog emphasises a sense of transience and forgetting inherent in the materiality of the photograph, whose lifespan is substantially shorter than the scene it depicts. Neither the landscape nor the photograph is able to reveal the accumulation of past time.
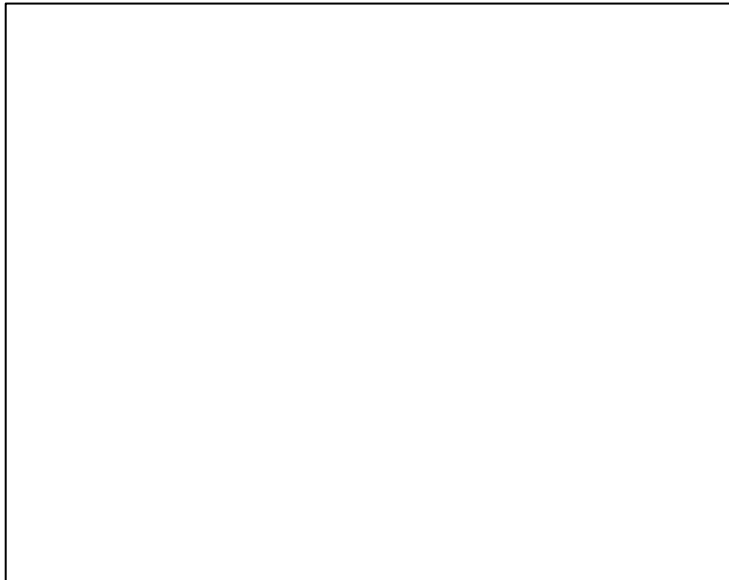
Figure 5: Ori Gersht, *Ghost, Olive 4*, 2004 (Removed due to copyright)
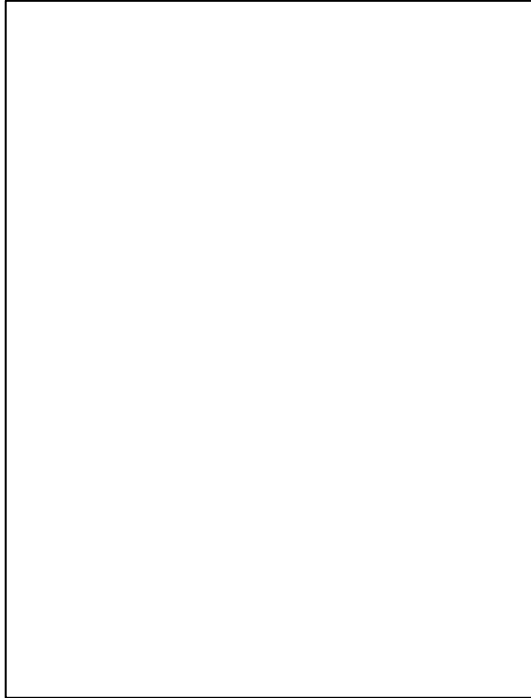
Figure 6: Ori Gersht, *Ghost, Olive 17*, 2007 (Removed due to copyright)

White Noise, made in Poland between 1999 and 2000 (figures 7 & 8) was taken through the window of a moving train, retracing the journey made many years before by prisoners of the Nazis on their way from Krakow to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. As Joanna Lowry explains:

> In the series *White Noise* Gersht places his camera waist-high on a tripod, he shoots constantly through the window aware that the speed of the train means he can never record the images he sees. He is aware that he is not only photographing a place, but also a history. The speed of the train, and indeed the entire modern bureaucratic and technological system of the railway network, is also part of the photograph… When the photographs are developed the dark Eastern European forests have dissolved into a blur of memory; snowy field render the images almost completely white. The evanescence of speed, the sharp zip of the winter air slicing past the train window, the cold glare of the reflected snow have all been strangely frozen in time; what was once all

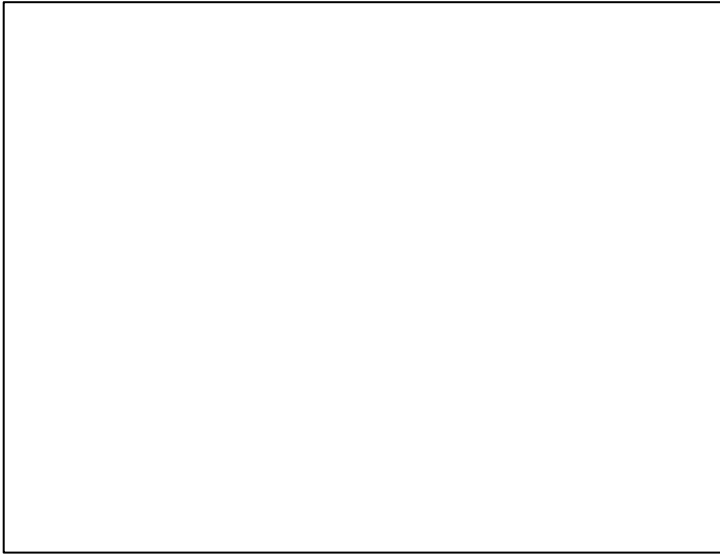movement has become quite still, material, congealed.[137]

Figure 7: Ori Gersht, *White Noise No. 8*, 1999-2000 (Removed due to copyright)
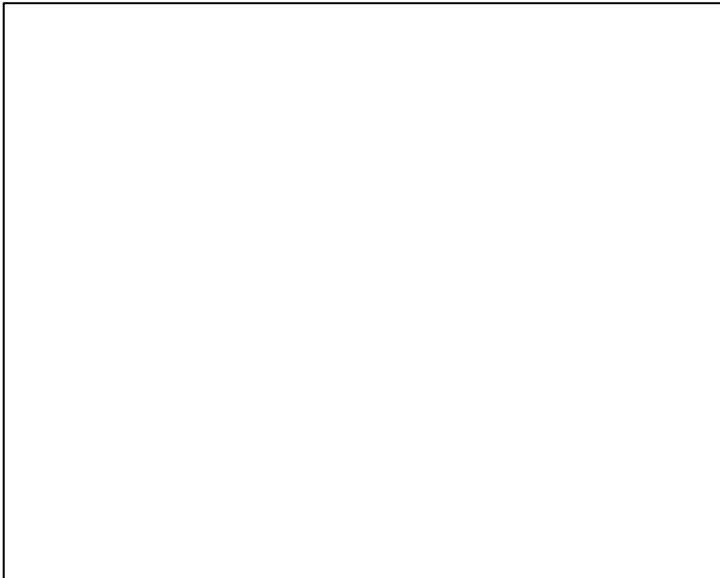
Figure 8: Ori Gersht, *White Noise No. 9*, 1999-2000 (Removed due to copyright)

Gersht's images again test the limits of what photographic technology is able to record. Like Proust's description of the views through the windows of a train while speeding through the countryside on its way to Balbec, the images in *White Noise* are determined by this technology of motion,

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[137] Lowry, Joanna. "Documents of History, Allegories of Time". Gersht, Ori, et al. *Afterglow*. London: August; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2002. Print. P153.

which merges with the photographic apparatus, to capture views of the optical unconscious, the photographic record of the journey being very different from that registered by the eye. The railway retraces the route taken by the prisoners with precision, taking the same tracks, but Gersht shows what the prisoners never saw from their windowless carriages. As Gersht observes "Photographs always struggle in places like these because a photograph is good at recording detail, but it cannot talk about the depth of the emotion in the events that took place. I was interested in the challenge of what can happen in a place the camera can never deal with."[138]

Gersht is unable to photograph the past on his travels between Krakow and Auschwitz and so creates what Lowry terms an "Allegory of Time"; a series of images that are more concerned with impressions of the fading and erasure of memory than with any form of conventional documentary record. The materiality of the journey is dissolved by the blur and the whiteness of the snow to the point where the photographs register almost complete absence. As with Proust, Gersht explores perception through the characteristics of the photographic process; the past is not directly visible to his lens, and instead of trying to painstakingly uncover traces or remnants from that time in the way an archaeologist might, he uses the camera's inability to see the past as a way of recording his experience of returning to this place of overwhelming historic significance. As Lowry remarks "The journey becomes a space of over-exposure where nothing can be seen. The white snowfields seem slowly to erase the past."[139]

Gersht's work implies the forgetting of history due to the lack of an observer to record it. He arrives at the scene too late with an apparatus that only captures the present. This is a practice that by its nature emphasises the remoteness of the past. The event is always over and Gersht is left to 'reconstruct' it as an impression mediated through the technology of photography. Unlike Freud and Proust, Gersht is not

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[138] Ibid. P139.
[139] Ibid. P154.

attempting to piece together a revealing truth that will make sense of the past.

J H Engström

Engström's work consists of an eclectic mix of photographic styles, presenting a heterogeneous and fragmented stream-of-consciousness account of his personal experiences. The considerable diversity of styles gives the work a dreamlike quality resembling a constructed archive of old photographs by different photographers. A repetition of themes in the scenes depicted and in the use of photographic styles, provides a means of constructing a loose overall coherence in the work presented in books such as *Trying to Dance* (2004) and *Haunts* (2006). There is an uneasy mix of being in the moment, characterized by the directness and spontaneity of his intimate photographs of people (figure 9), with the lonely aftermath of events, embodied by unmade beds, the debris of half eaten meals and deserted landscapes giving the impression of past haunts. Martin Jaeggi describes *Trying to Dance* as "A nonlinear juxtaposition of views of Engström's everyday surroundings… It is a visual stream-of-consciousness monologue, an ongoing succession of moments that retain an importance of their own, fragments of relentlessly passing time."[140] He compares it to "The impression of looking at memories."[141]

Like Frank, Engström's interventions in the photographic process create a sense of damage and imperfection in his prints. Technical "mistakes" such as blur, scratched negatives and lack of sharp focus, give the work a pervasive quality of transience. While the faded haze and distortions of colour inherent in Engström's frequent use of overexposure provide the most intensely haunting and melancholy reflections on the nature and loss of past time. The meals which sustain life are now eaten and the

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[140] Jaeggi, Martin. "J H Engström: Looking for Presence." *Aperture* 190 (Spring 2008): Print. P51.
[141] Ibid. P51.

remains discarded (figure 10); the bedclothes that once provided warmth reveal the impressions of bodies that are absent (figure 11); the derelict children's playground is long deserted (figure 12).

The processes of bleaching out and fading represent major tropes by which photography can be seen to represent memory. Engström uses a similar process to Gersht in greatly overexposing the negative so as to evoke a sense of instability and forgetting. But where Gersht applies this idea to the inability of the camera to register the past history of places, Engström uses it as a device to evoke the unstable appearance of memory. As we have seen, Bergstein identifies an analogy between photography, archaeology and memory in Freud: negatives are latent, as are buried objects and unconscious memories; prints are manifest, as are excavated artifacts and repressed memories brought into consciousness. It is as if the life and colour have been drained out of Engström's images; like archaeological fragments excavated from the latency of the unconscious and made manifest through the psychoanalytic process in the form of prints, time has eroded the image, bleaching out any sense of vibrancy and rendering a less distinct impression.

The action of light acts as a metaphor for the inscription of memory. Too much light is analogous to too many impressions inscribed into the surface of the wax tablet, leading to their ultimate obliteration and invisibility. The excess of light that reveals itself as an uneven fog over the surface of the image demonstrates that, when considered through the optics of photography, the processes of remembering and forgetting are intrinsically linked through the action of light. The tonal distortions, uneven fogging and colour casts register the break up of the image, unveiling the point at which memory starts to become forgetting.

Oddly, this process of over exposure also resembles the process of partial development, both forming the boundary between remembering and forgetting. Engström's desolate cityscape of the New York skyline almost dissolves into the page like a half remembered scene struggling to

be brought into consciousness from a state of latency, or a partially processed print emerging from the darkroom before development is complete (figure 13). The milky, uneven quality of the photographic print is analogous to the unclear, half formed image that emerges from the unconscious. This photographic trope in which the processes of remembering and forgetting are compared to the emergence and disappearance of the photographic image, is fundamental to Engström's aesthetic strategy for depicting the sense of a remembered past. It is closely related to Freud's use of photography to explain how psychical acts are *developed* into consciousness and to the way Brassaï describes Proust's development of latent images of memory, when he says, "the important thing – as much in the darkroom as in the realm of writing – is to immobilize and solidify them." Engström's images are not solidified; they are not fully developed and therefore not fully brought into consciousness.

Trying to Dance and *Haunts*

Proust teaches us that it is only in looking back that we can hope to reveal any kind of truth about a person or event. The front cover image of *Trying to Dance* shows a young couple who appear to have wandered off from a nearby wedding (figure 14). But this is no normal wedding photograph; it has already been made "old" at its inception, due to the effects of overexposure. Resembling the faded condition of Barthes' *Winter Garden Photograph*, it is more like something the couple's children or grandchildren might discover many years later. It is as if Engström is seeing the present moment through memory, as already in the past. The ritual of marriage is particularly poignant in this respect; it has a special significance in the marking of time and in establishing a union of permanence, its ceremonies being staged largely for the camera. This moment, seen through a fog of time, is unsettling because the act of photography has changed it into something to be experienced in the future, when in looking back its true significance may be realized.

The title *Haunts*, suggests not only a ghostly presence, but also a revisiting of places frequented in the past. Inside the book we find an image of a deserted lake, where you can imagine happy childhood times were spent, the decking path leads off into what might be the past, where Engström as a child may have walked or dived into its waters (figure 15). Both the aesthetic of the photograph, and the deserted scene it depicts, allude to a sense of loss of the event to which they refer. But we do not know these things; these images are evocative of such memories but lack captioning and do not anchor themselves to the particular. They may not be taken in the actual places where events happened; they may act more like Freud's screen memories, or Burgin's sequence-images, where one thing is substituted for another through an act of associative displacement. This is not the resurrection of the past as it was; this is a view of the past as it has become, many years later, in the aftermath of the events that are remembered.

The time of such images is a time of the distant past in which the inherent instability of the photographic print has been allowed to establish itself. Seeing the present as if it were the past positions Engström outside of a clearly situated idea of time. This strangely contradictory use of photography is complicated further by the other photographic styles he adopts in creating the sequences in his books. If, as Bergson suggests, perception is "a kind of photographic view of things," then the images that are retained in memory do not necessarily reflect a single photographic style. Engström's adoption of varying techniques, genres and styles all combine to produce a heterogeneous view of memory images that stresses their fundamental reliance on photographic conventions.
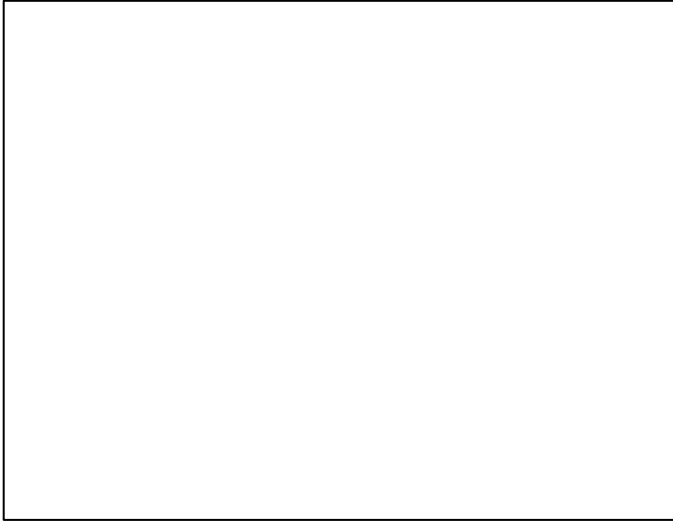
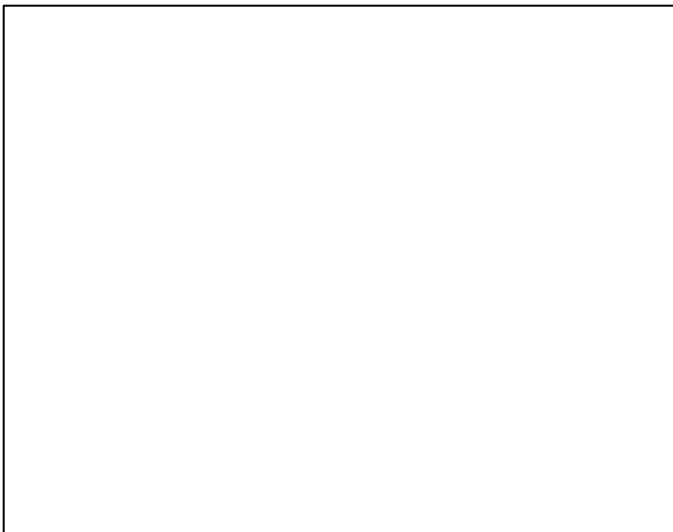Figure 9: J H Engström, Untitled, 2004 (Removed due to copyright)

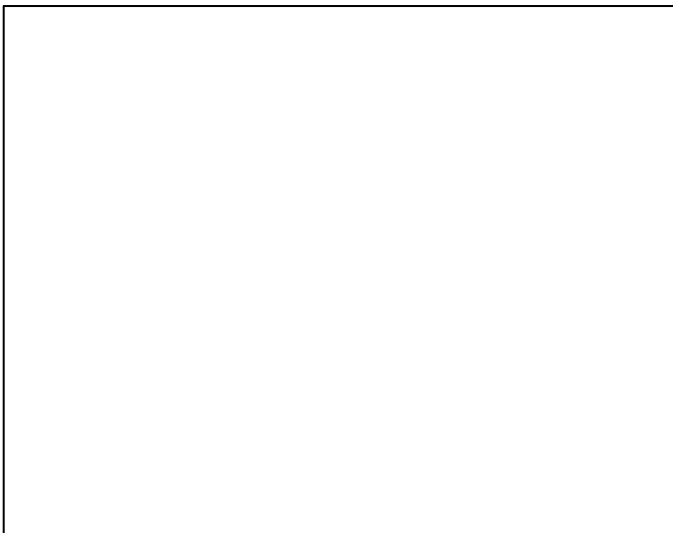Figure 10: J H Engström, Untitled, 2004 (Removed due to copyright)

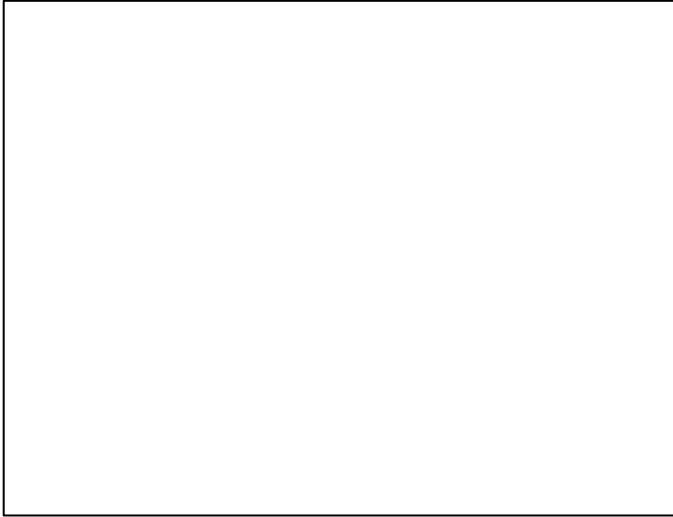Figure 11: J H Engström, Untitled, 2004 (Removed due to copyright)

Figure 12: J H Engström, Untitled, 2006 (Removed due to copyright)

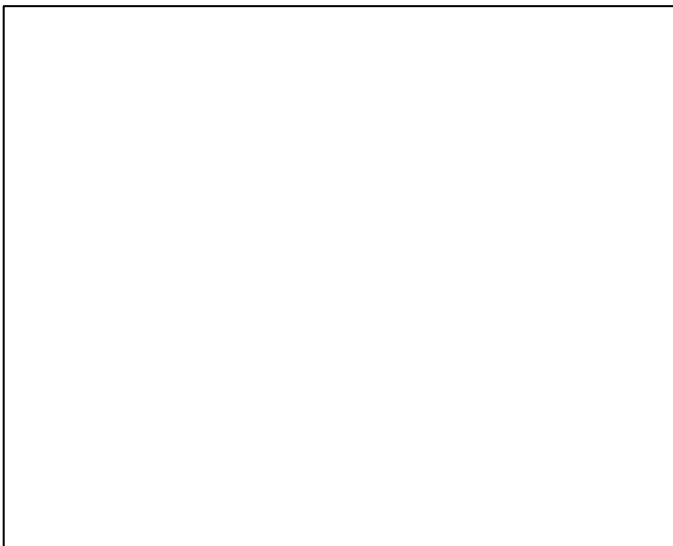Figure 13: J H Engström, Untitled, 2004 (Removed due to copyright)

Figure 14: J H Engström, Untitled, 2004(Removed due to copyright)
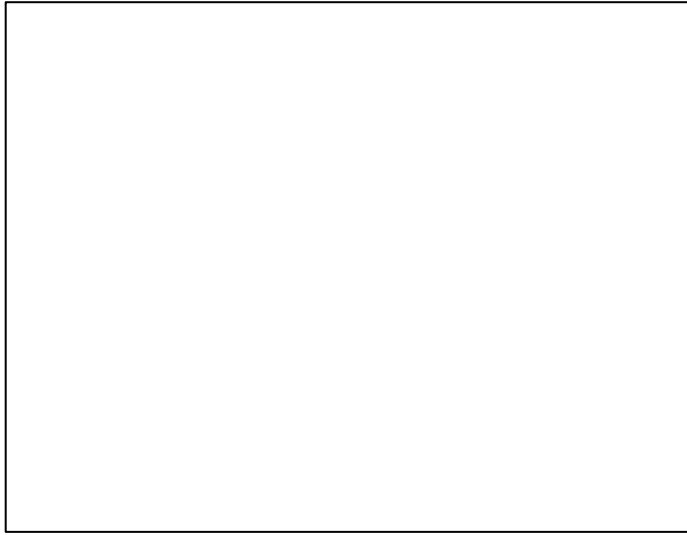
Figure 15: J H Engström, Untitled, 2006 (Removed due to copyright)

Concluding the Practices of Robert Frank, Ori Gersht and J H Engström

While Derrida considers how the material characteristics of the Mystic Writing-Pad determine the understanding we construct of the psyche, we can apply similar principles to the characteristics of photography in its use as a metaphor for memory. Thus the physical decay and bleaching out of the photograph become major tropes for imagining the deterioration and erasure of memory. Such photographic qualities have helped to formulate the theoretical accounts produced to describe the processes of remembering and forgetting. The ephemeral nature of memory images described by Proust, Freud and Bergson, that characterize involuntary memory, point to a short-lived existence. These images, like unfixed photographs, are glimpsed fleetingly before dissolving again. The physical photograph creates a new temporality, prolonging the period of memory and allowing the different processes of deterioration to be drawn out and visualized over time. In doing so it has led us to think of the processes of the psyche in material terms corresponding to the properties of the photograph. While Engström's images resemble the unstable 'flashes' of involuntary memory, Frank's collages construct a visual model of the psychic archive of remembering and forgetting.

In Frank's work there is a sense of bleaching due to the running and erosion of the chemicals that bring the image into being, while in Gersht and Engström's the bleaching takes place due to the action of light. Both the optical and chemical processes by which the photograph is conceived point also to the process of its demise. Both practices use these inherently unstable characteristics of photography to develop an aesthetics of loss, forgetting and erasure that seems inseparable from the act of remembering.

Chapter 3: An Analysis of My Own Practice: *Going Away* and *The Voyage*

(i) Metaphors for Memory

My practice-based research consists of my main body of work titled *The Voyage*, which was initiated and completed in its entirety over the course of the MPhil, and a second body of work, *Going Away*, which was largely produced as part of my MA, but was fully resolved during the period of my MPhil (see my methodology for further details). I have included a discussion of *Going Away* because it forms an important prequel to *The Voyage* and helps reveal the development in the direction of my ideas. The two bodies of work deal with an aesthetics of memory in different ways; *Going Away* depicts a "remembered place" based on childhood visits to the seaside, while *The Voyage* is an account of a sea voyage as represented by the deteriorating sea soaked pages of old books. Both are fictional in that, although they depict real places and real objects, the places depicted are not the same actual places experienced in childhood, and the books consist largely of fabricated sections pieced together, both physically and digitally, from a variety of publications.

Within my practice there are two levels of metaphor at work in the depiction of memory. The first consists in terms of the subject matter; here the sea and the book act as metaphors for memory. The sea's significance, both as a "remembered place", and as a vast fluid space of past voyages and experience, give it a metaphoric significance that threads through both bodies of practice, while the book represents a particularly privileged place in the metaphorical modeling and physical storage of memory. The second level of metaphor concerns the process of photography in transforming this subject matter and constructing fictions from it that relate to the processes of memory and forgetting.

(ii) Analysis of *Going Away*

Going Away explores the coast as a "remembered place" that triggers notions of escape and imaginative departure into past time. The 19 photographs that make up this body of work were taken along several distinct stretches of the Cumbrian coast. Like Proust, who merged fact with fiction in the depiction of places featured in the *Search*, *Going Away*, although showing locations on the coast of Cumbria, suggests a more generic childhood memory of the seaside and the loss of those times.

The sea, as a surface, evades inscription and is therefore resistant to the marks of past time. Its constant motion and lack of fixity defy the locatedness of memory and erase the traces of what has been. The liminal landscape depicted in *Going Away*, the border between land and sea, is a place where the action of the tides transforms the nature of what can be seen and thereby remembered. At low tide, the shoreline reveals vast uninhabitable spaces, inviting exploration on foot and the possibility of literally walking out to sea. The tranquil appearance unveiled by the sea's absence belies the hidden quicksand and perilous tides ready to claim the lives of those who are lured too far from the safety of land. The dwellings that inhabit this edge of land are appear like models against the infinite shifting expanse and sublime mesmerizing power of the sea. This duality of sea and land is culturally linked to wider notions of what is geographically fixed and boundless, knowable and unknowable, stable and unstable, located and placeless.

The scenes depicted reflect such notions of fixity and impermanence; a little shack nestles on the edge of land, looking out over the infinite unknowable shifting expanse of sea and sky (figure 16). A lighthouse stands alone, warning passing vessels in a landscape where the sea is now absent; the miniature houses huddling behind are rendered insignificant by the vast scale of the empty and featureless space (figure 17). A caravan, a symbol of recreational mobility and freedom, sits on a

roadside verge beside the sea, a temporary dwelling left stranded in a transient emptiness (figure 18). Diminutive figures are seen walking out to sea with the faint outline of distant lands rising up out of the haze of the horizon line where land and sea appear to merge (figure 19). This is a refuge, far from the thrust of the city, where vast reflective spaces provide a backdrop upon which to project past memories and past dreams.

The materiality of the photographic process forms a prominent motif in *Going Away*, the temporality of the record echoing the ephemeral presence of the scene it portrays. The "bleaching out" of the images and liminality of the spaces suggest a metaphorical association with the processes of fading and erasure of memory. To achieve this appearance, the "time" of the image was extended by exposing it to too much light and allowing the excess of light to distort the tonal range, giving the images a washed-out bluish green hue. Thus light becomes both the creator and eventual destroyer of the image, the appearance of the prints alluding to the appearance of old photographs, which over time, undergo their own material transformations, being bleached by the action of light and eroded by contaminants, the visible appearance they preserve being slowly "washed away". The materiality of the photographic remnant, while prolonging the passing of memory, can be seen ultimately to echo the transience of the moment it displaces.

This bleaching out of the images echoes the approach taken by Gersht and Engström to give the impression of memory. In common with their work, overexposure leads to a form of instability that alludes to loss and forgetting. In *Going Away*, the representation of childhood memories through the depiction of landscape has particular ties with many of Engström's images, the places presented evoking the empty aftermath of events, as if returning many years later and projecting an imagined past onto what remains. Figures 12, 13 and 15, function like the unstable 'flashes' of involuntary memory discussed by Proust and Bergson, that momentarily reveal the past before disappearing back into the ether. This is memory experienced as photographs but also as place. We have

already seen how the Proustian psyche attaches memory to notions of place. As Martens identifies, this is common to childhood narratives in general, Proust narrating much of the early part of the *Search* through the eyes of a child. *Going Away* attempts to work in a similar way, as if seeing the past as it might have been imagined at the time, although, like Proust, this is in reality always mediated through the mind's eye of an adult.

The metaphor of the sea itself is important to *Going Away*. It becomes a surface for the projection of the psyche. Land represents the knowable, while the sea is the unknowable; in Freud's view, looking out to sea is linked to a sense of "eternity", with "a feeling of something limitless, unbounded – as it were 'oceanic'."[142] While Barthes sees a clear division between land and sea, claiming that the sea "bears no message."[143] Land and sea form a binary opposition between culture and nature, history and historical void: "In a single day, how many really non-signifying fields do we cross? Very few, sometimes none. Here I am before the sea; it is true that it bears no message. But on the beach, what material for semiology! Flags, slogans, signals, sign-boards, clothes, suntan even, which are so many messages for me!"[144] Nandita Batra and Vartan P Messier observe: "Barthes seems to suggest that the sea denotes nothingness not only because it seems a reflection of the individual psyche but because it bears no material manifestation of human passage or cultural history in contrast to the land, which seems to bear much more evidence of human actions."[145]

Going Away, while showing the appearance of a real place, aims to present a fiction about a place of memory. But the fiction that can be created with words is different from that possible through the use of

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[142] Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents.* London: Penguin. 2004. Print. P1-2.
[143] Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies.* London: Vintage. 1993. Print. P112.
[144] Ibid. P112.
[145] Messier, Vartan P., and Nandita Batra. *This Watery World: Humans and the Sea.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010. Print. P4.

photography. The camera always presents what Barthes' terms the "noeme ("that-has-been"),"[146] and it is photography's literalness to the depiction of the subject in front of the lens that makes the use of metaphor and allegory so different compared to literature. There is always something specific about a photograph that binds it to the particular rather than the general. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes provides a detailed description of the *Winter Garden Photograph* in words, but is not prepared to show the actual image:

> I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the "ordinary"; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of science; it cannot establish an objectivity; in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *stadium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.[147]

In order for photography to transcend this specificity of subject matter, it has to present the subject using an aesthetic and language that speaks not just of this one instance, this particular scene, but relates it to a wider sense of the concept to be conveyed. Thus in Barthes' *Winter Garden Photograph*, the meanings he wishes to convey are only accessible to him; the nature of his memories and his sense of loss are not inherent in the photograph in a way that will be apparent to a wider audience. As we have seen, in dealing with memory, displacements occur; one thing is substituted for another in space and time, and there is often a lack of factual clarity about any "true" nature of events that took place. *Going Away* thus becomes a *displaced fiction* constructed through photography; the sense of memory conveyed being less about returning to the actual places in which past events took place and more about trying to evoke a sensation of those places.

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[146] Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.* London: Vintage, 2000. Print. P96.
[147] Ibid. P73.

Figure 16: Peter Bennett, *Going Away #1*, 2010

Figure 17: Peter Bennett, *Going Away #2*, 2010

Figure 18: Peter Bennett, *Going Away #4*, 2010

Figure 19: Peter Bennett, *Going Away #16*, 2010

(iii) Analysis of *The Voyage*

The Book and the Sea

The Voyage consists of 25 images that explore the processes of remembering and forgetting through metaphors relating to the book, the sea and the process of photography. The images weave a narrative examining the impermanent long-term nature of books as repositories of

memory and the material fragility of their continuing existence. The books themselves are commercially printed antiquarian publications from the period of the late 1700s to the early 1900s. Books of this age convey a sense of the past, revealing the ravages of time through the damaged condition of their pages and bindings. The subject matter of the books relates to sea voyages. This period charted significant advances in the science of navigation and the mechanization of sea travel, enabling greater mastery of the seas and more ambitious exploration and colonial expansion abroad. A complex cultural and literary mythology has grown out of such voyages and the longing to explore exotic lands.

The work examines our lack of proximity with the past by highlighting the processes of fading and disintegration inherent in the materiality of books as repositories of memory. The book's privileged status as a metaphor for memory makes it of particular interest as an object of study. The sense of absence and effacement of inscription that runs through the pages of the books in *The Voyage* becomes a metaphor for forgetting and erasure. Experience has either been lost or is on the verge of being lost, erased from the pages like being erased from memory. The technical clarity of the photographic reproduction allows for a close inspection of the textural qualities of the books, revealing the anatomy of their construction (figures 22, 25, 28 & 29). The dismantling of the pages becomes like the dismantling of the layers of memory. The gluing and stitching that holds the pages together is unpicked, dissecting the book's anatomy and undoing the linkages between memories. The book is slowly picked apart, with the last two images showing memory as having been erased; only the deteriorating structure of the book remains, the pages are blank (figures 28 & 29).

In Proust's scene where the narrator tastes the madeleine, the whole town of Combray, all the different fragments from the water-lilies on the Vivonne to the good folk of the village, are reconstructed in resplendent fashion from a single piece of paper. Memory is unfolded and projected spatially, like the spreading out of the pages of a book so that the entire

story can be revealed. A place that has been diminished by the confines of the unconscious takes on monumental proportions in an act of involuntary memory. The act of unfolding, of spreading out and opening up the paper, is seen in Proust as a metaphor for the realization of memory. *The Voyage* however, also using the metaphor of paper as memory, reveals another interpretation; the act of taking apart and opening out the pages become associated with notions of forgetting and loss.

The materiality of the books and the content they depict work together to create visual analogies with the processes of memory. The sea becomes an indistinct restless and placeless backdrop of past exploration and discovery, while the book becomes an attempt to immortalize experience and hold back the march of time. The pages of the books provide the surfaces upon which the sea's impressions can be imprinted. These restless explorations find their resting place within the pages, but these are records that undergo their own journey through time and are further transformed by it - their stories finally being re-told through the agency and aesthetics of photography. The imprint on the surface of the pages is reproduced and transformed into the imprint on the surface of the photographic print: the process of photography flattening the layers and fixing the arrangement of the fragments to create a new object and a new narrative.

A faint, non-linear narrative is present throughout the images; ships are just discernable through the pages, and fragments of text refer to tales of the sea (figures 20, 21, 23, 24 & 26). Imagined places are made all the more remote through the action of time and the processes by which they are reproduced. Many of the pages are transformed by the effects of dampness and contaminants, creating a patina of time on the surface of the paper. The books look like they have been dredged up from some watery depths, like remnants recording the lost traces of past voyages (figures 20, 21, 22 & 27). But this is not the record of any specific journey; this work represents a collection of fragmented narratives exploring the

book, and the processes of its reproduction, as an attempt to overcome the vagaries and mortality of human memory.

Bachelard observes, "Water is truly the transitory element… A being dedicated to water is a being in flux. He dies every minute; something of his substance is constantly falling away."[148] The disintegrating pages of the books are like disintegrating layers of narrative; the inscriptions they bear form the last traces of the restless fluidity of bygone journeys. Memory's attachment to places and things are not recognised by the sea; its constant motion and lack of fixity make it a place of forgetting. The action of water and light, bleach away the inscriptions on the pages of the books; the sea can be seen as taking back the traces of memory that remain and erasing them from recorded history. The sea thus becomes a metaphor for the vast depths of the unconscious into which memory disappears and is assigned to oblivion.

A Fiction Constructed Through Photography

Increasingly, books and a wide range of other objects, are "made accessible" through processes of reproduction, the photograph displacing the qualities and aura of the original. This new proximity brings with it an absence of the object itself, the surface upon which memory is projected being transferred from the object to the photograph. In *The Voyage*, the process of photography, while drawing on conventions that relate to the use of the "copy camera" to faithfully reproduce artefacts for museological records, does not merely *reproduce* the books but *transforms* them, constructing fictions that relate to the processes of memory and forgetting. As David Bate observes, "The photographic image is not just another memory device… but a machine for what I would call a *meta-archive*. The photograph offers in itself as a meta-form. The photograph has a capacity to incorporate and absorb many other already existing

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[148] Bachelard, Gaston. *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983. Print. P6.

visual memory devices within photographic re-presentation."[149] Thus *The Voyage*, while incorporating other visual memory devices, and referring to other metaphors of memory, exists as a photographic fiction or meta-archive.

The use of lighting produces a flattening of the layers of paper creating a collage-like effect. Presented in this way, the books resemble museum exhibits, taken out of their original context and placed on a background where new meanings are created. Images and fragments of text are scattered throughout the series, implying a faint underlying narrative, every aspect of which is carefully framed and orchestrated for the camera. Like Frank's *Andrea*, 1975 (figure 15), memory is projected spatially, as a series of fragmented layers, blank pages being used to indicate the loss and incompleteness of memory. While Frank uses paint to partially obscure images and provide a sense of damage and fluidity, *The Voyage* uses the effects of patination caused by dampness to similar effect. The narrative implied by *Andrea*, 1975, is self contained, summing up the memory of a life in a single frame, whereas *The Voyage* builds it up in a literary fashion across the multiple pages of the books. While the photographs depict books, the photographic process reconstructs what is effectively a new book out of the images of the pages.

The unstable materiality of the books is emphasized through the faintness of the printing and the way in which images and words almost dissolve into the page. The textures that run through their anatomy are revealed through the process of their disintegration. Layers of paper are overlaid one on top of another like the layers of inscription on Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad, while further translucent layers, as in figures 23 and 26 partially obscure the image beneath, like indistinct memories on the point of disappearing. The faint pieced-together backgrounds provide a space for the containment of memory. In figures 21 and 29, the tonality of the books starts to merge with the tonality of the background to the point

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[149] Bate, David (2010) 'The Memory of Photography', *Photographies*, 3: 2. Print. P248.

where they are about to become one. The photographic process creates a new surface upon which all others are combined and which denies the possibility of what Barthes terms "enter(ing) into the paper's depth."

The Voyage projects memory as a surface, as a re-presentation of multiple layers of narrative that are overlaid upon one another, but whose depth cannot be interrogated. In common with Frank, the reproduction of the layers of surface inscription become the dominant photographic metaphor for the representation of memory. In Proust's description of the point at which Marcel finally comes to kiss Albertine, the multiple perspectives, or masks encountered, form a series of layers representing the different facets of her being as they exist within memory. The interrogation of the different layers yields to the "collision" with the surface of Albertine's face, which becomes like the encounter with the surface of a photograph, where no greater depth or clearer impression can be gained. *The Voyage* presents memory in a similar way, as a series of layers that contain no depth beyond the photographic surface, that while offering the expectation of revealing a sense of truth about the past, in reality present a picture of loss, forgetting and erasure.

Figure 20: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #1*, 2012

Figure 21: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #3*, 2012

Figure 22: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #7*, 2012

Figure 23: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #9*, 2012

Figure 24: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #11*, 2012

Figure 25: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #16*, 2012

Figure 26: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #19*, 2012

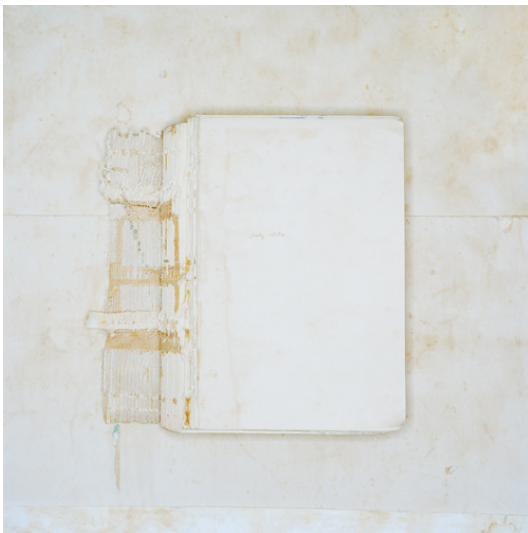Figure 27: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #23*, 2012
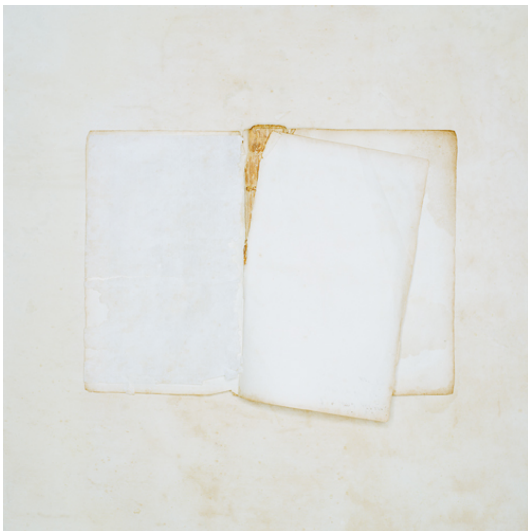

Figure 28: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #24*, 2012

Figure 29: Peter Bennett, *The Voyage #25*, 2012

Concluding the Analysis of my Own Practice

Going Away

Going Away uses photography to transform the coast into a place of memory, possessing a sense of latency, like a photograph merging from a state of development or fading through overexposure to light. The metaphors of the process of photography, and the fluidity of the sea, combine to produce a sense of transience echoing the fleeting imprint of an involuntary memory, "flashing up" before dissolving away again. Unlike *The Voyage*, which uses metaphors to produce a visualization of the structure and processes of memory, *Going Away* principally creates the sensation of faintly glimpsed fragments of the past. The liminality of the coast as the border between land and sea is echoed by the liminality of the faded image, as the border between visibility and invisibility, remembering and forgetting, and the conscious and unconscious mind.

The Voyage

The Voyage employs the dual metaphors of the materiality of the book and the transience of the sea voyage to explore the processes of remembering and forgetting. The process of photography is then used in the construction of this fictional journey, adding an additional metaphoric layer to the representation of memory, loss, forgetting and erasure.

Imprint and erasure are represented through the use of the book form. The photographs and text on the surface of the pages refer to notions of the imprint of memory, while the bleaching, patination and torn fragmentation refer to ideas of erasure. The action of the sea acts as another level of metaphor in washing away the imprint on the pages and in the fluidity of its surface, resisting the inscription of past time and past history. Latent images are implied through the faint photographs and text that is on the verge of appearing/ disappearing into the page. The surface

of the paper thus acts as the line between visibility and invisibility; consciousness and the unconscious; memory and forgetting; latency and development. The effects of space and motion are suggested through the fictitious voyage to which the work refers, and through the fluidity and lack of fixity of the sea. Forgetting is thus implied, as memories are lost to the restlessness of the sea and to the journeying through space. Returning to the words of Bachelard: "Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are." *The Voyage* presents a lack of fixity in space and therefore a world of forgetting. The deteriorating pages embody a sense of disintegrating narrative fragments. They are like the fragments of an archaeological dig, referred to in Freud's analogy, where the psychoanalyst, like the archaeologist, performs an act of reconstruction to piece together memory and reveal the past.

All of these ideas of memory are presented in *The Voyage* through a photographic aesthetic that creates its own narrative. The photographic process provides a way of objectifying memory and possessing it in a material form. Thus the fading and deteriorating books are re-presented through a medium that will itself, over time, fade and deteriorate.

Overall Conclusion

As I have already shown, in order to imagine and grasp the appearance and sensation of memory, we have to transform it into an *image* that takes on a *material form*. The intangible and elusive nature of memory then requires the use of visual metaphors to see and comprehend the intricacy of its vast hidden structures. For Proust, the senses of taste and smell are mainly responsible for bringing about the onset of involuntary memory, but it is through the literary use of visual metaphors that the phenomenon is recounted and analysed. Freud likewise relies largely on visual metaphors to describe the workings of the psyche, the literariness of which has led many to view his work as being disposed more to the field of literature than that of science. His description of the psychical act being *developed* like a latent image into consciousness makes explicit the analogy between perception and photography, as does Bergson's description of perception being "a kind of photographic view of things." Underpinning all these theories is Plato's notion of memory being like the impressions made upon a wax tablet and forgetting like their obliteration.

Many of Proust's most important scenes concerning the process of memory are encountered as if through the eyes of a photographer, bringing a sense of detachment and alienation to bear on what is perceived. But if it is through photography that many of his scenes most effectively narrate the process of memory, we should not forget the range of other metaphors he draws upon to bring to life his vision of the past. Surfaces and layers are used to both mask and reveal the truth, whether in some present encounter with a person or place, or when trying to fathom their true identity as it appears scattered across past time. Diana Festa-McCormick observes that, "Odette's personality assumes the mottled reality of costumes worn over the years, of shapes and colors stored in Swann's or Marcel's memory. The optics that revealed them and molded extrinsic appearance with preconceived ideas create at each turn new and personal truths that are at the same time reflections of Swann's

or Marcel's state of mind and of Odette's reality."[150] Memory is thus projected as a series of surfaces or layers of clothes, each one offering a new perspective on the past. In the multiple images of Albertine, revealed by Marcel's kiss, it is the excess of memory created by the myriad perspectives, or layers, of photography in mediating this act of intimacy, that render her finally invisible on reaching the surface of her outer being. Albertine is ultimately an image, an impenetrable collage of surfaces scattered spatially across time.

For Proust the one memory image, like the single photograph, is insufficient to represent the complexities and shifting perspectives that make up the true nature of memory. As Shattuck observes, "Though it remains the basic unit of observation and memory, the single image turns out to be an orphan, a meaningless fragment snatched out of the flux."[151] Memory consists of multiple layers; multiple surfaces; multiple photographs; each offering its own perspective and its own truth. And it is through the vast meandering narrative of the *Search* that these multiple perspectives are revealed. The book itself becomes the final metaphor for the unraveling of memory.

The use of layers and surfaces, mediated through the process of photography, are central devices in the metaphoric functioning of my practice-based work. In *Going Away* the sea forms a surface upon which memory is projected, a fluid surface whose transience and lack of fixity alludes to a sense of impermanence and instability. *The Voyage* uses the pages of old books and the inscriptions they bear as a metaphor for the layers of memory, and their disintegration and fading as a metaphor for forgetting. In doing so, it makes close reference to Plato's wax tablet and Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad. Once more the surface of the sea provides a metaphor for forgetting due to its resistance to register the marks of past

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[150] Festa-McCormick, Diana. *Proustian Optics of Clothes: Mirrors, Masks, Mores*. Saratoga, California: Libri, 1984. Print. P7.
[151] Shattuck, Roger. *Proust's Way: A Field Guide to in Search of Lost Time*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print. P127.

time and its action in washing away the inscription on the pages. The imprint and erasure of marks on a surface, whether it be a wax tablet, the pages of a book or a photographic image, form the fundamental underlying metaphor for the processes of remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and Forgetting in Contemporary Digital Culture

Through all the writers I have explored there is a common need for this objectification of memory. But in the process of turning memory into a metaphor based on a physical entity such as the wax tablet; the Mystic Writing-Pad; the book; the photograph; what does this do to our understanding of it? As Derrida observes about Freud's use of the Mystic Writing-pad, what meaning is derived from imitating psychical writing with the use of such a machine? So culturally embedded is our understanding of the processes of memory in the use of visual metaphor based on the workings of physical models, that we struggle to imagine it otherwise. Derrida also suggests that more modern forms of technology such as the computer might now be a more appropriate choice of metaphor in attempting to model the structure of the psychic apparatus. In chapter one I considered the effects that rapid advances in technology had on perception and memory at the turn of the twentieth century and how these ideas have become embedded in culture. Since the start of the twenty first century, the processes and changes brought by the digital revolution have had a major impact on our perception of the world and ways of remembering and forgetting it. The age of speed that characterized Proust's time has given way to an age of immediacy and the virtual. While a thorough exploration of the effects of digital culture on perception, temporality and memory is outside the scope of this thesis, it is worth making a few observations about the immense shift in contemporary experience that such technology is imposing.

The computer has, since the turn of the twenty first century, been increasingly incorporated into a range of other devices, many of which have been miniaturized into a mobile handheld form. Laptops, tablets and

smart phones, enable us to be constantly *connected* to what is happening in other places. They have generated a far greater sense of time-space compression and have provided unprecedented access to vast archives of information and imagery.

When Burgin talks about the origin of "sequence-images" being so vague as to make it unclear whether they were derived from a passage in life or film, then the introduction of such mobile devices, and their intervention in our everyday experience of events, makes the juxtaposition and merging of lived and media derived memories all the more indistinguishable. Looking back in future years, the connections formed by such interaction may create new degrees of uncertainty in terms of what we remember and the relationship between memory and the places we associate with those memories.

One of the most significant effects of the digital revolution has been the amassing and sharing, through the Internet and social media, of unparalleled numbers of photographs, recording in equal detail the significant and trivial moments of our lives. With cameras becoming routinely integrated into other handheld devices, particularly mobile phones, we are able to record our lives in photographs like never before. Brassaï's observation that Proust was a "sort of mental photographer who used his own body as an ultrasensitive plate, managing thereby to capture and register in his youth thousands of impressions" has now, in a sense, become a reality for most young people, with the mobile phone being almost like an extension of the body. Odette's personality, rather than being revealed through the optics of Swann or Marcel's memories, as Festa-McCormick observes, might in the modern day be revealed through the optics of mobile phone images, either remembered or actual. And Albertine might be seen as an impenetrable collage of surfaces scattered in space and time across the Internet or various other digital storage media.

If the intentional recording of our lives is one result of the advent of digital technology, then the automated collection of digital records and metadata is another significant, but often less discernible, one. The digital trace of our movements and communications creates a type of latent image requiring "development" through the use of particular software in order to be brought to visibility. This is a form of memory linked to the gathering of factual information, such as dates, times, geographic locations, device settings and various other types of personal records.

With the creation of these vast digital archives, the pace of remembering and forgetting is greatly accelerating. In the thesis I discussed the consequences of modernity in physical terms, such as the introduction of mechanized transportation and the effects of the consequent mobility, but in digital times these changes are often within a virtual realm and are communicated to us through the screen of a computerized device, increasingly while we ourselves are in motion, perhaps using a smart phone or tablet whilst travelling or out shopping. In a world that generates an over abundance of digital images and digital data, the nature of what and how we remember is changing, alongside the rate at which we remember, forget, and erase the traces of what has been. The juxtaposition and integration of fragmented images from computerized devices into our everyday lives, and the way in which the screen overlays these impressions onto our immediate surroundings, is bringing about entirely new ways of perceiving, remembering and forgetting the world.

The Sea and the Voyage

If digital culture has created a sense of immediacy, then the sea, in contrast, offers a sense of extended temporality. The sea's vastness and resistance to motion defies the hastening of time. The rhythm of the waves provides a timeless continuity like the perpetual ticking of a clock. As in the Proustian novel, it is a place where time is drawn-out and reflected upon. *The Voyage* uses the backdrop of the sea to offer a sense of extended temporality which is further echoed by the deterioration of the

books. The work reveals what appear to be the last material traces of journeys made at sea, its boundless surface offering the possibility of travel to distant lands, while leaving no material trace of time. In Chapter One (The Effects of Space and Motion), I discussed memory's attachment to places and things. The sea voyage leaves places and things behind, creating a sense of displacement and loss. The sea, due to its lack of proximity to land and lack of cultural stimulus (Barthes asserts that the sea "bears no message") makes it a place of reflection about past endeavours and life on land. The surface of the sea, due to its liquidity and flux, is thus a place of forgetting, but equally a place of remembering (a place upon which to project memory). It is a place where time leaves no mark. *The Voyage* links the surfaces of the sea and the book; the water soaked pages reveal traces of the sea's presence and expose the marks that are normally lost.

The sea is fundamentally linked to the desire to be elsewhere, whether as a surface upon which to project the past, or a surface upon which to project the future: a place to experience the possibility of new lands. If, as I have proposed, memory is made up of multiple surfaces upon which inscriptions are made and erased, then the sea offers another surface, like that of the wax tablet or the page of the book, but it is one upon which all traces are immediately lost. It is a surface more like that of a projector screen, bearing an image only for the period it is illuminated by another source. It is a place of blankness, like the bedroom wall upon which Marcel projects his magic lantern slides in order to transport him into a narrative about a far away land.[152] As a place of projection, the sea might be seen as analogous to the digital display screens that in the modern day are taking the place of paper in offering temporary surfaces of virtual inscription.

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[152] Proust, Marcel. *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way (Vol I).* Trans. D. Enright J., Terence Kilmartin, Moncrieff Scott C. K. London: Vintage, 2005. Print. P8-9.

The Book

The Voyage uses the book as a model for reflecting on the processes the psyche. The sea journey referred to in the title is not the documentation of a real journey, but a fictional and mental journey through time and experience. The work projects time as space. The dismantling of the books is like taking apart layers of time to be re-presented through the optics of photography. The fading pages and torn translucent overlays refer to the bleaching out and forgetting of the past, and the patination caused by dampness is like the decomposition of memory. The aesthetic properties and structure of memory are represented through the material properties of the book. The timeless fluidity of the sea provides a second level of metaphor that refers to the shifting narrative fragments contained in the unconscious mind, and the sea's erosion and bleaching out of the pages. *The Voyage* uses the layers of the book to represent the dismantling and deconstruction of memory, echoing Proust's unfolding of the Japanese paper toy in the Madeleine scene to represent the unfolding of memory. The *Search*, in its entirety, extends this metaphor further, the unfolding pages of the book revealing a narrative that projects time as space and comes to stand for the overall structure of memory. *The Voyage*, like the *Search*, uses the book form as an overall metaphor for memory, although unlike Proust, *The Voyage* is a book mediated through photography; like an image of an image, it is a representation of memory further displaced by another layer of representation. By sharing this commonality of the book form with Proust, *The Voyage* is able to explore in direct visual terms various of the themes of remembering and forgetting present in Proust's writing, while foregrounding, like Proust, the book's particularly privileged connection to memory. The title, *The Voyage*, echoes Proust's implied journey throughout *In Search of Lost Time*, attempting to make sense of the complex workings of human memory. By working with the book, the extended temporality and sense of fragmentation, fading and overlaying of surfaces, so important in Proust's depiction of memory, could be explored in terms of the physical nature of the pages and structure of the book. Writing the *Search* was for

Proust the final focus of his life and his relentless quest to complete it, despite his ill health, led eventually to his demise. In reflecting upon his writing it seemed fitting to use the idea of the book itself to explore the nature of remembering and forgetting in relation to the aesthetics of loss, forgetting and erasure.

The Possession of Memory

In his interrogation of memory, Proust is not merely attempting to unmask and understand the truth behind the many layers of appearance that are dispersed across time; his is also a quest for possession. As Sontag suggests, photography leads to a form of appropriation of the thing photographed. Experiencing an event as if through the eyes of a photographer creates a detachment, or lack of presence at the point of experience, leading, through the process of development, to a subsequent possession of the event in a material form. This enables the event to be re-lived at will, thus conferring a form of ownership over it. In the psyche, perception and memory are immaterial; photography gives them a materiality that can be owned and transposed into metaphor. By treating memory as a material entity, it takes on the characteristics and life of a physical object, with aesthetic properties that determine its appearance and a corporeal actuality that solidifies its intangibility.

Once the process of memory has been transferred to the realm of the metaphor and embodied in a physical object or process, it starts to be understood through the appearance and characteristics of that object or process. Thus, on witnessing the declining state of his beloved grandmother, Proust turns her into a photograph; Freud sees psychical acts as emerging from the unconscious like the development of a photographic negative; and Plato conceives of memory as being like impressions in wax. Barthes interrogates the *Winter Garden Photograph* of his mother trying to "enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side," so as to "possess" the image. But however hard he scrutinizes the surface of the image he can "see nothing but the grain of the paper."

Although he claims to have "found" his mother in the photograph, he is unable to go any further; the surface of the photograph becomes the boundary of the metaphor. Memory, when seen through the prism of photography, presents an impenetrable surface layer which is prone to the effects of aging but cannot be entered.

Frank's collages, such as *Andrea*, 1975, show memory as existing of multiple layers that provide the multiple perspectives of a persona. Like Barthes' *Winter Garden Photograph* and Proust's attempt to kiss Albertine, he emphasizes the surface of the photograph as an unyielding threshold that prevents entry into the past. Memory is seen as fragmented, deteriorating and incomplete. A dialogue is created between interior thoughts, represented by the inscription of words and marks on the surface of the image, and exterior experience, as represented by the photograph's depiction of "what is out there."

Bleaching Out

Bleaching occurs in two forms: by exposure to light and by the action of a chemical agent. It leads to fading and discolouration, and eventual invisibility. Exposure to light produces a gradual process of bleaching over an extended period of time and is therefore associated with aging. Chemical bleaching relates not only to aging, but also to whitening and cleaning; to washing away the traces of past marks. Bleaching is closely associated with the process of photography; the gradual fading of the image produced by a bleaching agent being the opposite of the gradual appearance of the image produced by the developer. If memories are developed from a state of latency in the unconscious, and thereby made visible, then bleaching is the reversal of this process, returning memory to a state of invisibility and forgetting.

Gersht and Engström use excessive overexposure to create a metaphoric bleaching out of memory. Their work uses the process of photography to emphasize the absence and loss of the past. In going to places where

past events have taken place and recording the absence that now exists, they highlight the remoteness and inaccessibility of those times. The ghostly fading and discolouration of the images removes their solidity, like unstable memories at the point of disintegration.

In both of my practice-based bodies of work, the action of the sea and exposure to light are seen as agents in the bleaching out memory. The discolouration of time presents itself in the washed-out bluish green hue of the images in *Going Away* and the yellowy brown staining of the paper in *The Voyage*. Like the muted hue of archaeological fragments, colour is used to evoke a sense of the fading of the vibrancy of memory. In a similar way to Gersht and Engström, the work points to the instability and indistinctness of memory as it is perceived close to the point at which it becomes forgetting.

Paper forms a common material composite of both the book and the photographic print; the imprinting of paper traces its lineage back to the impressions made in the wax tablet and continues to form a model for the screen-based presentation of words and images on the latest digital devices. Paper has fundamentally transformed the way in which memory is recorded, stored and imagined. The materiality of paper, its aging, fading and deterioration, holds a particularly privileged position in the metaphoric and aesthetic representation of memory and forgetting. The characteristic qualities of the bleaching and deterioration of paper, whether in the form of a photograph or the pages of a book, form a major metaphoric role in the aesthetic representation of memory across both of my practice-based bodies of work. *The Voyage* presents memory through a two-fold set of surfaces: the surface of the pages of the books, and their re-presentation through the surface of the photographic print. The bleaching out and deterioration of memory is thus expressed entirely through the characteristics of the paper surface.

Through the use of specific metaphors, memory is seen as having particular aesthetic properties and structural characteristics. If we take

Proust's notion of involuntary memory as corresponding closely to Bergson's pure and spontaneous memory and Freud's unconscious memory, then in the process of recollection, as in photography, the latent image appears faintly at first, in a ghostly and hardly discernible form, then gradually develops, gaining in solidity until it reaches its most intense and vivid form. At this stage the photographic image must be fixed in conscious memory, before it "flashes out" (to use Bergson's term) or disappears again. This is the stable state of the fully developed photograph and of memory's inscription in consciousness. But the apparent stability of the fully developed image gradually fades again, far more gradually than it was formed; slowly the action of light and chemical agents, those processes that brought it into being, dissolve the image until it melts back into the invisibility from which it was derived and the memory is erased.

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Appendix (i)

Methodology of Practice: Aesthetics and Materiality

(i) Going Away

Going Away was largely produced as part of my MA, but was further developed during the period of my MPhil, both theoretically, as expressed in my writing, and in terms of its practice-based presentation. I explored new ways of printing, editing and presenting the work in an exhibition context. I also started to explore the artist's book as a way of presenting the work and this led to me doing the same for the *The Voyage*.

Initially I photographed in both Cumbria and the south east of England, but I wanted to keep a consistency of feel in terms of place and the related topographical features. This led me to narrow my approach down to only photographing in several similar stretches of coast in Cumbria. In doing so I was able to construct a more generic sense of an "imagined" or "remembered" place, rather than documenting the specifics of the particular geographical region. As the work developed, I found myself walking out on to the mud flats so as to explore this landscape that disappeared under the sea each day at high tide. This act of "walking out to sea" led me to make images where the sea and sky started to dissolve into one another and the inclusion of small and sometimes blurred figures created a further sense of transience in relation to the inhabitation of these spaces.

The other feature that enabled me to allude to a sense of memory was my technique of considerably overexposing the negative and making adjustments in the scanning so as to distort the tonal range and give the images a washed-out bluish-green hue. In overexposing the film I found there was a fine line between achieving the tonal distortions I wanted and going too far so that the scanner could no longer register an image. This

process also led to a softening of the image, as light appeared to "spread out" and produce a slight indistinctness and lack of sharpness. I soon realized that this effect, which at first appeared to be a "technical issue", corresponded well with ideas of the indistinctness of memory as discussed in my theoretical writing and actually added to the work. The light that created the image also had the potential to destroy it.

(ii) The Transition in Practice from *Going Away* to *The Voyage*

After completing *Going Away* I wanted to produce more practice-based work that related to the direction of my theoretical writing. I started photographing new stretches of coast and inland rural areas using a similar "washed out" technique, this time applying it purely digitally (figures 30 - 34). While some of the coastal images were starting to work, I did not feel they were exploring anything that I had not already done in the previous work. At the same time there was a lack of continuity of theme in the rural images, and they did not always relate clearly to my intention of representing the processes of memory and forgetting.

Around this time I discovered an archive of old books and journals in the university and started photographing them (figures 35 & 36). The titles on the spines, such as "Wild Flowers Month by Month", along with the publication dates, related to ideas of the archive and formed an interesting link with the ideas of memory and forgetting I was exploring in my reading. The journals provided new metaphorical possibilities to work with; layers of paper became like layers of memory and the deteriorating surfaces like the process of forgetting and erasure. There was also a sense that by photographing the spines, the main contents of the journals remained unseen, like the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind. After working with further archives, I encountered the frustration that libraries were conserving their deteriorating books and journals by binding them together in new covers which made them impossible for me to photograph in the way I wanted. I was becoming increasingly interested in the opposite aspect of the preservation of such

archives: the loss, forgetting and erasure of memory through the fading, decay and destruction of their materiality. The more the work developed, the more I realized that I was not interested in documenting any sort of real archive; it became about constructing a form of fiction out of real fragments from the past, so as to create an overall visual metaphor for the processes of memory.

I stopped photographing books in institutional archives and started to buy old books from secondhand and antiquarian bookshops. This gave me the freedom to photograph in my studio, rather than in situ, and use more elaborate photographic techniques, but more importantly I was able to start deconstructing the physical anatomy of the books. This early experimentation led to the development of the main body of work for my research, *The Voyage*.

Figure 30: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

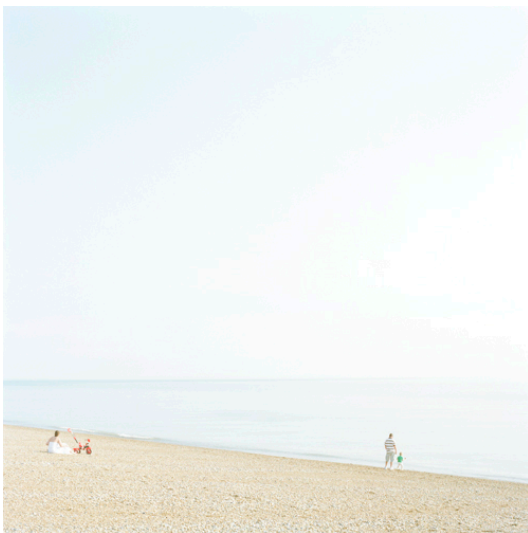Figure 31: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

Figure 32: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

Figure 33: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

Figure 34: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

Figure 35: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

Figure 36: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2011

(iii) The Voyage

The Voyage explores a photographic aesthetic that closely references the "copy set up." It is produced using a copy stand and ring flash. This form of lighting was originally developed for use in close-up documentation in medical photography. It produces a soft halo of light around the subject when it is offset from the background, but in the way I used it, placing almost flat objects in contact with the background, this effect is minimized, and the light appears to flatten everything into a single spatial plane, while illuminating every detail due to the lack of shadow; the object of study and the background becoming one. This merging of subject and background is further accentuated by the material properties of the two, the background and subject both consisting of fragments of aged and deteriorating paper. This technique resembles the effect of scanning because the light envelops the lens in a similar way to the action of a flatbed scanner.

The work, however, has an aesthetic intention and precision that runs contrary to the idea of the "copy photograph". The use of ring flash "suspends" the books in the image space, giving a spatial flatness that is unconventional for this type of photograph. The delicate nature of the

printing also differentiates the images, making reference to the more artistic associations of the "fine print", and therefore placing the work into an entirely different discourse from the archival copy. Through the use of particular forms of lighting, printing and digital manipulation, the pages are transformed from their original state. They are reframed and re-contextualized, taking them out of the original texts to which they belonged, and (often with the help of digital manipulation to add or remove words or images) transposing them into new fragmented narrative contexts.

As I started exploring the materiality of the old books I began pulling them apart, soaking them in bleach and physically combining fragments of pages, as in my developmental studies, figures 37, 38 and 39. There was an element of destruction in this that for me resembled the processes of forgetting and erasure of memory. What I was doing also fitted within the existing traditions of artists' altered books. Importantly, the altered books were not themselves the final work; through the transformation of the photographic process, I found that I could flatten the appearance of the layers or manipulate fragments of different books to make them appear to be the same book.

The initial image in *The Voyage* is of an imaginary ship's log (figure 20). This image was constructed out of fragments of more than one antiquarian book, parts of which were torn and bleached using a household cleaning product to mimic the action of dampness over time. The book boards were original, providing the impression of historical authenticity and helping to obscure the fabricated nature of the production process. The fragments were then placed together and photographed, before the words were added digitally, taken from scans of a typeface from another antiquarian book, and reconstructed into the words "Ship's Log, 1816," before digitally extending the paper tear across the date. The image is a combination of authentic original material, photographed using a copy stand in a style that refers to the

documentation of archival artifacts, and both physically/ digitally fabricated fiction.

Figure 40 is an auction house image of an authentic antiquarian whaling ship's log documenting a voyage from 1841-1843. It is described as "Water stained; some damage to paper on first dozen or so pages. Boards have seen better days, but the whole is still hanging together after 2 years onboard ship and over 150 years on land."[153] The similarities in the aging and material appearance of the two books should be clear. By visiting various specialist antiquarian bookshops and book fairs, I was able to establish a good idea of the typical appearance of original books of this age and type. These books are rare and valuable, often being of historic interest, so I was unable to photograph the books themselves, especially since I wanted to take them apart in order to reveal their construction and to give the impression of disintegration and loss.

As the work developed, it became evident that through the transformational aesthetics of the photographic process and the various "aging techniques" I was using on the books, the difference between an authentic historic artifact and a fabricated one became less clear. It was interesting how the use of household bleach mimicked closely the effect of years of deterioration and contact with water. With the careful use of a scalpel, books could be dissected, as if they had disintegrated due to the ravages of time. Text could be digitally cloned from one page to another, as in figures 20 and 24; water damage could be intensified, as in figure 21; and images could be added, and then faded at will, as in figure 25. Through the course of my investigations I was able to produce my own fabricated narrative that, like memory, began to blur the lines between the real and the imaginary.

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[153] Cowan's Auctions. http://www.cowanauctions.com/auctions/item.aspx?ItemId=74234. Accessed 29/4/2012.

Figure 37: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2012

Figure 38: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2012
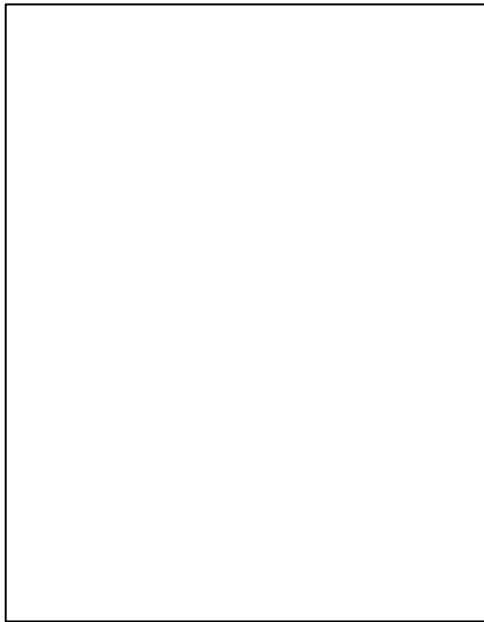

Figure 39: Peter Bennett, Untitled, 2012

Figure 40: *Whaling Ship's Log of the Tybee for 1841-1843* (Removed due to copyright)

Methodology Conclusion

The two main methodologies evolved out of the theoretical and practice-based changes that took place in my thinking during the process of my research. The transition from *Going Away* to *The Voyage* allowed me to explore visual metaphors for the processes of loss, forgetting and erasure more effectively, enabling closer links and a more productive dialogue between theory and practice.

In *Going Away* the methodology revolved around the production of a photographic fiction of the coast as a "remembered place". Through the specific choice of places, and the photographic techniques applied to their reproduction, the images were made to resemble the indistinct quality of memories from the distant past. While the methodology employed in *The Voyage* allowed me to visualize the structural processes of memory and forgetting by visualizing them as metaphors relating to the materiality of books. Through the development of these methodologies I was able to employ a range of visual metaphors in order to articulate ideas about the nature of memory in a similar way that the theorists I
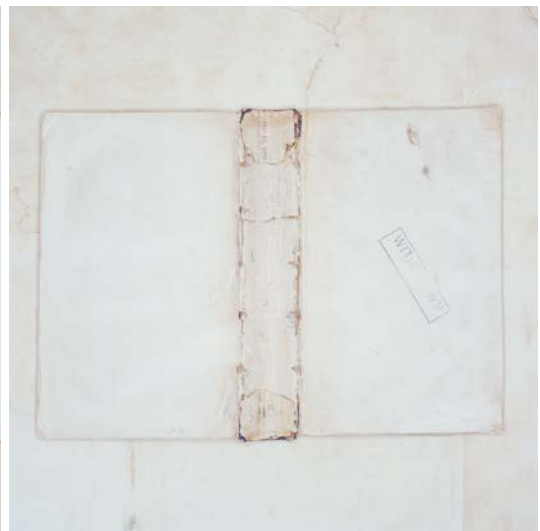
discuss in the initial chapter of my thesis did in their literary examinations of the processes of memory and forgetting.
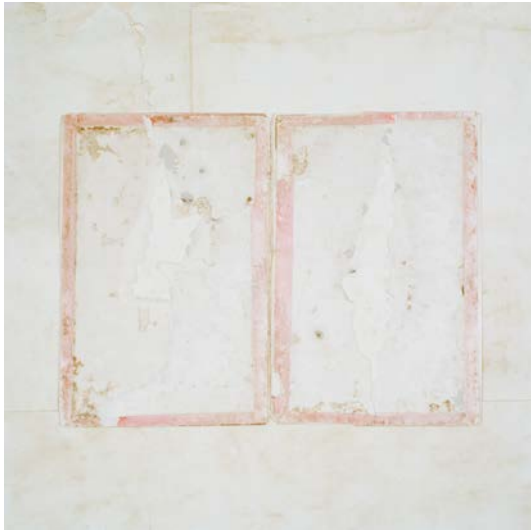
Appendix (ii)

Portfolio of Practice-based Work

(i) *The Voyage* **(Index of all 25 images)**

(ii) *The Voyage* **(Handmade folio of 25 archival inkjet prints, each 330mm x 330mm – separate from thesis)**