Double Gazing and Novel Spaces

An examination of the role of photographs in novels, using W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz as a case study and Roland Barthes’s interrogations of photography as an underlying context.

(This exegesis is part B of a two part PhD)

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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Introduction

This PhD Project consists of two parts:

Part A: A creative work in the form of a novel of 77000 words titled: Abraham’s Pictures with the final chapter, Just in Time, comprising 39 black and white photographs.

Part B: An exegesis of 20,000 words (not including appendices) titled: Double Gazing and Novel Spaces: An examination of the role of photographs in novels, using W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz as a case study and Roland Barthes’s interrogations of photography as an underlying context.

Synopsis of Part A: Abraham’s Pictures

Abraham’s Pictures is a novel of 77000 words and 39 black and white photographs. Told in third person limited narration,¹ it reveals the story of Abraham Rosen, a writer and photographer in Melbourne seeking to come to terms with a prediction, made on his fiftieth birthday, that his life will end in three months. He is committed to living his life ‘as normal’ in the shadow of his prediction. He also decides to shoot photographs for an exhibition he calls Just in Time. He schedules the exhibition for the very day of his predicted demise.

As he sits at his regular outdoor table at Café Obscura trying to make sense of the ‘ridiculous’ prediction, he is approached by a disheveled young man who seems to want money. He tries to engage with the young man but an out-of-control car skids on the wet tram tracks, killing its two occupants and knocking the young man into a coma.

The following day Abraham learns that he has won a competition to photograph the prototype of the Clock of the Long Now in London and to address the annual dinner of the Long Now Foundation.

The prediction and the accident set Abraham on a quest that takes him from Melbourne to London via Mumbai and Colombo before returning to Melbourne for his exhibition. Along the way he confronts issues of memory and denial as he is forced to question his life as a photographer. In the end it is the photographer who dies but Abraham survives as man who has learnt to live without being shackled to his past.

In writing Abraham’s Pictures I have sought to explore the relationships between time, photography, memory and coincidence. Underpinning this exploration is an attempt to grapple with some of the key theoretical questions about photography, in particular, the notion put forward by Roland Barthes, that a camera is like a clock for seeing, and that a photograph is a return of the dead and a message without a code.

By creating a series of photographs and positioning them in the novel, I am also seeking to explore the relationship between image and text. With the exception of three images used to illustrate the distinct parts of Abraham’s Pictures, all images in the novel appear as a ‘photo exhibition’ in Just in Time – the final chapter of the novel and the name of Abraham’s exhibition. As I outline in the final chapter of this exegesis, this modality of immersion differs from all the other novels with photographs that I have studied. My particular interest is in the relationship between imaginative (made-up) narrative and the indexicality (reference to something real) of a photograph. I chose this particular modality because I wanted to create a sense of the story that has been told with words, being re-told with images. My hope is that the effect will be twofold – to deepen a level of active engagement with the story and to trigger in the reader, an interrogation of photographic practice.

My work on this novel has been informed by my own twenty years experience as a photojournalist in many parts of the world, by the vast scholarship on the meaning of photography, particularly Roland Barthes, and by other novelists who have immersed photographs into their imaginative narrative – particularly W.G Sebald. I have also been informed by various discourses on the meaning and philosophy of time, particularly The Clock of the Long Now by Stuart Brand and the organization dedicated to public discourse on long-term thinking known as The Long Now Foundation.²

² See http://www.longnow.org/index.php for details
Research Question

What happens to a photograph when it becomes manifest in the pages of a novel? This is the key question that I explore in this exegesis. Related questions are:

To what extent does the photograph:

- interrupt the narrative or enhance it?
- make the narrative more ‘real’ by enhancing the process of ocularcentralism (seeing is believing) in the reader?
- serve as merely an illustration – useful but not essential to an understanding of the narrative?
- work with the text to open new and previously unexplored narrative possibilities?

A novel, even one that tends towards realism, is a work of imagination. It is made up. A photograph is usually of something that has ‘really been.’ According to the nineteenth century philosopher and pragmatist, Charles Sanders Peirce, ‘a photograph... owing to its optical connection with its object, is evidence that appearance corresponds to a reality.’\(^3\) The photograph is therefore, according to Peirce, indexical by nature. In *Camera Lucida* Roland Barthes reminds us that a photograph is not like a painting, which can feign reality. A photograph implies that ‘Something was really there.’\(^4\)

To suggest other meanings is to recognize the ambiguity of the relationship between a photograph and its referent and to acknowledge, as Andy Grundberg suggests, that ‘…images exist not to be believed but to be interrogated.’\(^5\)

My interrogation of photographs in a novel necessarily involves an interrogation of the indexicality of a photograph and a reading of the narrative context into which the image has been submerged. Such interrogation falls within the rubric of semiotic and structural analysis and is informed by theories of narratology and intertextuality.

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Methodology

I draw heavily on Barthes’s notions of second order connotation to consider the meaning of photographs in novels and to compile an annotated inventory of the photographs in W.G Sebald’s Austerlitz (Appendix 2). I also engage with Barthes’s notion of the ‘third meaning’ to unpack some of the symbolism in Sebald’s novel which contains some significant echoes of Barthes’s concept of time and photography.

In my interrogation of particular images I borrow the term ‘interplay of directed attentions’ from film theorist, Rudolph Arnheim, to suggest that the images provide an alternative second-order narrative that serves to enrich the reading of the primary narrative.

The practice of placing photographs into imaginative narratives has emerged from a strong tradition and appears to be gaining currency. In Appendix 2, I provide a brief historical overview of the relationship between photography and fiction.

In chapter two my emphasis is on Roland Barthes as I attempt to answer the question: What does Barthes say about photography that is relevant to my research question? In chapter three I draw upon Barthes’s notions of punctum, connotation and the ‘third meaning’ in my examination of the photographs in W.G Sebald’s Austerlitz and the echoes of Barthes.

Finally, in chapter four I reflect on my creative project, Abraham’s Pictures and the way in which my understanding of Barthes has influenced my construction of the narrative.

Rationale

In his essay Rhetoric of the Image (1977), Roland Barthes considers the advertising photograph in relation to text. He encapsulates his argument by saying:

‘Today, at the level of mass communication, it appears that the linguistic message is indeed present in every image: as title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon. Which shows that it is not
very accurate to talk of a civilization of the image – we are still, and more than ever, a civilization of writing?’

Barthes is suggesting that no matter how pervasive images might be, we still require writing to help decode them. This notion is very different from W.J.T Mitchell’s assertion, nearly twenty years later, that we are currently living in the *Pictorial Turn*. Mitchell, Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago and editor of the interdisciplinary journal, *Critical Inquiry*, uses this term in reference the American philosopher Richard Rorty who saw the history of philosophy as a series of turns ‘in which a new set of problems emerge and the old ones begin to fade away.’ To Mitchell, the *Pictorial Turn* means a rediscovery of a complex interplay. He states:

‘Whatever the Pictorial turn is then, it should be clear that it is not a return to naïve mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial “presence”: It is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the pictures as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figularity…it is the realization that *spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation etc).’

We are still a civilization of writing. But as Kress and Van Leeuwen argue, we are living in a ‘new semiotic landscape’ brought about by rapid and far-reaching demographic, cultural and technological change. One of these changes is the extent to which the image, particularly the photograph, is now privileged. It is in this context that the phenomena of placing photographs in novels is worthy of scholarly discourse. When novelists speak to us with both photographs and words we are necessarily invited into different ways of reading. James O’Donnell claims that, ‘…reading is not one simple thing, but a related set of activities, each with its own power

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8 ibid.
for enlightenment.’ There is the activity of ekphrasis – of employing words to conjure images. And there is the activity of looking at photographs and decoding them, not just in relation to the text into which they are immersed, but also in relation to cultural familiarity and context – to whatever the reader brings to the image. Reading is about looking. It ‘begins with the eyes’, says Alberto Manguel in his History of Reading. The act of looking is about sight, which, like a photograph, is inextricably concerned with light, with time and with memory.

To place a photograph in a novel is to engage in what psychologist and film theorist, Rudolph Arnheim calls an ‘interplay of directed tensions.’ Arnheim was concerned with moving images. My concern is with still images. When such images are immersed into a novel this interplay takes the form of a double gaze. The gaze of the reader is drawn by both the image and the text. When reading a newspaper there is an implied understanding that a photograph exists to illustrate the text. In a novel the photograph is far more complex and the double gaze of the reader is an attempt to grapple with the implied indexicality of a photographic image within a fictional context.

When he wrote Rhetoric of the Image, Barthes was primarily concerned with semiotics and he informed us that words, in the same way as images, ‘…are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realized at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis…’

Diegesis considers all the elements that make up a narrative, including those that influence a narrative but which themselves may come from outside the narrative. In this sense, photographs manifest within a fictional narrative obviously form part of the diegetic structure. However, because they contain a referent to some reality that may be outside of the narrative, they are regarded as extradiegetic.

By the time he came to write Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes regarded the camera as a ‘clock for seeing.’ In so doing he recognized the symbiotic relationship between the photographic image and the passage of time. This would have a profound

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bearing on the development of his notion of photographic punctum which I examine in more detail in chapter two.

As a product of this ‘clock for seeing’ Barthes suggests a photograph is an arrested or an extrapolated moment in time. But it is a moment of ‘time past’ and is therefore a moment that can never be repeated. Barthes also claimed that a photograph does not necessarily call up the past. ‘…the effect it produces on me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed.’ This dual role of photography – of being able to see a moment of time past and of validating something that ‘has been’, offers a powerful narrative device for the novelists.

Professor of German Studies, Mark McCulloh regards W.G. Sebald’s ‘visually augmented texts’ as a demonstration of ‘how photographs, even of unfamiliar persons in unfamiliar settings and times, have a particular power over people, provoking involuntary questions about the significance and meaning of the past.’ He claims that Sebald’s intention to employ photographs in his texts was influenced by Roland Barthes’s use of photographs in Camera Lucida and that Sebald recognized how the conscious use of certain photographs can ‘propel a narrative’.

There are significant echoes of Barthes’s concepts in Sebald’s Austerlitz. An examination of the images in Austerlitz, in the context of what Barthes and others have written about photography and its meanings, together with a reflection on my own creative practice, may offer a model for looking at photographs within imaginary narratives and contribute to a further understanding the relationship between photographic image and contemporary fiction.

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15 ibid., p. 82
17 ibid.
18 Camera Lucida was the last book that Barthes wrote before he was killed in a car accident in Paris in 1980, and Austerlitz was the last novel Sebald wrote before he was killed in a car accident in England in 2001. This may be more of an indicator of the statistical probability of fatal car accidents than a bizarre coincidence.
Chapter one: Literature Survey

According to Michel Sage, Professor of French at West Chester University, most studies of image/text relations ‘have analyzed how a picture resembles, recalls or influences a particular text or how image and text together define a particular historical period.’ In his introduction to a special issue of the journal *College Literature* titled: *Literature and the Arts: A French Perspective*, Sage addresses the importance of scrutinizing the borderline to ‘raise theoretical questions about the complex relations between image and text.’ He suggests that the image/text discourse has now moved beyond a study of simple juxtaposition to embrace a range of theoretical perspectives.  

It is these perspectives that I wish to consider in this survey. The literature relevant to my research question can be divided into two categories: that which interrogates the meaning of photography; and that which focuses on photographs in novels. Whilst some of the literature cuts across both areas, the second category is significantly less abundant than the first because the consideration of photographs in novels is still a nascent area of scholarship.

The relevant literature includes the historical and philosophical such as Walter Benjamin; John Berger, Nancy Armstrong, W.J.T Mitchell, Susan Sontag, Charles Sanders Peirce and Andy Grundberg; the structuralist and semiotic espoused by Yuri Lotman, Umberto Eco and Victor Burgin; the psycho-analytic of Diana Knight, Mary Bitttner Wiseman and Nancy Shawcross; and the narratological such as Marianne Hirsch, Silke Horstkotte and Mark McCullloh.

Cutting across, melding into and, at the same time, actively resisting all of these categories is Roland Barthes. His writings on mythologies, text, music and especially on photography continually reorient the thinking of the reader and it is to him I turn as the key theorist in my focus on the photograph in the novel.

In a separate chapter on Barthes I examine in detail how, in his consideration of photography as a signifying practice, he moved from a stringent structural and

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semiotic analysis to a more conjectural, personal and metaphysical realm. His final work, *Camera Lucida* represents the pinnacle of his shift in thinking. The Barthesian notions of *punctum* and *studium*, of *connotation* and *denotation* and of the *third form* are crucial to my interrogation of photographs in novels.

As secondary sources, the work of Nancy Shawcross, Diana Knight and Mary Bitttner Wiseman have been particularly useful for understanding the evolution of Barthesian thought and its relevance to my question.

In her definitive study *On Photography*, Susan Sontag regards a photograph as an artifact that exists in myriad contexts and acquires a range of meanings. Underlying her analysis is her belief that photographs are pieces of the world rather than statements about the world. Nearly thirty years later she wrote *Regarding the Pain of Others* in which she reconsiders some of her earlier questions about photographs and their meanings. In this later work Sontag states, ‘The photographer’s intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it.’ There is a definite echo of Barthes in Sontag’s statement which separates the work from its author and acknowledges a diversity of meanings. This notion of diversity is relevant to my research question because the realm of literary fiction is clearly one of these diverse communities.

**Image, text and the paradox of realism**

Nancy Armstrong’s *Fiction in the Age of Photography; The Legacy of British Realism* (1999) is an important text to an understanding of the influence of photography on the emergence of reality in fiction. Her work analyses the nineteenth century social and cultural milieu within which the practice of photography developed and, in turn, fed the prevailing desire for realistic representations in literature.

Armstrong’s thesis is that the realist fiction of the Victorian era refers not so much to ‘things in the world’ as it does to ‘visual representations of things as they might be photographed.’ Her exploration is not so much about the specific images of the time as it is about the prevailing and emerging ideologies that surrounded the production, distribution and decoding of photographic images.

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The practice of photography became so pervasive and so authoritative in its representation of the real that, according to Armstrong, ‘It could do to the sordid, the exotic and the private pockets of nineteenth-century life what the eye could do to the most accessible of public spectacles.’ In other words, photography became a new way of not just seeing reality that had hitherto been hidden from the public gaze. It became a new way of realising reality. Once again, this affirms the indexical nature of the photograph. It also accords with Barthes’s notion of a photographic consciousness (the awareness of reality that a photograph can kindle) articulated in Rhetoric of the Image.

It is Armstrong’s very definition of realism that makes her work particularly relevant to looking at photographs in novels. She addresses what she regards as realism’s inherent paradox, suggesting that it is:

‘…at once a text that reproduces its context and a context that reproduces its text. In both cases, we confront a system of representation that observes the paradoxical logic of a Möbius strip, striving at once to put its inside on the outside and to contain its outside within itself.’

This suggests that realism in fiction emerged as a transcendence of a one-dimensional (often romantic) view of things and that photography, because of its referent to reality, aided this process. Photography began to mirror a very different world from that which had previously been exposed to the public gaze, and, as Victor Burgin states, ‘Romanticism stressed the primacy of the author…Realism on the other hand stressed the primacy of the world.’

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22 Armstrong, N. (1999) *Fiction In The Age of Photography - The Legacy of British Realism*, (USA, Harvard University Press). Armstrong confines her focus to nineteenth century British realism. But across the channel in France, and only a few years into the twentieth century, Marcel Proust published his great opus, *Remembrance of Things Past* (more accurately known as *Search for Lost Time*). According to the writer and photographer, Brasaï, Proust was significantly influenced by photography’s power and possibilities. Brasaï’s book, *Proust in the Power of Photography*, attempts (albeit in a far less sophisticated manner) to do to Proust what Armstrong does to the literature of nineteenth century Britain. Brasaï is convincing in his attempt to document the influence of photography on the astonishingly visual memory of Proust, but Armstrong’s overarching discourse on realism offers a far better understanding of the symbiosis that developed between photography and realist fiction.


24 Armstrong, N. p. 16

Armstrong’s reference to the Möbius strip (with its non orientable surface) offers an appropriate metaphor for novels with manifest photographs. The orientation of the photograph is towards reality but the orientation of the imaginary narrative, even a ‘realist’ one, is away from reality. We therefore have a paradox. This is the essence of what, in chapter three I call the double gaze where the reader shifts focus between the images conjured by the text and the words evoked by the image.

To conjure an image with words is, as I mentioned earlier, to engage in the process of ekphrasis. This brings me back to W.J.T Mitchell. His discourse on Ekphrasis has been particularly useful for unpacking the dichotomy between description of an image conjured by words and an image that is physically manifest. He speaks of the challenge of using language to ‘make us see’ and he says of words that they can “cite,” but never “sight” their objects. However, Mitchell is less certain than other scholars, especially Victor Burgin, about the extent to which photography is necessarily ‘invaded by language.’ Just as Armstrong pointed to a paradox in reality, so Mitchell points to a paradox in the photographic image when he says:

‘Photography is and is not a language...the relation of photography and language is a principal site of struggle for value and power in contemporary representations of reality; it is the place where images and words find and lose their conscience, their aesthetic and ethical identity.’

As I show in the next chapter, Roland Barthes was engaged in a struggle with language and image, particularly when he wrote the second part of Camera Lucida. His interrogation of a very personal photograph – that of his mother, led him into a realm beyond language.

In his more recent work, What Do Pictures Want? Mitchell speaks of a Double Consciousness towards pictures and representations in a variety of media. He describes Double Consciousness (a concept he acknowledges as an echo of the work of critic, activist and socialist W.E.B DuBois), as the vacillation of the reader or the viewer ‘between magical beliefs and skeptical doubts, between naïve animism and

27 Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994), p. 281. Mitchell reminds his readers of the German Enlightenment critic and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s famous essay Laocoon: On the Limits of Painting and Poetry in which Lessing issued a law to poets that they should not combine their art with the art of painting for each is unique and should not pollute the other.
In chapter two, I show how Barthes vacillates in a similar way and in chapter three I suggest that such vacillation is triggered by the *double gaze* between images and text in the novel.

**Photographs as punctuation – turning spectator into speculator**

Victor Burgin asserts that we are still locked into a nineteenth century construct when we look at photographs. He claims our perceptions are:

‘…dominated by metaphor of depth, in which the surface of the photograph is viewed as the projection of something which lies behind or beyond the surface; in which the frame of the photograph is seen as marking the place of entry to something more profound – reality itself.’

In other words, Burgin is suggesting that when we regard a photograph we cannot escape its indexicality – its referent to a time and place.

It is in its relation to this temporal reality in general, and to the relationship between the two dimensional surface of the image and whatever lies beyond the surface in particular, that the paradox of a photograph becomes apparent. The paradox is to do with the complex duality of presence and absence. The existence of what we see revealed on the surface is clearly now absent because the very moment it represents has vanished and can never be recreated. This paradox is further complicated by photographs in novels where the reader is asked to consider the ‘real’ image in the context of the fictional text.

Along with structuralist and semiotician, Yuri Lotman’s theories of *The Text within the Text*, Burgin’s assertion that the ‘photographic text, like any other, is the site of a complex “intertextuality”, an overlapping series of previous texts “taken for granted” at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture,’ echoes much of Barthes.

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In regard to the immersed photograph, the surrounding text can be the perceived reality from which the image has been extrapolated. The intertextual discourse then becomes a process of looking between, across and beyond the image and the text.32

The immersion of a photograph into a novel may remove that image from its own indexicality, but, according to both Victor Burgin and Nancy Shawcross, photographs of reality do not, on their own, necessarily reveal much about reality. As Nancy Shawcross says, ‘Photographs represent figuratively and literally what existed in reality, but just because someone (or thing) has been there (the “here” depicted in the photograph) does not mean that the spectator can recollect or rediscover that reality.33

This opens the possibility for photographs to be read as fiction, and is probably the reason why Barthes referred to his own family photographs in his autobiography as a ‘fiction.’

Long before Barthes was writing on photography, Marxist philosopher Walter Benjamin expressed his concern about the limitations of photography. In his famous essay A Short History of Photography (1931), Benjamin stated how photographs of large industrial complexes, reveal ‘nothing about these institutions.’ (He cited the Krupp works as an example).34 Later, in The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936), Benjamin regarded the invention of photography as vehicle for the ‘emancipation of a work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual.’35 His questioning of the authenticity of the medium, based on its ability to be easily mass-reproduced, led him to conclude that ‘…the total function of art is reversed. Instead of a sign based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.’36

Scholars have long argued about Benjamin’s complex interpretations of politics.37 It is certainly debatable as to whether ritual can be regarded as somehow

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32 Julia Kristeva, a student of Roland Barthes and, with Lotman, a founding member of the International Semiotics Association, suggested Lotman was subverting semiotic convention with his notions of text as a reduced model of culture.


36 ibid.

outside of politics, (the structures and contexts of weddings, funerals, sporting events or cultural festivals would surely attest to the inseparability of politics and ritual).

As soon as photography became more accessible it became a medium for recording and validating the rituals of every-day life, particularly family life.

To observe such ritual via the stillness of a photograph is, according to Barthes, a very different experience from observing directly via the eye or looking at a movie. Barthes affirmed his preference for movie stills to the actual movie, claiming that, ‘The still offers us the inside of the fragment.’  

38 The still can also offer what Walter Benjamin termed the ‘Optical Unconscious’. Benjamin coined this term in reference to the ability of the camera to refer to that which may be hidden from the human gaze.  

39 This power of stasis is crucial to a reading of Austerlitz. Two images in the text are stills from the propaganda movie made inside the concentration camp at Theresienstadt. The film was made to ‘con’ the International Red Cross that conditions at the camp were like a resort, (images 63 and 64 in the annotated inventory in Appendix 2). By slowing the film down and extrapolating these moments of stasis, Austerlitz recognizes that the supposedly ‘happy’ people at Theresienstadt were in-fact zombie-like. More importantly, he also recognizes the face of his mother. This realization in the moment of stasis is analogous to Freud’s theories of the unconscious where the repressed content of the unconscious can disturb and disrupt the conscious acts of looking.

40 This disruption to the act of looking is what happens when we regard a photograph immersed into a narrative. If the narrative is ‘true’ (a newspaper article for example), the disruption is likely to be minimal since the photograph serves to simply illustrate the alleged truth of the text. It is there because of its indexicality and as a referent to the reality of the story.

In an imaginative narrative however, the disruption is far more significant because the indexical nature of the photograph necessarily opposes the made-up narrative. When we read a novel we know, even if the novel is informed by and seeks to mirror certain facts, that what we are reading is not quite true. When we confront a

39 An obvious example is Eadweard Muybridge’s Locomotion Studies in the late nineteenth century that revealed the true nature of how humans and animals moved.
photograph in a novel we enter a speculative realm as we ask, ‘who or where is this? Is it really real?’ Seeing becomes questioning rather than believing. And questioning is, as Barthes shows throughout *Camera Lucida*, an attempt to unravel what the photograph connotes rather than denotes.

I suggest that speculation involves entering the peripheral space beyond the borders (or the frame) of the image. As I show in the next chapter, this is what Barthes embarks upon in *Camera Lucida* where he eventually locates his photographic punctum – that certain something beyond the design and the content that draws the gaze of the viewer.

Immersed into a fictional narrative, the image therefore punctuates and interrupts the story. The question arises – what is the photograph interrupting? As an object in itself, the photograph interrupts time because it has arrested (or appears to have arrested) a moment in time. And time, according to Nancy Shawcross, is what lies at the heart of Barthes’s *punctum*. In interpreting Barthes she argues that a photograph engorges time and that: ‘The photograph is the existential replication by way of infinite repetition of what can have occurred only once.’

More than the specific content of the photograph, it is the unbearable sense of time passing evoked by the photograph that ‘wounds’ the viewer and which becomes, for Barthes, the photographic *punctum* – the point of true engagement with the picture. He calls this passage of time the ‘…lacerating emphasis of the noeme (“that-has-been”), and by suggesting that it should be measured not in form but in intensity,’ he is affirming a desire to go beyond the strictures of semiotic analysis.

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41 In *The Past Within Us - Media, Memory, History* (2005), Teresa Moriss-Suzuki regards photography as a form of punctuation – in particular as a question mark which sets in motion a procession of speculation that forms the ‘core process of historical truthfulness.’ p. 118. See also the preface to Eduardo Cadava’s *Words of Light – Theses on the Photography of History* (1997) in which he draws on the work of film critic Siegfried Kracauer to write a series of essays on Walter Benjamin. He quotes Krauer saying: ‘What makes photography, photography is not its capacity to present what it photographs but its character as a force of interruption.’ P. xxviii


Propelling the narrative with visual secrets and signposts to memory

As I outline in the next chapter, Roland Barthes offers an extensive discourse on the meanings of photography but he makes very few specific references to the practice of immersing photographs into novels. However, many of the writers and scholars who do examine this practice are clearly indebted to Barthes’s discourse on photography. For example, in his preface to the 1997 novel of text and photographs, I Could Read the Sky, John Berger claims that images and words work together but ‘…they don’t know the same things, and this is the secret of living together.’ Such a claim clearly echoes Barthes notion of the photographic punctum – whereby certain photographs speak secretly and in silence. According to Barthes the punctum is an addition to the photograph. ‘…it is what I add to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there.’ This apparent contradiction alludes to the speculative realm that Barthes entered with his discussion on the Third Form, which I address in the next chapter.

In Another Way of Telling, (Berger’s famous collaboration with photographer Jean Mohr), Berger, like Barthes, regards the image as a form of punctuation and a space for speculation and recall rather than definition. He concerns himself with the act of looking and he concludes:

‘The ambiguity of a photograph does not reside within the instant of the event photographed: there the event is less ambiguous than any eye-witness account…The ambiguity arises out of that discontinuity which gives rise to the second of the photograph’s twin messages. (The abyss between the moment recorded and the moment of looking).’

It is within this very abyss that Barthes ventures into the speculative realm in Camera Lucida. And it is in this abyss (as I outline in chapter three), where the double gaze between image and text in a novel can generate new layers of meaning.

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Nancy Shawcross extrapolates from Barthes’s idea of a photograph representing ‘that which has been’ to consider the images in two novels: *Stone Diaries* by Carol Shields and *Austerlitz* by W.G. Sebald. She suggests that the images:

‘…assist these two authors in posing a novel in the trappings of nonfiction genres. As effective as photographs can be to the theorist or memoirist in attesting to and helping recall “That-has-been,” they compete with rather than compliment conventional story telling, because the quality of certainty that the analog photogram may possess is a contradiction to the essence of fiction, a break in the tale being spun, a confrontation with intractable reality.’

The words, *intractable reality* are the very last two words Barthes wrote in *Camera Lucida* as he pondered on two ways of looking at a photograph. ‘…to subject its spectacle to the civilized code of perfect illusion, or to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality.’

The intractable reality of the photograph is, according to Barthes, its indexicality – its referent to something real. But when immersed into a novel such reality is being called into question. Shawcross refers to the American writer/photographer and academic, Wright Morris’s experimental photo-texts to support her thesis that photographs compete with conventional story telling, (see Appendix 1 of this exegesis for more detail on the work of Wright Morris). She quotes from an interview Morris gave in which he said:

‘The photo-text confronted me with many problems. Chief among them are that some people are readers, some are lookers…I was losing readers and picking up lookers. Several reviewers asked why this photographer was writing fiction. There was only one way to clear this up. Stop the photo-books. And so I did.’

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49 Shawcross, N. ibid., p. 99
This says more about Moriss’s perception of himself (am I a writer or photographer?) than it does about the use of a photograph in a novel. In a 1982 limited edition tribute to his work, Wright Morris wrote: ‘Words now affirm the photographic image, as photographs once confirmed reality. This seems to be the fate of all enterprises that are open to scrutiny and discussion. To the extent that the photograph is a ponderable object, it will have to be pondered with words.’ Pondering the photograph with words is exactly what Barthes embarks upon, initially in his autobiography Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, and finally in his seminal work, Camera Lucida.

Since the untimely and tragic death of W.G. Sebald in 2001, there has been a significant increase in scholarly attention to his work. This is coming from a range of disciplines such as Jewish Studies, German Studies and Media Studies. Many of these scholars focus specifically on the images in Sebald’s work while deriving their theories from the tenets of Barthes discourse. And most of them regard the immersed photograph as a powerful mnemonic device for propelling a narrative.

Silke Horstkotte uses narratological theories of focalization to ponder Sebald’s images. Drawing on Wagner’s notions of iconotext, (a blending and layering of the visual and the verbal that triggers interpretation based upon the viewers’ mindset and knowledge of the discourse and the image), Horstkotte concludes that photographs do not illustrate the verbal text. Rather, they enable the reader/spectator to enter the realm of the fantastic where ‘time and space open up into multiple dimensions. Words and images merge, and nothing is what it seems.’

This fantastic realm is akin the labyrinthine realm in which Barthes became immersed in Part Two of Camera Lucida when he was contemplating the image of his mother. In this realm, Barthes saw the image as a trigger to interrogate his relationship to himself, to his presence in the moment and his absence from his past.

Stefanie Harris, Professor of German and Comparative Literary Studies at Midwest University (USA), engages with what she calls ‘traditional photographic theory’ to interrogate the meaning of loss and the relationships between absence and

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53 Horstkotte, S, ibid., p. 41
presence in Sebald’s work,\textsuperscript{54} while Todd Presner, Professor of Germanic Languages and Jewish Studies at the UCLA refers to Sebald’s work as ‘a realistic history of the present, which, through his use of modernist techniques of narration, ‘unlinks’ history from the literal reproduction of the past.’\textsuperscript{55}

What seems to unite the growing body of scholarship on Sebald is recognition that his writing (like the later writings of Barthes), resists categorization and genre. It represents a complex literary interplay between the dimensions of past and present; and that the photographs immersed into this interplay are visual and mnemonic signposts that help propel the narrative into new layers of meaning.

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Chapter two: Reading Roland Barthes

As far as the ontology of the photograph is concerned, most roads lead to or emanate from Roland Barthes, particularly his final and most enigmatic work, Camera Lucida. This work is described by Graham Allen as ‘an impossible text’ because it moves from what appears to be a theory of the essence of photography to become a work of mourning for his mother.56 However, I share Allen’s conclusion that the work offers ‘many illuminating, if not immediately useable, insights into the nature of photography and representation generally.’57 Particular among these insights is the way Barthes extrapolates a connotated and a denoted meaning of photographs.

Camera Lucida is not a fictional narrative. But Barthes’s interrogation of the photographs he immerses into this work offers a useful basis for considering images in fictional narratives, in particular, the way he enters the ‘speculative’ realm by asking questions about that which lies beyond the frame of the photograph.

Messages, codes and signs

Before discussing Camera Lucida in detail, it is necessary to refer to aspects of Barthes’s earlier work, especially his essays, The Photographic Message, The Rhetoric of the Image and The Third Meaning. In these essays he employs various forms of semiotic and structural analysis to unravel photography as a signifying practice. Although Camera Lucida represents a significant departure from his commitment to semiotic analysis, it is clearly informed by the tenets of such analysis.

It’s well documented that Barthes’s early ideas on semiotics were influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure. In the posthumously published collection of interviews with Barthes titled The Grain of the Voice (a reference to Barthes’s early writing on music, transformation and transcendence), he affirms his disdain for the ‘analogical forms of thought and art’ (those that represent a copy of something). At the same time he expresses his attraction to the utter arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, which he

57 ibid., p. 132
discovered in his reading of Saussure, who concluded that there is ‘no relationship of resemblance between the signifier and the signified...’

As far as photography is concerned, perhaps the most important (and contested) point that Barthes asserts in his pre Lucida writing is that a photograph is a message without a code. By this he means that because a photograph is necessarily analogous to something (an object, a place or a person), it contains its own referent. In other words, a photograph is simply a (mechanical) trace created as a result of light falling onto an object. It is linked exactly to that which it reveals and is therefore essentially a ‘denoted message.’ As Barthes states:

‘Of all the structures of information, the photograph appears as the only one that is exclusively constituted and occupied by a ‘denoted’ message, a message which totally exhausts its mode of existence….In front of a photograph, the feeling of ‘denotation’…is so great that the description of a photograph is literally impossible…’

This is a reference to the limitations of language (similar to what Mitchell meant by suggesting words can “cite,” but never “sight” their objects). Barthes is suggesting that if we want to describe a photograph we can only use language, therefore any description, no matter how accurate, will necessarily result in connotation – the ascribing of a ‘higher meaning’ via some form of interpretation involving context. This may be counter to the denotation of the photograph and although Barthes suggests that describing a photograph is impossible, this is exactly what he goes on to do in Camera Lucida.

The terms denotation and connotation (initially referred to by Barthes as first order and second order meaning) are crucial to my question of how we regard photographs in novels. Before expanding on this it is necessary to consider the elements of semiotics where the relationships between sign, signified and signifier appear to be in an arbitrary continuum such that each new signified triggers a new signifier and a new sign. The argument goes something like this:

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• A sign can be anything in society but whatever it is; it is formed by an association of a signifier and a signified.

• The signifier is the representation, usually in the form of a sound (spoken) or a mark (written) that refers to the sign.

• The signified is not the object itself, but a concept or the idea (formed in the mind) of the object.

• Whilst each sign comprises an association between a signifier and a signified, each signified can, in turn, generate a second order signifier and sign – and so on.

In figure 1: below, I have selected the written word ‘book’ as a first order signifier. The signified (the mental picture or concept formed when thinking of a book) could be learning. And the sign is clearly the object – a particular book – for example, my concise Oxford English Dictionary.

The second order that is generated (indicated in upper case) stems from the signified of learning. When expressed as a second order signifier, learning might become a school room, the sign of which would be a particular classroom. To me, a school room signifies discipline (to someone else it might signify chaos or anxiety or friendship, depending on personal experience). This process is, as Saussure indicated, completely arbitrary.

Figure 1: The semiotic relationship between sign, signified and signifier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Signifier</th>
<th>2. Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(book)</td>
<td>(learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A hardback edition of the Oxford English Dictionary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. SIGNIFIER</td>
<td>B. SIGNIFIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[school room]</td>
<td>[discipline]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. SIGN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A classroom from my schooldays]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Barthes talks about denotation he means the most basic or the literal meaning of a sign. With regard to a photograph, it is simply the information contained within the picture. Connotation however, is a higher order of meaning – a subjective interpretation that involves experience and context. Connotation is that which is

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These terms become crucial to Barthes’s work on mythology as a ‘second-order’ system of signs in which he interrogates that which we take for granted. (I examine this in more detail later in this chapter. And in Appendix 2 I extrapolate a second order connotation of some of the photographs in an annotated inventory of all the photographs in Sebald’s Austerlitz).

To suggest that a photograph is a ‘message without a code’ is, according to Nancy Shawcross, logically impossible. As an object a photograph is a sign and, according to formal semiology, a sign exists strictly because of its position in a coded system. Shawcross suggests that Barthes is playing with language but she gets him off the hook when she reads his *message without a code* in the context of the three types of signs put forward by American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce. These are the:

- icon – based on resemblance to a sign
- index – based on correspondence to fact
- symbol – a general sign that has no natural or resembling connection with its referent.

Shawcross suggests that a photograph, according to Peirce’s categories, is an icon. Whilst I believe it makes sense to regard a photograph in this way it is also, because of its association with fact, an index.

It’s surprising that Shawcross makes no reference to Umberto Eco. Eco took issue with the semioticians who claimed that an image is an iconic sign, in possession of the properties of the object represented. In *Critique of the Image* (1982), Eco states that the theory of the photo as ‘an analogue of reality’ has been abandoned. ‘We know’ he says, ‘that it is necessary to be trained to recognize the photographic image.’ Eco’s argument is that an image is a message not, as Barthes suggests, ‘without a code,’ rather, it is a message with a reference to what he terms a perceptive code ‘which presides over our every act of cognition.’ In other words, the very act of perception is itself, is a coded activity. This is particularly relevant for the images in Austerlitz whereby the reader switches from the written to the visual narrative and

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61 An example often used to illustrate denotation and connotation is a rose. It may denote a flower but it may connote passion or love See: Allen, G. (2003) Roland Barthes, (London, Routledge), pp 33-52 for a concise summary of Barthes’s *semiotics*


back again. How the images are interpreted (connoted) depends on myriad variables, some of which are encoded in the text and others of which are encoded in reader experience.

In Rhetoric of the Image, Barthes regarded photography as having a ‘resistance to meaning.’ Several years later he wrote Mythologies, because, in his words, ‘I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there.’

Barthes unpacks the meaning of photography in two of the essays in Mythologies. In Photography and Electoral Appeal, he examines the use of photographs as symbols employed to sell political votes to the public. He suggests that photography plays an anti-intellectual role because it privileges ideology over politics. Barthes writes: ‘What is transmitted through the photograph of the candidate are not his plans, but his deep motives, all his family, mental, even erotic circumstances, all this style of life of which he is at once the product, the example and the bait.’

By identifying types of gaze within the electoral photograph (angle, focal length, closeness etc), Barthes reveals the layers of connoted meaning. However, he makes no reference to the text or slogans that inevitably accompany electoral photographs. The absence of any such comment is particularly surprising given his scathing criticism of Edward Steichen’s famous Family of Man exhibition. The problem for Barthes lies in the decontextualisation of the Steichen collection. There is no accompanying text and therefore, according to Barthes, ‘no history’. The images are meant to be venerated simply because they exist. There is no way of telling from the images what sort of circumstances the subject of the image lives in – whether they enjoy comfort and security or suffer pain and uncertainty. The only thing that can be deducted from them is that the subjects were in fact born. For this reason Barthes dismisses the exhibition as ‘an eternal lyricism of birth.’ As Shawcross says, according to Barthes, ‘… the removal of the images’ historical context yields

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66 ibid., p. 91
67 ibid., p. 102
sentimentality and a diffusjon of the accountability of the individuals well as societal action.'

In these early reflections on photography, Barthes reveals a concern for context that is carried through to *Camera Lucida*. His extrapolation of meaning via a debunking of ‘what can be taken for granted,’ offers ‘a meta language’ – a second-order language that results from ‘a process of transformation from the original meaning.’

In *The Third Meaning – Research notes on some Eisenstein stills*, Barthes interrogates a series of stills from two Eisenstein films. He articulates three levels of meaning in these stills – informational, symbolic and significance.

The informational is simply all that can be gleaned by observing what exists in the frame of the image. The symbolic can be either referential (referring to what is actually going on within the confines of the story or film), or diegetic (referring to a much bigger narrative – to a ‘theme’ that operates beyond the story). But it is *significance* – the third meaning, that becomes problematic and pivotal for Barthes.

Another word he uses for this meaning is obtuse. He suggests that this meaning is hard to define, that it has something to do with disguise, that it opens out into ‘the infinity of language’ and it can be ‘limited in the eyes of analytic reason.’ In particular, he says that obtuse meaning is, ‘discontinuous, indifferent to the story and to the obvious meaning (as signification of the story).’

It is in *The Third Meaning* that Barthes foreshadows his move away from structural and semiotic analysis. It is also here that he makes one of his few references (in a footnote) to what he calls the photo-novel:

‘There are other ‘arts’ which combine still (or at least drawing) and story diegesis – namely the photo-novel and the comic-strip. I am convinced that these ‘arts’ born in the lower depths of high culture, possess theoretical qualifications and present a new signifier (related to the obtuse meaning).'

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70 Barthes, R. (1977), ibid., pp 52-65
71 ibid., p. 61
72 ibid., p. 66
Although he doesn’t specify, Barthes is probably referring here to what became known as ‘movie tie-in novels.’ Whilst such novels are outside the realm of my research question, I think it is noteworthy that Barthes raises this point about the ‘new signifier’ of a photo-novel. By linking this new signifier to his obtuse (third) meaning, Barthes is offering a possible framework for the examination of photographs in the photo-texts he had in mind, but did not specify. This framework can, I believe, be also applied to literary fiction such as Sebald’s Austerlitz.

Barthes’s concept of the third meanings forms part of this framework. His third meaning is, according to Shawcross, a means of breaking out of the intellectual restrictions of a structural semiotic analysis. ‘Any reference to “third,” I contend, is a movement towards meaning not identified or understood within a binary system.’\(^{73}\) Sontag refers to Barthes’s ‘third meaning’ as liberating the critic as artist and as being ‘triadic’ rather than binary. She calls it a ‘poetics of thinking’ which identifies with the very mobility of meaning, with the kinetics of consciousness itself…\(^{74}\)

Far from implying that ‘anything goes’ when it comes to interpretation, I understand this as suggesting that meaning can be located by moving beyond certain restrictive frames. This is certainly what Barthes does in *Camera Lucida*.

**Decoding Camera Lucida**

*Camera Lucida* is a slim volume of 119 pages written in 48 sections and divided into two distinct parts. Part One is driven by Barthes’s curiosity triggered by a picture of Napoleon’s younger brother, Jerome, taken in 1852. Barthes doesn’t show us this image. But he says of it: ‘I realised then, with an amazement I have not been able to lessen since: “I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor.”’\(^{75}\)

The next 57 pages and fifteen photographs are an attempt to address the meaning of the photograph. Barthes has clearly moved away from the semiotic analysis employed in his earlier work towards a more philosophical and metaphysical language. As Mary Bitttner Wiseman states in *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes*, ‘Inscribed in Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* are notions of a generic identity as

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\(^{73}\) Shawcross, N. *Personal email correspondence*, October 6\(^{th}\) 2006.


sprawling as the ancestral tree whose lines it draws and a specular identity as short-lived as the click of a camera.'\(^76\)

It is here that he develops his ideas on *studium* (the information conveyed by a photograph) and *punctum* (the ‘accidental’ aspect of the image that ‘wounds’ the viewer). At the end of Section One Barthes seems to be meditating on photography. He suggests that the best way to see a photograph is to look away and close your eyes. In quoting Kafka, ‘We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds…’\(^77\) he seems to be engaging with the paradoxical nature of a photograph and emphasizing the relationship between memory and photography (a relationship that underscores the presence of the images in Austerlitz).

Part Two of *Camera Lucida* begins shortly after the death of Barthes’s mother. This section becomes deeply personal. Barthes is searching through some old photographs. He wants to ‘re-create’ his mother (this is not dissimilar to the way Sebald’s Austerlitz seeks images of his mother by searching old photographs and film footage). Eventually Barthes finds a picture of his mother when she was aged five (in 1898) with her seven year old brother. He calls it the *winter-garden photograph* because it was taken in a glassed-in conservatory. Barthes, who nursed his mother through her final years, writes of her weakness in the days before she died – before he found the photograph. He invests a lot in this photograph. He tells us that in it he found ‘…the impossible science of the unique being’. He reflects on how he discovered it by moving ‘back through time – through the life of someone he loved.’ Above all, he finds within the photograph the ‘essence of all photography’. It somehow provides for him a way out of the labyrinth, of ‘all the world’s photographs.’ It eventually leads him to change the nature of his enquiry. ‘I had understood that henceforth I must interrogate the evidence of photography, not from the viewpoint of pleasure, but in relation to what we romantically call love and death.’\(^78\)

In *Structural Analysis of Narratives*, written before *Camera Lucida*, Barthes attempts to compare a lyrical poem with the narrative of a novel. He claims that lyrical poems can be reduced to the signifieds *Love* and *Death*.\(^79\) To speak of love and death in *Camera Lucida* in relation to the ‘evidence of photography’ is indicative of

\(^77\) Barthes, R. (2000). ibid., p. 53
\(^78\) ibid., p. 73
the extent to which Barthes’s quest has become intensely personal. Until now he has sought to understand photography as representation. His construction of *studium* and *punctum* has helped delineate his sense of seeing from his sense of feeling. But with the discovery of the image of his mother, Barthes appears to have slipped through a portal into a whole other dimension where photographs form a symbolic code, open to a complex process of connotation.

The winter-garden photograph is possibly one of the most significant unseen photographs in the history of photographic discourse. Barthes says (in parenthesis) that he cannot reproduce the photograph because ‘It exists only for me. For you it would be nothing but an indifferent picture.’ It therefore remains a narrated rather than a manifest photograph and debate continues as to whether the photograph ever existed other than as a figment of Barthes’s imagining.

Marianne Hirsch is clearly moved by what she refers to as Barthes’s ‘trajectory through his reflections on photography – from a general analysis of how photographs acquire meaning to an elegiac autobiographical narrative.’ Before describing Barthes’s winter-garden photograph as a *prose picture*, she suggests that family photographs ‘locate themselves precisely in the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life. They can ‘show us what we wish our family to be and, therefore, what most frequently it is not.’

It may well be that Barthes is imagining an idea rather than facing a reality. Diana Knight, Professor of French at the Nottingham University (UK), is more definite. She claims that the winter-garden photograph is a fiction, created to provide a ‘symbolism of light and revelation’ to tie in with the very title of his book which is an inversion of the *camera obscura* (dark chamber) into the *camera lucida* (light chamber).

There is no doubt that Barthes is seeking to shed light on photographic meaning. He does this by moving further into consideration of the peripheral photographic space – of the space beyond the frame. Whilst I don’t have space here to consider all of the images in *Camera Lucida*, there is one that I believe epitomizes Barthes’s move into peripheral space. In section 39 he publishes an image by

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82 ibid., p. 8
photographer Alexander Gardner titled: Portrait of Lewis Payne, 1865. Payne was executed for his assassination attempt on the then Secretary of State. The full-page black and white image shows a young pensive man in a prison cell waiting to be executed. His hands are shackled and his solemn gaze is directly towards the camera.

To the image Barthes adds the following text: ‘He is dead and he is going to die…’

Obviously Payne was not dead at the time the image was taken. But by the time Barthes came to regard the photograph, Payne had met his demise (this is what led Barthes to his belief that photographs ‘resurrect the dead’). However, my point is that there is no way Barthes could know, just by looking at the image, who Payne was, why he was in prison or what had become of him. To discover the identity and the circumstances of the subject he needed a context beyond the frame of the image. He needed to go beyond being merely a spectator of the image. In fact Barthes needed the very substance that he identified as ‘missing’ in Steichen’s Family of Man exhibition. He needed history.

A vocabulary of resurrection

Diana Knight regards Camera Lucida as Barthes’s return to a recognition of the reality that a photograph re-presents. She says:

‘That this late celebration of a direct contact with reality should be presented to the reader as a vocabulary of resurrection and madness suggests that Barthes, in is final period, has not only abandoned the semiological approach as method. More fundamentally, he seems to have moved into a different conceptualisation of reality itself.’

This conceptualisation concerns itself with the borderline between seeing and believing and with the relationship between reality and fiction. It is what Martin Jay refers to as an ‘antiocularcentric discourse’ and it is essential to my question about the relationship between the photographic image and the fictional text.

84 Barthes, R. (2000), p. 95
85 Knight, ibid., p. 8
By using the term *vocabulary of resurrection*, Knight is referring not only to the way in which Barthes raises the question of reality, but also to his desire for photographs to return something that has been. In the next chapter I identify what I believe to be a profound vocabulary of resurrection in Sebald’s Austerlitz.

The final of the 24 photographs that Barthes includes in *Camera Lucida* is by André Kertész. It is titled: *The Puppy. Paris, 1928*. The full page black and white image shows a boy in a rather shabby jacket clutching a small puppy close to his face. The boy is looking almost threateningly as well as fearfully towards the camera as he seems to be protecting the puppy, which, like all puppies, appears innocent and vulnerable. An out-of-focus figure is behind the boy, indicating that the boy is not alone. To this image Barthes adds the following incomplete caption:

“*He is looking at nothing; he retains within himself his love and his fear: that is the look...*”

At the denoted level the image reveals a boy clutching a puppy dog. At the connoted level we enter a labyrinthine realm of conjecture. The incompleteness of the caption implies that this realm is a continuum – that there are no definitive answers – just more questions. Who is the boy? Does the puppy belong to him? What has become of the boy and the puppy since the image was taken? Perhaps the boy is Jewish and ghettoized. Perhaps he has found solace in the puppy that he cannot find elsewhere. And what are we to make of the text that Barthes has put with the image? Of course the boy isn’t really looking at nothing. He is in fact looking at the camera. What does he see?

I believe we can never be absolutely clear why Barthes selected this particular image or composed that text to go with it. The image obviously struck him. He found within it the punctum that is so crucial to engagement.

I suggest that Barthes is in fact arriving at a conclusion very similar to that which Horstkotte spells out in her analysis of Sebald’s photographs. He is opening up multiple dimensions – and in so doing he is seeing certain madness. As he says at the end of *Camera Lucida*:

‘Here is where the madness is, for until this day no representation could assure me of the past of a thing except by intermediaries; but with the photograph, my certainty is immediate; no one in the world can undeceive me. The
photograph then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time.  

On first reading it appears that Barthes is somewhat naïve to invest such faith in the certainty of an image. However, if we accept Shawcross’s thesis that ‘photography allows Barthes to assume the role of a novelist’ (because through it he enters the realm of speculation and imagination), and that Camera Lucida ‘unfolds like a mystery novel told from an autobiographical point of view’, it becomes apparent that he is in the realm of multiple dimensions where the indexicality of a photograph becomes subsumed by the power of imagining.

Shawcross refers to Camera Lucida as the ‘third form’ where Barthes is re-evaluating the ‘extremes’ of his former positions (the previous two forms can be regarded as his structuralist and his semiotic/linguistic). She regards this third form as being parallel to the argument that Barthes posed in his earlier work, S/Z, where the reader becomes a producer rather than a consumer of the text.

Ten years before Camera Lucida, Barthes wrote Empire of Signs, based on his experiences in Japan. In the front of his book, he expresses a view about the relationship between images and text by saying:

‘The text does not “gloss” the images, which do not “illustrate” the text. For me, each has been no more than the onset of a kind of visual uncertainty, analogous perhaps to that loss of meaning Zen calls a satori. Text and image, interlacing, seek to ensure the circulation and exchange of these signifiers: body, face, writing; and in them to read the retreat of signs.’

In Zen, a satori suggests a sudden individual enlightenment, an intuitive experience, a transcendence of the need for logical meaning and a triumph of ‘non duality’. The word is derived from the Japanese satoru which means ‘to know’.  

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[^87]: Barthes, R. (2000) P. 115
[^89]: ibid., p. 71
[^90]: Shawcross, ibid., p. 79
stating that the signs are in retreat, Barthes may have been (perhaps subconsciously) foreshadowing the deeply personal engagement he was to have with the visual uncertainly of photography in *Camera Lucida* – the very title of which suggests enlightenment. In Sebald’s Austerlitz, as in many novels with photographs, there is indeed a complex ‘circulation and exchange of signifiers’ through such an interlacing of text and image.

As a prelude to my specific focus on the images in Sebald’s Austerlitz, and as a conclusion to this chapter, I am drawn to Jacques Derrida’s tribute to Roland Barthes which he titles *Deaths of Roland Barthes*. Derrida is not suggesting that Barthes died many times, but that Barthes experienced many losses during his lifetime. One of the losses, it seems, was a loss of faith in the ability of semiotics to provide meaning to photography. In *Camera Lucida* there is a sense in which Barthes is pulling together fragments from a range of theories and discourses in order to find meaning. Derrida’s tribute to Barthes is written in what he calls *fragments*. He refers to them as ‘…these little stones, thoughtfully placed, only one each time, on the edge of a name as the promise of return.’

Clearly, Derrida is evoking the Judaic tradition of placing stones (rather than flowers) on graves as a symbolic gesture of a promise to return (an evocation that is visually represented by the front cover photograph on Derrida’s book *The Work of Mourning*).

Roland Barthes has shown us how a photograph can re-present a return of something. And how, when we bring text to the image, we can be drawn into the realm of multiple dimensions – into a continuous ‘circulation and exchange of signifiers’.

Like Derrida’s stones, the photographs in Austerlitz can be regarded as fragments. They offer the reader opportunities to pause, to reflect on this *circulation and exchange* and to construct the narrative.

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Chapter three: Double Gazing at W. G. Sebald’s Austerlitz

As stated earlier, the aim of this exegesis is to consider what happens when photographs are immersed into novels. Is the reader expected to suspend disbelief in the indexical nature of the image – in its referent to a certain reality? Is the author, as Nancy Shawcross suggests, posing a novel in the trappings of nonfiction?

Having outlined some of the relevant tenets of Barthes’s on photography, I will now consider W.G. Sebald’s final novel, Austerlitz, as a case study for applying Barthes’s concepts of connotation, of punctum and of the third form.

References to specific images in Austerlitz are denoted with image/page number in parenthesis (# 7/26) refers to image no 7 on page 26 of Austerlitz. In this chapter I will also be referring to the annotated inventory of photographs in Austerlitz that I have compiled as Appendix 2.

Physicality of the book

Two crucial aspects to the physicality of the book are the 76 black and white photographs spread throughout the 414 pages of text, and the fact that there are no quotation marks indicating speech and almost no paragraph breaks. The effect of this is to achieve what Barthes mentions in Empire of Signs – ‘an interlacing of text and image which generates a circulation and exchange of signifiers’. It is Barthes’s notion of connotation – of a second order meaning, which becomes pertinent to how the images in Austerlitz are read in relation to the text.

Synopsis of the story

Sebald’s last book tells the story of an elderly architectural historian named Jacques Austerlitz who seeks to reconstruct his forgotten origins. Through a series of often coincidental encounters with the unnamed first-person narrator, fragments of Austerlitz’s life come together in an almost dreamlike sequence as he and the narrator rendezvous in various locations in Europe and then in England.

The novel reveals complexities of relationships – between memory and identity, place and space, self and other and, above all, between time past and time present.
We learn (via the narrator) that Austerlitz arrived in England, aged four and a half, on a train from Prague in 1939. The train was part of the *Kindertransport* and Austerlitz was sent to England by his mother who did not survive the holocaust. The boy was fostered by an austere Calvinist couple, Emyr Elias, a Pastor, and his timid English wife Gwendolyn. They lived at the manse in an isolated Welsh village called Bala.

Austerlitz learns nothing of his Jewish origins as he grows up in the Welsh village. He acquires English, loses his mother tongue and lives his school years as Dafydd Elias. He is thirteen when Gwendolyn dies of a mysterious illness (on epiphany day). If he were among his own people he would be having his Bar Mitzvah. Instead he is packed off to boarding school. Many students regard the school as prison-like. For Austerlitz it is liberating. He flourishes in sport and in academia. He earns a sixth-form scholarship and when he registers for his exams he learns, for the first time, that his real name is Jacques Austerlitz. Although he is intrigued by the name, he feels no emotional connection to it. He is told to keep it a secret but eventually he shares it with an enthusiastic teacher who takes him under his wing and helps him secure a place at Oriel College.

Much later in his adult life, when he is embarking on his post retirement project of writing about architecture, Austerlitz enters a disused waiting room at Liverpool Street Station in London. There he experiences a strong feeling of *déjà vu* as he realizes that he is standing in the very place where the Welsh pastor and his wife came to collected him from the train from Prague all those years ago. This experience triggers a feeling of an ‘internal wrenching and heartache’ which Austerlitz tells the narrator was ‘caused by a vortex of lost time.’\(^{94}\) Austerlitz then embarks on a painstaking search for his childhood and the destiny of his parents.

Identity, memory, time and stillness are key elements to Sebald’s novel. Along the way the reader also learns much about architecture as well as details of the Nazi campaign to rid Europe of its Jewish population.

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Photography and the Barthesian echo

Photographs and the act of photographing play a key role in revealing that which would otherwise remain unseen in Sebald’s Austerlitz. Apart from the 76 pictures that are actually manifest there are many references in the text to the practice of photography, which serves as a metaphor for memory and resurrection as well as a validation for being. As such there are significant echoes of Barthes, particularly his photographic punctum, his concern with the lacerations of time, and his notion of photography as a certificate of presence.

Austerlitz himself is a keen photographer. At boarding school he enjoys experimenting in the darkroom. He tells the narrator how he never really photographed people and how he ‘…was always especially entranced…by the moment when the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing tray for too long.’

When Austerlitz arranges a rendezvous with the narrator in Paris, he speaks of an earlier time when he used to live in Paris. He would walk endlessly though suburbs taking what he called banlieu-photographs (suburban photos) ‘…which in their very emptiness, I realised only later, reflected my orphaned frame of mind.’ Austerlitz photographed places that he couldn’t remember and he became ill with fainting fits that would cause memory loss or ‘hysterical epilepsy’. Only when he developed his photographs was he able, with his friend Marie, to ‘reconstruct his buried experiences’.

For Austerlitz, as for Barthes, photography becomes a powerful mnemonic device, not only for what is present but also for what is absent – for what has been lost. It is as if he can only form a mental frame of his fragmented experiences by framing his camera and constructing images that become signposts to lost time.

The act of looking and focusing is as relevant to the narrator as it is to the protagonist. The novel begins where the narrator is visiting a Nocturama in Antwerp and he comments that the animals possess ‘…strikingly large eyes, and the fixed inquiring gaze found in certain painters and philosophers who seek to penetrate the

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95 Sebald (2001), ibid., p. 109
96 ibid., p. 370
97 ibid., p. 374
darkness. This comment is accompanied by the first four photographs manifest in the text showing four pairs of eyes – two human two and two animal, in extreme close-up (# 1,2,3,4/3).

When regarding these images the reader is immediately taken away from the Nocturama in Antwerp and into the realm of the philosophical gaze that seeks enlightenment. This realm has its parallels with the realm that Barthes entered via *Camera Lucida* (Light Chamber). There is a strong desire to see beyond the referent of the photographic image – to *feel* rather than just see the image. For Barthes, this desire found its expression in the photographic punctum and in process of connotation and speculation. For Sebald the desire is manifest through the wanderings and the relationships of his protagonist, Austerlitz.

The fourth image in this first sequence of images is in fact a close up of the eyes of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. A few pages further into the book there appears a photograph of a rucksack (#13/55) and another reference to Wittgenstein. Austerlitz informs the narrator that the rucksack is the only truly reliable thing in his life and that Wittgenstein also carried a rucksack on his wanderings.

There is a definite resonance between Wittgenstein, the Austrian born Jewish convert to Christianity who was particularly concerned with logical positivism and power of language; and the fictitious Austerlitz who was born Jewish, raised by Calvinists and spent his adult years attempting to recover his lost language.

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein employed the metaphor of a ladder to make sense of the world of language and ideas. The ladder is used to gain a big-picture view. But the ladder can only be used once before being discarded. Every subsequent attempt is a new beginning and needs a new ladder. For Barthes, Wittgenstein’s ladder becomes Ariadne’s thread that helps him navigate his way out of the labyrinthine maze of photography and its meanings.

In Sebald’s Austerlitz, the protagonist is also scrambling through a labyrinth – not of photography but of history. He dons his rucksack and wanders around Europe, taking photographs as he goes in an attempt to create moments of stillness and to extrapolate sense from the senseless. Some of those images are manifest in the novel. It is then up to the reader to navigate a coherent path through the resulting labyrinth of

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98 ibid., p. 3  
images and text. The reader does this by engaging in a double gaze and a process of connotation. The image of the rucksack for example, clearly connotes the wanderings of Austerlitz who, because of his childhood experiences, seems destined to remain forever displaced. Austerlitz has spent a lifetime wandering across borders – both real and imagined. And there is a real sense in which the novel itself transgresses borders of fact and fiction as well as of image and text. As Mark McCulloh says, Austerlitz is ‘… a holistic amalgam of literary, historical, and cultural allusions, in which conventional borders – both of form and content – are penetrable and shifting.’

This interlacing and shifting is the intertextual at work. It enables the reader to not merely consume but also construct the story by engaging with the relationship between the text and the images.

Once we leave the images of Wittgenstein’s eyes and return to the text, we are back on location in Antwerp, but we are changed because of the images that have punctuated the text and drawn our gaze. This act of double gazing enriches our experience of the overall narrative.

Further into the story the narrator has problems with his eyesight. The treatment involves having his eyes photographed. The image conjured of eyes being photographed is of an eternal recurrence of a returned gaze.

For the narrator, photography becomes a form of validation, not only of his own insights, but also of the relationship that he forms with Austerlitz.

After months of no communication, the narrator receives a postcard from Austerlitz (# 30/166), suggesting a rendezvous at his (Austerlitz’s) London house. When the narrator enters the sparsely furnished house he notes a number of photographs on a table (some of which are manifest in the book.) The narrator imagines Austerlitz pouring over his images ‘like a game of patience.’

Towards the end of the novel Austerlitz and the narrator are in Paris. The narrator tells us that Austerlitz ‘…gave me the key to his house in Alderney Street. I could stay there whenever I liked, he said, and study the black and white photographs which, one day, would be all that was left of his life.’

There is a key parallel here with how Barthes regarded the photograph – as evidence of what has been. And just as the concept of the lacerations of time became

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102 Sebald, W. G. (2001), ibid., p. 408
crucial to Barthes’ attempt to grapple with the paradox of the photograph, so it is equally critical to how Austerlitz constructs his sense of self with the aid of photographs.

At the Greenwich Observatory Austerlitz tells the narrator that he thinks time is the most artificial invention. He says that the dead are ‘outside time’ and that he has never owned a clock or a watch.\(^\text{103}\) Part of this is Austerlitz’s desire to prevent what Barthes regarded as the lacerating wound of time embodied in a still photograph. There is also a sense in which Austerlitz himself is living outside time, alongside the dead – perhaps because he has not yet been able to recover his own lost time.

The novel is full of signifiers to death and decay. For example, for reasons he cannot explain, ‘even to himself’, Austerlitz becomes obsessed with photographing skeletal human remains at the excavations at Broad Street Station. Austerlitz tells the narrator how he learns, from the archaeologists at the excavations, that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the city had risen on top of thousands of bones and decayed bodies. In this context, the full-page photograph of skeletal remains (#33/185) serves far more than an illustration. It becomes a signifier to the layers of dead in Austerlitz’s own life that he is, metaphorically, yearning to excavate.

There are two images that I regard as being pivotal to Sebald’s dream-like narrative, both of which contain significant echoes of Barthes looking at his own family photographs. One is the picture of Austerlitz himself as a small boy (#42/258). The other is an image of his mother, which he discovers from a freeze-frame of the propaganda film made in Theresienstadt concentration camp (#64/351).

The image of himself is presented to Austerlitz in Prague by Vera – his mother’s neighbour and former nurserymaid to Austerlitz. Before showing him the picture of himself, she shows another image of a theatre stage (#41/257) where his mother once performed. The narrator tells us that Austerlitz spoke of how Vera mentioned the mysterious quality peculiar to such images that ‘surface from oblivion’. She said that that there is ‘…something stirring in them, as if one caught small sighs of despair…’\(^\text{104}\) To connote a photograph in this way is, I believe, akin to a Barthesian ‘third form’. It is to identify the photographic punctum – that ineffable something that wounds the viewer.

\(^\text{103}\) ibid., p. 143
\(^\text{104}\) ibid., p. 258
The image of the four year-old Austerlitz, swathed in white fancy-dress, was taken in 1939, six months before his mother sent him to England. Inside the book the image is small – a quarter of a page. It also appears much larger on the cover of the book. The boy is standing in a field. He has wispish white hair and he is clutching an extravagant white hat. His left arm appears to be in a white sling and his gaze is direct to camera. The horizon is blurred with mist. There is something specter-like about this photograph as if the boy has somehow emerged from the ether.

This image is profoundly moving because of what we know about the fate of the boy. We know that he will lose his parents and also his identity. We know that throughout his adult years he will experience the dull ache of yearning for a lost time. In short, we know the impact of time’s lacerations. The image is also enigmatic. There are things we don’t know. Who is the boy in the picture? Is it Sebald as a child? The angelic-like face of the child certainly looks like a younger version of the teenage boy on the far right of the rugger team at his boarding school (# 18/106). Austerlitz mentions this team picture to the narrator, pointing out himself on the far right of the front row. Later he sends the picture to the narrator.

Even if the two pictures are of the same person, we still have no idea who, in reality, that person is. Maybe this doesn’t matter. However, to enter this realm of conjecture is to engage with Arnheim’s ‘interplay of directed attentions’. It is to exercise the double gaze. As a reader I am in the paradoxical realm of the Möbius strip with its non orientable surface. I look to and away from reality at the same time and I am grappling with a similar visual uncertainty that Barthes faced in *Empire of Signs* and, later on, in *Camera Lucida*. The result is that I am doing what Nancy Shawcross suggests Barthes is advocating in his third form. I am producing (as well as consuming) the narrative.

In regard to the picture of the boy in the field, the gaze is actually a triple gaze because not only is my gaze shifting between the text and the immersed image of the boy, I am also looking over Austerlitz’s shoulder as he gazes at the picture of himself. He tells the narrator how he examined every detail under a magnifying glass without once finding the slightest clue. ‘And in doing so I always felt the piercing, inquiring gaze of the page boy who had come to demand his dues, who was waiting in the grey
light of dawn on the empty field for me to accept the challenge and avert the misfortune lying ahead of him.’  

We know that destiny cannot be changed but there is a sense of being able to suspend such belief when we look at a photograph. As André Bazin’s said, a photograph represents ‘…the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration, freed from their destiny…’

Despair and hope exist in that halted moment. And when that moment contains an image of one’s own self – albeit a much younger self, there is, for Barthes, a fundamental questioning of identity. ‘I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes imposture (comparable to certain nightmares).’

Later, after dreaming that he returned to his childhood apartment in Prague and his parents walked in, oblivious to his presence, Austerlitz says to the narrator, ‘It does not seem to me…that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the rules of a higher form of stereometry, between which the living and the dead can move back and forth as they like…’

As I have mentioned earlier, both Barthes and Sontag regarded a photograph as a return of the past. One of the purposes Sontag ascribed to photography was to ‘…restate symbolically, the imperiled continuity and vanishing extendedness of family life.’ When he gazes at the image of his own lost childhood, Austerlitz is painfully aware of what has vanished – and it is through photography that this vanishing is, symbolically at least, returning.

The sense of time passing is never far from the gaze of Barthes and there is an interesting parallel between the way the fictional character Austerlitz regards images of his childhood, and the way Barthes regards his childhood images in his autobiography that he calls a fiction. Beneath a solitary image of himself as a small child, staring self-consciously and shyly towards the camera, Barthes added the

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105 ibid., p. 260
108 Sebald (2001), ibid., p. 261
caption, ‘I was beginning to walk, Proust was still alive, and finishing À la Recherche du Temps perdu.’

In an interview with the journal Le Photographe, Barthes stated that he loved captioning images and exploring the relationships between images and text, which he described as ‘… a very difficult relation but which thereby provides truly creative enjoyment.’

Sebald does not caption his images, but there is a sense in which the images are captioned by the text into which they are immersed. Deriving the second order connotation of the images (as shown in my annotated inventory in Appendix 2) is a process of reading the image in the context of this surrounding text.

The second pivotal picture in Austerlitz isn’t actually a photograph. It’s a still from the propaganda film that was made in Theresienstadt, (titled The Führer Gives the Jews a City, it was made to convince the Red Cross that the place was akin to a holiday camp). In the halted moment, Austerlitz believes he has found his mother ‘barely emerging from the black shadows’ (#64/351). Austerlitz tells the narrator that he has gazed and gazed at that face, ‘Which seems to me both strange and familiar.’ He studies the time code on the film. The woman is visible for just seven seconds but in the stillness he can regard her forever.

When Austerlitz first views the film he cannot see his mother anywhere, even though he knows that she was in the camp. Austerlitz tells the narrator about ‘…the impossibility of seeing anything more closely in those pictures, which seemed to dissolve even as they appeared’. He then had the idea of slowing the film down. He tells the narrator that this reveals ‘…previously hidden objects and people, creating, by default as it were, a different sort of film altogether…’

What Austerlitz is now able to see is the extent to which the supposedly happy people at Theresienstadt were in-fact all zombie-like. His ability to see, in the frozen frame, that which was invisible in the moving picture, is suggestive of Walter Benjamin’s Optical Unconscious. It is also reminiscent of Barthes’s exploration of the obtuse meaning in certain stills from Eisenstein films and his preference for the still over the moving image. As I mentioned in chapter two, Barthes regarded the still as being able to offer the ‘inside of the fragment.’ Austerlitz was searching through the

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time-code of the film in order to identify his mother whose life had become torn apart and fragmented by the events of the holocaust. The frozen frame gives Austerlitz an opportunity to consider the inside of the fragment.

Vera informs Austerlitz that the picture from the film is not his mother. But she does confirm another photograph – a picture Austerlitz located among the archives of the Prague theatre, as being his mother.

Unlike a lot of ‘quest’ literature, not a lot happens after Austerlitz realizes his quest and nears his journey’s end. The discovery of the image of his mother is not a moment of catharsis; rather, it is just another sequence in the narrating. The novel continues in the same melancholic style whereby Austerlitz reveals fragments of his life to the narrator who relays them to the reader. The novel ends with the narrator reading a book given to him by Austerlitz. The book is a memoir by prominent writer, Dan Jacobsen, titled *Heshel’s Kingdom*. It tells the (true) story of Jacobson’s journey back to Lithuania in search of the traces of his Jewish family. Such an ending suggests a perpetuation of the ‘circulation and exchange of signifiers’ relating to loss, grief and the search for fragments.

The reason why I believe these two images to be pivotal is not because they form a catalyst to any action, but because they are, as Barthes would say, certificates of presence. They are the moments in which Austerlitz has located (or thinks he has located) his presence in a very different past, as such they form a visual ‘vocabulary of resurrection’.

There are some significant parallels and differences in the way both Barthes and Austerlitz discover images of their mothers. The differences are that Barthes knew his mother well and nursed her through her final ageing years. His discovery was of a picture of his mother as a girl, long before he (Barthes) came into being. Austerlitz could barely remember his mother. She saved him by sending him away (enabling his presence to be sustained by an absence). His future came at the expense of an obliterated past. He discovers his mother as a young woman, just a few months before he would have been sent to England and not long before she was sent to her death. Barthes, for reasons already outlined, does not reveal the picture of his mother, Austerlitz does. The obvious parallel is that they both entered time backwards to make the discovery and that the object of their discovery was in fact a representational photograph – a moment of stillness that returns the past.
It is this stillness that underpins the relationship between the photographic image and text. The adult Austerlitz is crippled by the pain of lost time. It gnaws silently at his very being but he cannot be still. He moves about Europe and walks at night through London. However, it is in the photographs that he finds stillness and eventually recovers moments of lost time. McCulloh refers the photographs as ‘visual manifestations of stasis.’ As a reader we move through the text, but we pause at these visual manifestations. Through their punctuation of the text, they provide a second order reading, a double gazing or, what Barthes calls, a circulation and exchange of signifiers through which we reflect on and reconstruct the narrative before moving on.

**Illusions and realities**

At the beginning of this essay I posed my key question: What happens to a photograph when it becomes manifest in the pages of a novel? After reading Sebald’s Austerlitz in the context of Roland Barthes interrogations and interpretations of photography, I conclude that the photograph in a novel can become a catalyst for a level of active engagement with the fictional narrative. Whilst the picture doesn’t change, the reading of it does. In a novel as finely crafted as Austerlitz, the reader is able to suspend belief about the indexical nature of the image and, by the act of a double gaze from the dynamics of text to the stasis of the image, is able to forge new links within and beyond the construct of the imagined narrative. Rather than posing a novel in the trappings of non-fiction, Sebald is in fact liberating his novel from the conventional borders that separate fiction from its opposite. His manifestation of uncaptioned photographs enables the consumer of the text to also be a producer of the text.

To appropriate Barthes’s final paragraph from *Camera Lucida*, the reader can choose to subject the spectacle of the photograph to the ‘…civilized code of perfect illusion or confront in it the wakening of intractable reality.’ I read the photographs in Austerlitz as illusions, albeit ones that signify the constructed and intractable realities of the fictional narrative.

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Connoting the image – a model of analysis for novels with photos

In a Paris Review interview with Sebald (before he wrote Austerlitz), James Atlas describes how Sebald borrows the Claude Lèvi-Strauss term *bricolage* to refer to his (Sebald’s) work. Atlas states that the effect of this bricolage is ‘…a kind of organized free association, as if one were reading a sequence of dreams instead of a linear narrative.’\textsuperscript{113}

The dream-like quality to Sebald’s Austerlitz is created through the weaving of the free-flowing narrative and the immersed black and white photographs. As with all dreams, understanding can be enhanced by decoding the images. Reading the photographs as a symbolic code and using Barthes’s process of connotation, I have devised an annotated inventory of all the photographs in Austerlitz (see Appendix 2).

This annotation is inspired by Barthes’s statement that ‘narratives are, of necessity, condemned to a deductive process.’\textsuperscript{114} It includes my own connotation of each image. I have divided the inventory into sections according to the location of the meetings between the narrator and the protagonist since these meetings represent the physical movement in the novel. Whilst the connotation is clearly a subjective point-of-view, it does, I hope, offer a useful model of analysis for novels that embody manifest photographs.

Chapter four: Out of time – reflecting on Abraham’s Pictures

‘He framed the plastic table number 26 alongside his coffee cup, pressed the button, viewed the result and felt a moment of satisfaction. Perhaps this is what he would do from now on. He would document his own moments in time and place. He would create the evidence of his own existence – up until March twentieth. After that...well, after that he’ll have to see what happens.’

The above passage is from chapter three of Abraham’s Pictures. The chapter is titled The Accident. Abraham is seated at his regular outdoor table at Café Obscura. He photographs the table number soon after he has been told by a local ‘fortune teller’ that he has only three months to live, and moments before he witnesses a car accident that claims the lives of the two people and knocks a young pedestrian unconscious – a disheveled pedestrian who, moments before being hit by the car had approached Abraham and asked him for some help.

Seeing what happens is how Abraham has constructed much of his life as a photographer. The problem however, is that he has spent so much time looking through his camera to see what has happened, he has become blind to what is happening. And what is happening is that his life is disintegrating.

Abraham’s pictures grew out of my desire to weave a narrative around the paradox of photography and around the relationship between time past and time present. I also wanted to explore the notions of identity, destiny and coincidence.

Two of Barthes’s key concepts about photography have helped me shape this narrative. One is his statement about a camera being a clock for seeing. The other is his notion of a photograph representing a return of the dead.

I read the ‘seeing clock’ statement as an affirmation of the symbiotic relationship between the passage of time and the arrested moment that can never be repeated. Time is the essence of the photographic act. A photograph is, after all, just in time. To give creative expression to these concepts I formed the idea of the prediction. The protagonist photographer, Abraham Rosen, is told he will die in three
months. His decision to hold a photographic exhibition called *Just In Time*, on the very day of his predicted demise, is my sense of paying homage to Barthes and his *seeing clock*. It also gave me a useful device against which the narrative could unfold.

The images Abraham shoots for his exhibition become not only validations of his own existence, but also signposts to his memories and to his lost time. He has spent a lot of time pondering the nature of the photographic image. In a speech at the opening of an exhibition of photographic portraiture in India, he says *‘Taking photographs is easy. It’s looking at them that is difficult, because we have to deal with whatever it is that returns our gaze.’* He becomes irritated by the number of portraits in the exhibition that are titled *Untitled*. He feels, (like Barthes did in response to Edward Steichen’s *Family of Man* exhibition), that the images are de-contextualized – that the subjects have been robbed of their history and their dignity. By the time Abraham arrives at his own exhibition (the final chapter in the book), he has been forced to question much about photography, about his relationship with his camera and about his own de-contextualization.

There are many manifestations of the *return of the dead* in Abraham’s Pictures. As he embarks on his quest to establish the identity of the young man in a coma, Abraham becomes haunted by memories of people whose lives he has ‘passed through.’ He fails to see the extent to which the life he is now living is on a collision course with the life he has led.

Abraham’s quest is two-fold. He is determined to ‘live life as normal’ so he can arrive at the day of his predicted demise and ‘see what happens.’ At the same time he becomes driven by a desire to establish the identity of the young man knocked into a coma in Horizon Street outside Café Obscura. Pivotal to this part of his quest is a photograph salvaged from a burnt photo album. This partially burnt image is what leads Abraham to the final and devastating conclusion of his quest.

I have employed the vocabulary of photography as headings for the four parts of the narrative (The Decisive Moment, Circles of Confusion, Beyond the Frame and Just in time). This has helped me sustain the interrogation of photography as a signifying practice while using elements of photography as a mnemonic and narrative device.
Photographs as resurrected narrative

I shot seven of the thirty nine images that comprise Abraham’s Exhibition specifically for the narrative. The rest are ‘found objects’ selected from among the thousands of images I have taken on assignments in India, Sri Lanka, Europe and Australia. Whilst I selected the images on the basis of the narrative I was constructing, it is also the case that the shape and direction of the narrative became influenced by the selected image. In other words, the completed narrative became a symbiotic melding of images and text.

Earlier in this exegesis I said that photographs in a novel can be seen as a form of punctuation – an interruption to the flow of time. As such, they trigger a double gaze in the reader – and this double gaze can lead into other dimensions in the reading of the narrative. I have also explained my reasons for choosing a different modality of immersion (placing the images at the end rather than throughout the narrative). By having the images in this location, the double gaze changes. With the images clustered at the end of the book, the reader is not shifting gaze from the image to the text and back again because by the time the reader arrives at the images, the text is finished. Instead, the reader is likely to be shifting gaze from the images at the end, to their recollection of the text in which most of the images were previously narrated.

My intention is to create a visual re-reading or resurrection of the narrative, as well as a mnemonic device that recalls moments of past time. I do this in order to offer the reader two ways of engaging with the story – firstly as a fiction that embraces and interrogates photography. And secondly as a visual narrative that is essentially a re-reading of the fiction through photographs (the products of the seeing clock). This re-reading allows the reader to enter time backwards (in a way similar to how Barthes examined the winter garden photograph). By connoting other layers of reality to their reading of the images, and by switching gaze from the image to the mental recollection of the narrative that has already unfolded, the reader of the narrative can also become a producer of the narrative. Whether or not this works is, of course, up to the reader.

In narratological terms this process, known as sjuzhet, involves a re-ordering of the temporal sequence of the narrative. See: http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/narratology/terms/ (accessed Nov 28, 2006).
In Conclusion

Photographs are powerful narrative devices for fiction writers, not just as illustrations or stimuli for ideas, but also (as Sebald has shown), as a part of a mnemonic discourse that can propel the narrative into new and speculative realms.

The photographs immersed into W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz form an intertextual discourse that is constructed by both the author (through the modality of immersion), and the reader (through a double gazing between texts and image). I have outlined how this discourse contains significant echoes of Roland Barthes’s work on image and text and leads to an enriched reading of the novel.

I began this essay by interrogating the indexical nature of a photograph that becomes manifest in an imaginative narrative. I also posed a number of related questions including:

To what extent does the photograph:

- interrupt the narrative or enhance it?
- make the narrative more ‘real’ by enhancing the process of ocularcentralism (seeing is believing) in the reader?
- serve as merely an illustration – useful but not essential to an understanding of the narrative?
- work with the text to open new and previously unexplored narrative possibilities?

I am led to conclude that the photograph in an imaginative narrative is indeed an interruption, but it is one that can enhance the narrative. The image becomes far more than illustration because it does in fact allow for a suspension of disbelief that seeing is not necessarily believing.

I believe that by examining the images in Austerlitz in the context of the narrative into which they are immersed, as well as the context of Barthes’s interrogation of photography in Camera Lucida, I have revealed something of the intertextual discourse at work.
In my own attempt at a novel that contains manifest photographs and, at the same time, interrogates photographic practice, I have, through a different modality of immersion, experimented with this intertextuality.
Appendix 1: Novels with photographs – an historical overview.

Almost from its inception, the photographic image acquired a reputation for irrefutable evidence – for proof that something or someone really existed or that an event really took place.

Ten years after Nicéphore Niépce produced the first photograph in 1829, Henry Fox Talbot presented his discovery of how to fix a photographic image. Talbot’s book The Pencil of Nature became the first published photographically illustrated book. The title was an expression of the belief that the camera was ‘nature’s pencil’ and that photo-graphy, or painting with light, was a means of duplicating reality. Nature (and therefore the camera) could not lie.

Historians of photography claim that photography developed at a time when society became increasingly concerned with expressions of reality and with proof or evidence of reality. In fiction this found expression in the works of Balzac, Flaubert and Dickens.

Not everybody however, welcomed the new invention. In 1840 William Wordsworth wrote a sonnet condemning the degradation of the printed word. He feared that intellectual life would be driven back to the time of the cave dwellers by the “dumb Art” of photography.’

By 1859, photographs were used as evidence of ‘what has been’ in courts of law, but such evidence was also being contested. In 1873 in the case of Tome v. Parkersburg, photographs were rejected as evidence by a court with the ruling that they were not exact ‘facsimiles’ and that photography is ‘a mimetic art,

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117 Moenssens, A. The Origin of Legal Photography. http://www.forensic-evidence.com/site/EVID/LegalPhotog.html. Accessed June 20, 2006. It’s worth noting that Attempts to use photography to construct a 'false truth' were also evident from the early days of photography. One of the most famous examples was in 1840 when the French photographer and inventor Hippolyte Bayard produced his Self portrait as a drowned man (showing himself as a dead person in his bathtub). On the back of his fabricated image he scribed, in third person, M. Bayard drowned himself because his photographic inventions were not given proper recognition by the French government compared to those of Monsieur Daguerre. According to Barthes, such trickery undermines the very essence of photography as evidence of 'what has been.'
which furnishes only secondary impressions of the original, that vary according to the lights or shadows which prevail whilst being taken.’

In 1880 The Daily Graphic in New York became the first newspaper to employ photographic illustration, thus further strengthening the link between photography and ‘truth’. Photo-illustration in books was already well established with over 500 photographically illustrated books published between 1854 and 1900. Most of these books however were non-fiction. Illustrated novels were very popular in the Victorian era but the use of photographs in fictional narratives (other than to show the author) was rare.

The concept of a narrated photograph (rather than a manifest photograph) assuming a pivotal role in the plot of a fictional story was employed as early as 1891 in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Scandal in Bohemia, the first of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Through cunning means, the famous detective secures an ‘incriminating’ photograph on behalf of his client (the King of Bohemia). According to Janice Hart, ‘The larger idea that Conan Doyle develops is that photography’s indexicality is so incontrovertible that it can, literally assume the status of evidence’.

Fifty years after he published A Scandal in Bohemia, Conan Doyle became embroiled in the quest to verify the ‘fictional photographs’ of the fairies at the bottom of the garden taken in 1917 by two English schoolgirls, Elsie Wright and her cousin Frances Griffiths. Known as the Cottingley Fairies, the case attracted considerable attention from spiritualists like Doyle who believed them to be true, as well as from skeptics. It wasn’t until 1982 that the octogenarian cousins admitted in a radio interview that they had in fact fabricated the fairy photographs. The fact that for so long, so many people wanted to believe the pictures is further evidence of the extent to which photography is associated with ocularcentrism.

Andre Breton’s surrealist novel, Nadja (1928), was the first literary novel of the twentieth century containing photographs. Some are of the 44 photographs are of
identifiable places (such as the *Hôtel des Grands Hommes* which was Breton’s point of departure for his journey).\(^\text{123}\) Others are of identifiable people such as such the image by Man Ray (himself a member of the surrealist movement) of the poet and activist Paul Eluard.\(^\text{124}\) To read these images of ‘real’ people and places in the context of Breton’s novel is to engage with the interplay of directed attentions and with questions of verisimilitude. We know they are real but we know too that they form part of a fictional construct. It is as if we have seen a ghost and we question if seeing really *is* believing. As Kendall Johnson states, ‘Between Nadja’s poles of photographic presence and the narrative portrayal of Nadja herself as an irrational lunatic and a chosen medium, Breton pursues the effects of ambiguity as configured in ghosts.’\(^\text{125}\)

Ambiguities of presence and absence as well as existence and identity loom large in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, published by her own Hogarth Press in the same year as Breton’s *Nadja*. Orlando is a story about identity, gender and time. It is fiction presented by Woolf as biography. The story spans three hundred years during which the character of Orlando morphs from a man into a woman. The novel is Woolf’s tribute to her friend Vita Sackville West and it contains photographs of her (Vita) ‘as Orlando.’

Woolf addressed the question of reality and fantasy in her diary and named the people upon whom her novel was based. ‘I am writing Orlando half in a mock style very clear and plain, so that people will understand every word. But the balance between truth and fantasy must be careful. It is based on Vita, Violet Trefusis, Lord Lascelles, Knowle & c.’\(^\text{126}\)

At about the time of Nadja and Orlando, *Photoplay editions* or *movie tie-in books* as they were also known, enjoyed peak popularity. Mainly in the detective, horror adventure and science fiction genre, these books contained photographs that were stills from the movies of the same story. They began in the silent movie era and today they are highly sought after collector’s items.\(^\text{127}\) Whilst they are clearly

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\(^{123}\) Breton, A. (1960) *Nadja*, trans. R. Howard (USA, Grove Press), p. 21

\(^{124}\) ibid., p. 27


\(^{127}\) For a survey of photoplay editions see Mann, T. (2004), *Horror and Mystery Photoplay Editions and Magazine Fictionsizations*, McFarland & Company
examples of imaginative narratives containing manifest photographs they are, as I indicated in chapter two, peripheral to my research question because the photographs are quite simply illustrations from the movie and do not therefore generate questions of authenticity and indexicality.

The American photographer and academic, Wright Morris was a significant experimenter with the combination of image and fictional narrative. His 176 page photo-text *Home Place*, comprises alternating pages of text and full page images. Published in 1948, it tells the story of a visit home to Nebraska (Wright Morris’s own birth place). The book spans one single day and the images reveal a range of objects and occasionally people, (though not any who can be identified) that reside at the *Home Place*. Unlike Woolf and Breton, Morris’s images carry no captions. They are read in conjunction with the accompanying narrative and are intended to form a visual continuity of the narrative. Wright Morris was concerned with what he termed shadows from the past that ‘Reveal a previous habitation.’ He described photography as ‘…the eternal presence in time’s every moment. From this continuous film of time the camera snips the living tissue.’ 128 This notion of photography as temporal in nature is consistent with Barthes’s idea of a ‘photographic consciousness’ where the photograph is a logical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*. 129

Apart from W.G Sebald, there a number of other significant contemporary novelists who employ photographs is their texts. These include:

- Barbara Hodgson, a Canadian book designer and author who blends narrative fiction with photographs, maps and drawings.
- Carol Shields who used her own family photographs in her Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Stone Diaries* (1993) to enhance the autobiographical ‘feel’ of the story.
- Ronit Matalon, a prominent cultural critic in Israel and a faculty member of the *Camera Obscura Academy for the Arts*. Her first novel, *The One Facing Us* (1998), includes many family photographs (and some empty frames of

‘missing’ photos) which are integral to the protagonist’s search for her past; and,

- Jonathan Safran-Foer whose award winning novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* contains many photographs including the controversial image of a person falling from the New York World Trade Centre after the attacks on 9/11.

In Australia, Brian Castro’s fictional autobiography, *Shanghai Dancing* (2004) and Carrie Tiffany’s *Everyman’s Rules for Scientific Living* (2005), both winners of significant literary awards, have photographs manifest in their narrative.

With the exception of Barbara Hodgson, all of the above novels use black and white rather than colour photographs. Whilst this is most likely because of the cost of printing colour, it is interesting to note John Berger’s claims that the advantage of black and white photos is that they are reminders of a search for what cannot be seen and for what is missing. He says that, ‘…never for one moment do they pretend to be complete, whereas colour photos do. The photos are a reminder of everything which is beyond the power of words...And the words recall what can never be made visible in any photographs.\(^{130}\)

Captioning of the images is the exception rather than the rule. This allows for the surrounding text to become a continuous and contextual caption. Of all the above examples only Safran-Foer appears to use the photos in a deliberately manipulated way. At the very end of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* the image of the falling man is repeated seventeen times in a reverse sequence to create a ‘flick-book’ effect whereby the man appears to be rising up into the tower. The story is told through the eyes of Oscar, the nine-year old protagonist and the final sequence of images becomes an optical resurrection, representing Oscar’s yearning and his denial.

Themes of mourning, of yearning and of absence loom large in all of the novels with photographs I have mentioned. In Wright Moriss’s *Home Place*, there is a clear sense of mourning for a lost time. In Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the protagonist mourns the loss of his father in the attack on the World Trade Centre. In Carrie Tiffany’s *Everyman’s Rules for Scientific Living* it’s the lost fertility of the land and all that it portends that is mourned. Ronit Matalon uses

family snapshots, including photographs of empty spaces in a family album, to construct her narrative that yearns for the return of a life that once was. And in Sebald’s Austerlitz, the mourning is for a loss of language, of identity and of a personal history.

In all these examples, the photographs immersed into the text trigger questions of reality. As Silke Horstkotte argues, the effect of such immersion ‘…opens up a spatial gap that acts as a window through which the reader may see a layer of reality behind or beyond that described by the text. Thus the photograph opposes the realism of the verbal narrative by introducing a fantastic dimension.’

Time is a key aspect of this ‘fantastic dimension’. Indeed it is not possible to talk of a spatial gap without also considering the notion of time – time present and time past. If a photographic image is an arrested nanosecond of time then clearly there is the time before the image was constructed as well as the time that has lapsed since. As I have mentioned, Barthes claimed that we look at a photograph in the present knowing that what we are regarding has happened in the past. It is the sense of time passing that led him to construct his thesis on the photographic *punctum*, on the notion of what it is in a photograph that stirs the viewer beyond a simple acknowledgement of a visual message.

The time before and the time after a photograph is, I believe, akin to what writer and poet Murat Nemet-Nejat calls *peripheral photographic space*. He suggests that ‘… what lies outside the focus of the image is perhaps as relevant as what is defined within the frame of the image.’

Writers of fiction who immerse photographs into their text are offering their readers more than a simple extrapolated moment in time. They are offering a form of visual punctuation through which the readers can enter this peripheral space and engage in the mnemonic discourse that a photograph embodies.


132 Nemet-Nejat, Murat. The Peripheral Space of Photography, Green Integer Series No: 76, p.37
Appendix 2: Annotated inventory of photographs in W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz.

KEY: CU = close-up, MS = medium shot, MCU = medium close-up, WS = wide shot, AS = aerial shot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph description</th>
<th>Page/size</th>
<th>Comment/Context/Connotation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First meetings between narrator and Austerlitz in Brussels</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CU: Raccoon eyes</td>
<td>3 ¼ page</td>
<td>The narrator is visiting a nocturama (a night zoo). He describes the creatures as having a gaze similar to those of the philosopher. The top set of human eyes belong to Sebald’s friend and publishing companion, Peter Tripp. The philosopher’s eyes are in fact those of Wittgenstein who, like Austerlitz always carried a rucksack. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Wisdom and enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CU: Owl eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. CU: eyes of Peter Tripp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CU: Philosopher’s eyes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CU: interior of dome of Lucerne station</td>
<td>11 ¾ page</td>
<td>The narrator recalls his time at the Lucerne railway station whilst he is engaged in conversation with Austerlitz in the Antwerp station. The story of the 1971 fire at Lucerne is true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. WS: The station fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. WS: Belgium fort of Breendonk</td>
<td>26, 27 ½ page each</td>
<td>Austerlitz tells the narrator about the ‘madness of fortifications’ and about this particular fort which is preserved as a memorial of Belgium resistance. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Access and defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. WS: Belgium fort of Breendonk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. AS: The Palace of Justice in Brussels</td>
<td>38 ½ page</td>
<td>The palace is another place of coincidental meetings between the two men. Austerlitz speaks at length on the architectural history and the labyrinth-like structure of what was the biggest building in the world. The references to closed doors and dead-end passages could be metaphors for the closed-off parts of Austerlitz’s life. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Power, labyrinths and being lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. WS: Breendonk fort – internal</td>
<td>30 ½ page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. AS: The Palace of Justice in Brussels</td>
<td>38 ½ page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty years later: Narrator and Austerlitz meet in London at Great Eastern Hotel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. WS: Interior of Austerlitz’s study in Bloomsbury, London</td>
<td>43 ½ page</td>
<td>The study is seriously cluttered <strong>Connotation:</strong> An attempt at order within chaos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. MS: Austerlitz’s rucksack</td>
<td>55 ½ page</td>
<td>After a twenty year absence the narrator ‘bumps into’ Austerlitz In The Great Eastern Hotel near Liverpool Station in London just after he (the narrator) had tests for his failing eyesight. He is struck by how much Austerlitz looks like Wittgenstein. Austerlitz tells him later that the rucksack is the only truly reliable thing in his life Wittgenstein always carried a rucksack. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Security, mobility, exile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. CU: Inside dome of Great Eastern Hotel</td>
<td>58 ½ page</td>
<td>This is one of many ‘dome’ photographs in the novel. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Light and enlightenment</td>
</tr>
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<td>Photograph description</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. MS: Photo of painting of an arc and a dove in a ‘temple’ in the Great Eastern Hotel</td>
<td>59 1/5 page</td>
<td>It is here in the Great Eastern Hotel that Austerlitz begins to tell the narrator about his childhood. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Displacement and rescue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. WS: Village of Llanwddyn that was ‘drowned’ to make way for the Vyrnwy reservoir.</td>
<td>72 1/5 page</td>
<td>Images from a photo album that Elias (Austerlitz’s foster father) shows to him and which later came into the possession of Austerlitz. Austerlitz describes how the people ‘…became as familiar to me as if I were living with them down at the bottom of the lake.’ <strong>Connotation:</strong> Lost time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. MS: Young girl from drowned Welsh village of Llanwddyn</td>
<td>73 ½ page</td>
<td>The drowned village evokes a sense of loss and even, perhaps, of an ethereal and parallel universe existing alongside the temporal one. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Family, ghosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. WS: Austerlitz’s rugger team with Austerlitz ‘at the extreme right of the front row’</td>
<td>106 ½ page</td>
<td>When he was studying sixth form Austerlitz was assigned a ‘fag’ (servant) named Gerald Fitzpatrick who he befriends. The boy requested a picture of the rugger team which Austerlitz gave him. A week after the encounter with the narrator in the Grand Eastern Hotel, Austerlitz sent a him (the narrator) copy of the rugger photo. Is that front row boy really Austerlitz or Sebald? <strong>Connotation:</strong> Camaraderie and belonging,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Four square-format images of Austerlitz’s darkroom experiments</td>
<td>108 ½ page in total</td>
<td>Austerlitz enjoys experimenting in the darkroom. He shares his passion for photography with Gerald. He describes becoming entranced when the ‘…shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing onto exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them...’ <strong>Connotation:</strong> Experimentation, illusion, reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. MS: Display cabinet of butterflies at Gerald’s family home at Andromeda Lodge</td>
<td>118 ½ page</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong> Captivity, fragility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. MCU: Gathering on lawn at Andromeda Lodge some time in the 19th century</td>
<td>120-121 Double page spread</td>
<td>An elderly man with top-hat and walking stick and two younger women wearing hats are looking disconcertingly at a young suited man on the left with a large parrot on is right shoulder. This man is not meeting their gaze, he is looking towards the camera. This is one of the most extraordinary pictures in the novel. It contains plenty of Barthesian punctum and the reader is deeply immersed in the conjectural realm. Who are these people? They evoke a sense of the fragmented experiences of Austerlitz’s life. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Otherness and fragmented encounters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photograph description</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. WS: Naturalist ‘Uncle Alphonso’ wearing white on expedition somewhere in English countryside.</td>
<td>125 Full page</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong> Exploration Attempt to tame or colonise the wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. MS: Moth silhouetted against a window</td>
<td>133 ⅓ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz learns much about moths and butterflies from Gerald’s Great Uncle Alphonso. He passes this on to the narrator. ‘Perhaps moths dream as well’ says Austerlitz  <strong>Connotation:</strong> Mystery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrator and Austerlitz continue their conversation at Greenwich in London**

<p>| MS: Observational measuring instruments on display at Royal Observatory in Greenwich | 140 ½ page | Greenwich is the next location after the Grand Eastern Hotel where Austerlitz and the narrator resume their rendezvous. It is the observation room that Austerlitz says to the narrator ‘Time was by far the most artificial of all our inventions’ and he talks about being ‘outside time. He says that the dead are outside time.  <strong>Connotation:</strong> Seeing and control |
| WS: Reception room of dilapidated house near Oxford called Iver Grove. The floor is covered with sacks of potatoes | 147 ¼ page | This photo is immersed in the lengthy talk Austerlitz gives on the grand houses that were being demolished around Oxford in the 1950’s. Like many other images, it adds to the sense of decay and neglect.  <strong>Connotation:</strong> Decadence and decay |
| WS: Photo of a painting in observatory at Iver Grove. Painting shows the earth and the moon and is by 18th century English artist John Russell. | 150-151 Double page spread | <strong>Connotation:</strong> Time, space and the unfathomable |
| WS: Photo of a rapid watercolour sketch by Turner titled: Funeral at Lausanne | 155 ½ page | Austerlitz refers to the painting because it reminds him of the funeral of Gerald’s uncle and great uncle. It also reminds him of the last walk he (Austerlitz) had with Gerald in 1966  <strong>Connotation:</strong> The dream-like nature of memory |
| WS: Image of the ‘Eagle Nebula’, taken form the Hubble Space telescope. | 163 1/5 page | Austerlitz’s friend Gerald, now studying at Cambridge, became obsessed with astronomy and star gazing. ‘I remember Gerald’s saying that there were positive nurseries of stars out there…’ Austerlitz tells the narrator.  <strong>Connotation:</strong> The spectacular, the unknowable and distant time |
| WS: Cessna airplane with man (presumably Gerald) standing nearby | 164 ¼ page | Gerald’s death in his Cessna somewhere over the Swiss Alps marks the beginning of Austerlitz’s withdrawal into himself.  <strong>Connotation:</strong> Adventure and loss |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrator and Austerlitz meet at Austerlitz’s London home</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. WS: Postcard sent by Austerlitz to the narrator from the 1920’s or 1930’s showing white tents in front of the Egyptian pyramids</td>
<td>166 ⅓ page</td>
<td>Connotation: Transience and otherness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. WS: A distant solitary figure walking along a country road</td>
<td>171 ⅕ page</td>
<td>This appears to be one of the few mages that is not narrated. It appears at the point where Austerlitz is talking about his increasing sense of paralysis – his inability to write his book on the history of architecture – he says he felt ‘like a tightrope walker who has forgotten how to put one foot in front of the other.’ He gathers all his research material and casts it to the compost heap in his garden – but the ‘burden weighing down his life’ does not disappear. He begins his ‘nocturnal wonderings’ around London. Connotation: The solitary journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. WS: Old picture of Liverpool Street Station before it was rebuilt in the 1980’s</td>
<td>181 ¼ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz describes the station as ‘one of the most sinister places in London, a kind of entrance to the underworld.’ He ventures into a disused ladies waiting room and experiences a strong sense of déjà vu. The room is the place where he arrived on the kindertransport. The experience kindles his quest to discover traces of lost time. Connotation: Hidden stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. CU: Skeletal human remains found during excavations at Broad Street Station in 1984</td>
<td>185 Full page</td>
<td>Austerlitz becomes occupied by a sense of past time – by a sense of what had been. He talks of having visited the site where human remains were found beneath the station and he took photographs of the remains of the dead. Connotation: Death and the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. MS: Inside the galleries of State archives in Prague</td>
<td>203 ¼ page</td>
<td>After his experience of ‘seeing his childhood’ in the disused waiting room of Liverpool Street Station, Austerlitz embarks on a journey to unearth his past. His first stop is the State Archives in Prague. Connotation: Labyrinths and eternal recurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. WS: Inside of the dome of the State Archives in Prague</td>
<td>204 ¼ page</td>
<td>Connotation: Enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. WS: Desk in the State Archives in Prague where Austerlitz fills in a visitors form</td>
<td>206 ½ page</td>
<td>Connotation: Authority and anticipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. CU: Octofoil mosaic set in the tiles of the entrance to the residence of Agáta Austerlitz</td>
<td>213 1/8 page</td>
<td>On the trail of his mother, Austerlitz meets Vera Ryšanová, his mothers neighbour and Austerlitz’s nursery maid before he was sent to England. Connotation: The cycle of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photograph description</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. WS: The staircase in the entrance to where Austerlitz lived with his mother.</td>
<td>214 ¾ page</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong> Ascension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. MS: Entwined roots of a chestnut tree in Prague</td>
<td>230 ¼ page</td>
<td>The tree is a place Austerlitz re-discovers (through Vera) in Prague – a place where he once played as a child. The tree roots ‘clung to a steep slope’ <strong>Connotation:</strong> Seeking security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. MS: Sloping parkland in a Gloucester country house, England</td>
<td>231 ¼ page</td>
<td>The park, where Austerlitz once visited with his teacher many years ago and where he says ‘my voice failed me,’ has the same north facing slope as the park in Prague where he used to play <strong>Connotation:</strong> Carefree childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. WS: Stage with a mountainous backdrop in a provincial theatre in Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>257 ½ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz tells the narrator how Vera found this photo after she had been telling him about how his mother was transported by the Germans. His mother had been an opera singer and possibly performed on this particular stage <strong>Connotation:</strong> Theatricality and tragedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. WS: Austerlitz as a small boy in fancy dress standing in a misty field in 1939, six months before his mother sent him on the Kindertransport to England</td>
<td>258 ¼ page</td>
<td>This is also the cover image <strong>Connotation:</strong> Loss and fragility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. WS: Panorama of rusty petrochemical plants on the road from Lovosice to Terezín</td>
<td>262,263 ½ page, spread over two pages</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong> Decay and relics of the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. MS: Old building in Terezín</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. WS: Marshy floodland around Terezín</td>
<td>265 ½ page each</td>
<td>These are the first in a series of photos of the Terezín or Terezienstadt concentration camp where Austerlitz has traveled seeking traces of his mother. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Concealment and secrets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. WS: Desolated street in Terezín with a shop sign IDEAL suspended above a doorway.</td>
<td>267 ½ page</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong> Emptiness and abandonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. MS: Window in Terezín with garbage bins lined up in front</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. MS: Window in Terezín</td>
<td>268 ½ page each</td>
<td>These windows and doors are all shut as if they are concealing something. They evoke a similar sense of ‘denial of access’ that Austerlitz experienced when living with his foster family at the manse in Wales. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Denial of access, Stillness of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. MS: Window and doorway in Terezín</td>
<td>269 full page</td>
<td><strong>Connotation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photograph description</td>
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<tr>
<td>50. MS: Doorway of barracks at Terezín</td>
<td>270 full page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. CU: Interior of old barracks at Terezín</td>
<td>271 full page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. WS: Window of Antikos Bazar, the only shop in Terezín</td>
<td>272,273 ½ page over two pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. CU: Paraphernalia in Antikos Bazar shop window</td>
<td>274 ⅓ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz gazes for some time in these windows and conjectures about the odd range of objects on display. He comments that he can see his own faint shadow ‘…barely perceptible among them.’ <strong>Connotation:</strong> Fragments and traces of other lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. CU: Paraphernalia in Antikos Bazar shop window</td>
<td>276 ⅓ page</td>
<td>A close inspection of this image reveals the faint outline of a face looking into the window. Is it Austerlitz’s face? Is it Sebald? <strong>Connotation:</strong> Projection of fragmented self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. WS: Pump room of the spa complex in Marienbad, Bohemia</td>
<td>303 ⅓ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz is accompanying his friend, Marie de Verneuil as she carries out research for her studies on the architectural history of the spas of Europe. Austerlitz tells the narrator ‘...she also hoped to try and liberate me from my self-inflicted isolation.’ Marie accuses Austerlitz of standing on a threshold but not daring to step over it. Through her he becomes increasingly aware of just how isolated he has made himself. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Projection of fragmented self</td>
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<td>56. WS: Interior of old roof of Wilsonova railway station – the Prague station from which Austerlitz made his journey as a small boy on the kindertransport</td>
<td>309 Full page</td>
<td>On board the train Austerlitz recollects fragments of the time he left on the kindertransport when he was given a Charlie Chaplin comic to read. As he tells the narrator, ‘...as soon as I tried to hold onto these fragments fast, or get it into a better focus, as it were, it disappeared into the emptiness revolving over my head.’ There is a sense in which the photographs in the novel become the fragments that Austerrlitz is struggling to hold onto as he reconstructs his past life. <strong>Connotation:</strong> A significant journey</td>
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<td>57. WS: The Rhine Valley which Austerlitz views from the train window from Bohemia to Germany</td>
<td>317 ⅓ page</td>
<td>Austerlitz visits Germany for the first time and describes it as being very strange. When he glimpses the Rhine Valley from the carriage of his train, he immediately sees a resemblance to Lake Vyrnwy in Wales and understand why, in that place in Wales, he had uncanny feelings. <strong>Connotation:</strong> Remoteness and remebering</td>
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**Narrator and Austerlitz walk to Tower Hamlets Cemetery, London**

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<td>58. WS: Gravestones at the cemetery in London</td>
<td>320 ⅔ page</td>
<td>The narrator speaks of how he and Austerlitz left the house in Alderney Street and walked along the Mile End road to the Tower Hamlets Cemetery.</td>
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| 59. CU : Overgrown and fallen gravestones at Tower Hamlets cemetery in London           | 321 ¾ page    | Austerlitz tells the narrator he would walk through the cemetery to find solitude, but at night he became crippled with anxiety attacks.  
**Connotation:**  
Death and abandonment                                                                 |
| 60. WS: Façade of St Clement’s Hospital with trees in foreground                        | 324 ½ page    | Eventually Austerlitz collapses and spends three weeks of ‘mental absence’ in a St Clement’s mental hospital.  
**Connotation:**  
Concealment and conspiracy                                                                |
| 61. WS: Cheerful looking man at a council-run horticultural nursery in Romford, East London. | 326 ½ page    | On medical advice, Austerlitz takes on a physical and menial job – at a council-run nursery where he meets people who ‘...though they bore the scars of their mental sufferings, often seemed carefree and very cheerful’.  
**Connotation:**  
Simplicity; pain beneath the surface                                                      |
| 62. CU: Tray of seedlings at council-run horticultural nursery in Romford, East London  | 327 ½ page    | Whilst working with plants, Austerlitz takes time to read the study of Theresienstadt ghetto by H. G. Adler. This (true) meticulous account of life in the camp gives extraordinary detail of the extent to which the camp was ‘spruced up’ with stores, concert halls and meandering pathways to give the impression to the Red Cross that the inmates were in fact being well looked after and had managed to escape the ravages of war.  
**Connotation:**  
Nature/Re-generation                                                                         |
| 63. CU: Pixilated still from the film of Theresienstadt that Austerlitz views again and again to try to find something of his mother. | 346, 347 Double page spread |  
**Connotation:**  
Hidden truths                                                                                   |
| 64. CU: A still (with time code in top left corner) from the film of Theresienstadt. Taken during a concert performance of Pavel Haas’s piece (composed in the camp) showing a male audience member in the foreground and a woman in the background. | 351 ½ page    | Austerlitz believes the woman in the background could be his mother – the singer Agáta Austerlitz.  
**Connotation:**  
Loss and grief                                                                                 |
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| 65. CU: Photo of an anonymous actress that Austerlitz finds in the Prague theatrical archives who resembles Austerlitz’s ‘dim memory’ of his mother | 353 ½ page | This image is confirmed by Vera, to be a picture of Austerlitz’s mother. Austerlitz gives the photograph to the narrator (as a memento) and then announces that he will travel to Paris in search of traces of the last days of is father.  
**Connotation:** A quest fulfilled |
| **After a gap, the narrator is invited by Austerlitz to Paris for another rendezvous** | | |
| 66. WS: Nondescript six storey concrete dwelling in Paris | 357 Full page | This is the building in which Austerlitz lived when he was in Paris in the 1950’s which he described to the narrator as ‘…a shapeless concrete block which I still sometimes see in my nightmares today’.  
**Connotation:** Indifference, anonymity |
| 67. WS: Cimetière de Montparnasse with city tower in background | 361 full page | Austerlitz ambles though the Jewish section of the cemetery  
**Connotation:** Death and resurrection |
| 68. WS: Slightly out of focus image of family of fallow deer gathered by a manger of Hay at the Paris Zoo. | 369 ½ page | Austerlitz is telling the narrator about his earlier time in Paris when he visited the Paris zoo with his new-found friend, Marie. As they are looking at some fallow deer, she says to him something that he can never forget. ‘Captive animals and we ourselves, their human counterparts, view one another across the gap with incomprehension.’  
**Connotation:** Protection and family unit |
| 69. WS: Tree of bronchial tubes, at museum of veterinary medicine in Paris. | 372 Full page |  |
| 70. WS: Old reading room of the now closed library in Paris | 384,385 2 x ½ pages | **Connotation:** Silent contemplation |
| 71. WS: Outside deck of Bibliotèque Nationale in Paris | 388 Full page | Austerlitz learns that the biblioteque is built atop a series of old warehouses in Paris which, during the war, became the storage facilities for all the goods stolen by the Nazis from the Jewish people of France. A veritable army of people were engaged to sort, classify, value and store the goods. He is highly critical of the new architecture which he describes as instilling ‘...a sense of insecurity and humiliation on the poor reader...’  
**Connotation:** Control and sinister past |
<p>| 72. WS: Book-filled records room of Terezín | 396,397 Double page spread | <strong>Connotation:</strong> Systems and order |</p>
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<td>73. WS: Roof of the Gare d’Austerlitz in Paris.</td>
<td>404,405 spread over 2 x ½ pages</td>
<td>Still on the trail of his father, Austerlitz feels as if he is getting closer. &lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Connotation:&lt;/strong&gt; Journey’s and destinations</td>
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<td>74. CU: Large windows in roof of the Gare d’Austerlitz in Paris, showing two tiny figures moving about on rope carrying our repairs.</td>
<td>407 ½ page</td>
<td>Connotation: The diminishing of the human form by vast glass and concrete edifices</td>
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<td>75. TWS: Jewish cemetery in Alderney Street, London</td>
<td>409 ½ page</td>
<td>This is a cemetery adjoining Austerlitz’s house. Austerlitz didn’t know it existed until he discovered a gate in a wall had been opened for the first time in many years. &lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Connotation:&lt;/strong&gt; The death that surrounds us</td>
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<td>76. ‘MS: ‘Ugly’ view from the hotel in Antwerp where the narrator stays on his way from Paris back to London.</td>
<td>410 ½ page</td>
<td>The story ends with the narrator talking about making his journey back to London. On the way he revisits the nocturama where the story began. He also reads a book, lent to him by Austerlitz. The book is a memoir by prominent writer, Dan Jacobsen, titled Heshel’s Kingdom. Published in 1999, this book about Dan Jacobson’s journey back to Lithuania in search of the traces of his Jewish family. &lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Connotation:&lt;/strong&gt; A façade or ordinariness that conceals the extraordinary</td>
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Bibliography


Heron, L. & Williams, V. (Eds.) (1996) *Illuminations, Women Writing on Photography from 1850's to the present* (USA, Duke University Press).


