

Roland Barthes, the amorous discourse of the camera and its subject

Contemplations of *A Lover's Discourse* (*Fragment d'un discours amoureux*, 1977) and *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (*La Chambre Clair: note sur la photographie*, 1980).¹

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Published within three years of each other, Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* and *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* are kindred works. It is not only love and photography that we can compare, for the works share a twofold configuration, a 'laminated' simulation, in which desire, death, writing, language, representation and subjectivity, among many other topics are expounded. When, in *Camera Lucida* for instance, Barthes says that in the Photograph, he 'saw only the referent, the desired object, the beloved body,' he uses this description to write *through* his encounter with that object. Love and photography accordingly comprise a 'discursive' scene or space in and upon which Barthes performs the act of thinking through discourse, in which Photography too comprises a language. In the critical interpretation of this simultaneous analysis of *Camera Lucida* and *A Lover's Discourse* we might miss the point, for Barthes at once transcends or transmutes the object under scrutiny and scrutinises ideas-as-objects. To receive Barthes's writing in its fullness it must flow through our opening to an intersubjective realm, in our common being-in-longing as lovers and lovers of photographs, which produces for Barthes an 'ontological desire'. The performative work of the book evokes a projective space echoed in *Camera Lucida's* French title, an illuminated/*Clair* room/*Chambre*; a chamber of reverberating dissonance and oblique reflection. I am alone but I wonder who else is listening.

*Richard is stretched out on a mattress in the back of Andy's combi van. I am instantly taken with his languid beauty and his flared orange slacks. His eyes are wide, his hair wiry and wild. Reclining among the cushions, he could be made of marble, not in a lifeless way but in the kind of carving that surpasses its material nature, like Michelangelo's Pietà or Bernini's Ecstasy of St Teresa. Ritchie see me standing beside the van door. He smiles gently, then goes back to staring beatifically at the psychedelic ceiling of the vehicle. A year and half later Nick and I have broken up and after three months I am intent on seeing Ritchie. I've asked him to come down to the riverbank. It is an autumnal morning, close to midday. We wander along a narrow path. The bank slopes down gently into the tawny river waters. Ritchie leans over to kiss me. It begins in this way.*²

The *camera lucida* was an early instrument of objective representation, which Barthes adopted as the title for his tract in an allegorical context for both photography and the psychological 'speaking' or 'viewing' subject. In use from 1800, a camera lucida is a three-sided glass prism that projects a chosen scene before its draftsman. The scene or subject and the piece of paper onto which its depiction is being laid and are at once projected and melded into a single image on the retina of its operator, yet that image is invisible to everyone else except in the 'tracing' produced.³ In *Camera Lucida* Barthes describes photography in similar terms: its 'essence' is like a 'trace' because 'a photograph is always invisible: it is not what we see'.⁴ For him, Photography creates a mutual image, a 'laminated object... whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object...'⁵ The lover speaks to the absent beloved and the photograph of the mother is mute,

refusing remembrance 'entirely on the level of the image's finitude'.⁶ In Barthes's late work, especially in the dialectical structuring of the dramatic method he deploys in both books, the desiring subject is exiled yet tied to its referent, as Barthes says, by an 'umbilical cord'.

While the 'figures' of the discourse trace of the 'other' through a kind of camera lucida, the Loving or Lover's Discourse is likewise for Barthes a projection onto an object of desire, so that the other becomes a 'kind of stuffed doll, for me to shift my desire from this annulled object to my desire itself.'⁷ In the first two chapters of *Tales of Love* Julia Kristeva writes that 'love involves a sizeable *aufhebung* of narcissism'. She suggests that, despite Sigmund Freud's link between love and narcissism, we should not camouflage desire's sway over the lover because the two are distinct for the narcissist is in fact incapable of love.⁸ In *A Lovers' Discourse* Barthes similarly declares, 'it is my desire I desire, and the loved being is no more than its tool'.⁹

He tells me that he's been off the drugs all week and that he's getting healthy. He describes how depressed he feels when he is not at a party. I feel the desire to implicate myself in his affairs subside for the first time in weeks. As I glance over his elongated body, fine jaw line, plump lips and droopy eyelids, I cannot help thinking that he is the most beautiful man I have ever seen. It would be a horrible thing to give him up. I push the thought aside. Look at him now, all relaxed, clear and affirming. Only desire is a powerful force, it would have you betray yourself to get what it wants.

In light of *we used to talk about love*, it is tempting to compare *A Lover's Discourse* to *Camera Lucida*, to make a Studium of the two. As you can hopefully see, it is impracticable to draw 'flat' equivalences between the 'discursive sites' of *A Lover's Discourse* and *Camera Lucida*. Such an effort also risks diminishing the luxurious and often Baroque correspondences of Barthes's restaging of love and photography. In re-reading the two volumes analogously, I have discovered many correspondences, only to find that they tend to comprise a 'sting, speck, cut, [or] little hole'.¹⁰ Nonetheless, one word unexpectedly appears at the outset of both volumes – *solitude*. On the first page of *Camera Lucida* Barthes describes his 'amazement' in gazing at a photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother Jerome, from 1852, and realising he 'was looking at the eyes that looked at the Emperor,' except when he sometimes mentioned this amazement 'no one seemed to share it...' Then, in a consolatory tone, Barthes adds that 'life consists of these little touches of solitude'.¹¹ But in his scrutiny and 'Sisyphean search for the 'truth of the face I had loved, the 'essence' of his dead mother and in his desire to learn what Photography was 'in itself', he found he was 'at an impasse, and so to speak, "scientifically" alone and disarmed'.¹²

In the preface to *A Lover's Discourse*, entitled 'The necessity', Barthes makes the unequivocal declaration that the lover's language is a discourse 'of an extreme solitude'.¹³ What does Barthes mean by this solitude? The trope of the doubled mirrors of the camera's internal body is again an apt illustration, for Barthes's discourse is not a one-dimensional portrait of the 'symptomal subject,' but a 'discursive site' the site of 'someone speaking within himself, *amorously*'.¹⁴ Composed in the first person, Barthes's writerly voice in the two texts is at once conversational, diaristic and scholarly. In the two books, it is precisely these refracting, mirrored arrangements and the crossing of historical and subjective voices that produces a binary momentum, generating for the reader something 'other' in this exchange, a dynamic that emulates the function of the Hegelian dialectic, a concept and practice critical in much of the philosophical thought of that period. Barthes proposes within his counter-dialogue that we apprehend in the lover's voice what is 'unreal' *because* it has been exiled, being 'completely forsaken by the surrounding languages,'

severed from 'authority', even though it 'is spoken by 'thousands of subjects'.¹⁵ In both volumes he doubly invokes a 'site' of exile and solitude precisely because it is irrevocably personal, if not traumatic – for what else are the agonies of passionate love, requited or not, and the death of one's mother? Barthes writes of the isolation he felt upon finding her resemblance in the Winter Garden Photograph: 'I am alone with it, in front of it. The circle is closed, there is no escape... I cannot *transform* my grief'.¹⁶

Adopting what seems to be a formalised, academic logic, *A Lover's Discourse* is structured as a dictionary of the lover's parlance, assuming the 'age-old convention' of alphabetical order as an 'arbitrary' device – an 'absolutely insignificant order'. The definitions form short expository paragraphs, fragments or 'figures' of a discourse 'caught in action'. The 'figure', he explains, is the 'lover at work' and as such the dispersion of the text fluctuates, in 'nodes', 'blanks', 'outbursts of language' and 'episodes' that 'occur to the lover without any order'.¹⁷ A one-sided approximation of the popular philosophical form of a platonic dialogue, the principle of this contra-dialogue for Barthes is that the discourse evades classification in existing ideological hierarchies.

The concise treatise of *Camera Lucida* is configured in a subtle yet analogous dialogical design. In its bipartite composition of two parts of twenty-four passages, this little book possesses a built-in symmetry that is at once systematic and reflexive, historical and poetic, observational and intimate, analytic and pleasurable, which is in many ways comparatively restrained. For instance, Barthes noticeably displaces or defers the titles for each of these passages onto the contents page, at the end of the volume in the French edition. *Camera Lucida* is additionally a detective exercise, with a narrative structure that embodies both an historical exposition and the novel, unavoidably emulating the work of Marcel Proust. In any such reflexive work, to find or 'retrouver' is to rediscover the invisible and intangible material of one's own history, which Proust does in *A la recherche d'un temps perdu* in his search for the presence of himself in time through the medium of memory, in an irrevocably 'lost time'. Barthes too privileges memory's estrangement: 'One day, some friends were talking about their childhood memories; they had any number; but I, who had just been looking at my old photographs, had none left'.¹⁸ I know another who has followed a Proustian impetus, re-finding something apart from herself.

Ritchie has promised to meet at four in the afternoon. I have left uni early. I sit in my room. Four o'clock, five and then six o'clock passes. I am distressed. I call his house, which is pointless because he's never there. At midnight the doorbell rings. Ritchie is at the door. He's stoned. I am wearing a black slip and he moves on me straight away. He has pissed me off but it's too late: I have already given over to his whims. And I want him to make love to me.

Conceived in the last few years of Barthes's life, *A Lover's Discourse* and *Camera Lucida* are at once significant exercises in an immersion in language and of thought, as they are acts of resistance.¹⁹ It is logical to consume a book for its apparent content, on 'face' value, and of course apprehend a great deal, so it is difficult to relinquish the tendency to identify books as containers of facts and unique observations. Only what *happens to us* when we read? Are we not subject to certain effects? Are we not changed, however subtly when we are linked into an unconscious chain of ideas that flows through us? Consider the notion that 'real reading goes forward unknowing,' as Jean-Luc Nancy advances in the essay 'Exscription', where he says that this kind of reading 'opens a book like an unjustifiable cut in the supposed continuum of meaning'.²⁰ Concealed within the unitary edifice of the 'book', Barthes's writing offers a radical encounter with subjectivity through language, one in which the wavering subject, the 'I', is like an actor who

performs a simulated utterance instead of analysis, to counteract the logocentric or singular author.²¹ It is hardly surprising that Barthes asserts that the 'amorous discourse' is typically exiled from dominant language, 'driven' as he says into a 'backwater' of the 'unreal'.²² The intent and experience of any text, let alone Barthes's pluralist practice, is surely more than a matter of unequivocal intellectual apprehension, and being receptive to, although not necessarily conscious of, the melding of the reciprocity of image-thought-subject is consequently constructive for the reception of these texts.²³ It is precisely the 'unreal' irreconcilable quotient beyond reason, that finds its 'recourse' in the 'site of an affirmation', an arena for a methodical yet tragic 'lunatic sport'.²⁴

Ritchie's habitual disappearances make arrangements difficult. On an afternoon some weeks later he is an hour late, but I am happy he at least turns up this time. I am letting his driftwood habits direct me. I cease to make decisions without having first heard from him and I am usually stranded. It's a warm day and Ritchie is in the mood for sex. For all of his faults, he is a great lover. We roll around, laughing and kissing for hours. I can't imagine anything more blissful than this.

Barthes was by no means alone in this philosophical enquiry. During the 1960s and 1970s, the culturally and socially disruptive questioning of late capitalism in the west was a breeding ground of formal and critical experimentation across cinema, literature, art and philosophy. Avant-garde filmmakers of this period focused on the generative possibilities of discordant juxtapositions of images and sound, such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Tout va bien* (1972), Hollis Frampton's *Nostalgia* (1971), *A Film About a Woman Who...* (1974) by Yvonne Rainer, and the films of Chris Marker, *La jetée* (1962) and *Sans Soleil* (1983), which are remarkable for their sumptuous interpolations of photography with voiceover. In France, by the early-1970s, a common impetus was emerging within a set of thinkers and makers, including H el ene Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, as each began to deploy forms of creative or 'ficto-critical' writing, specifically in order to resist the dominant unitary code of language and its hegemonies. Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, among others, moreover made incursions from academia into the political sphere.²⁵ In the chronicle of a personal, life-changing encounter with the writing of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector, Cixous's *Vivre l'orange* (1979) is exemplary because writing itself caused her to 'come into writing'. Published in 1979, between *A Lover's Discourse* and *Camera Lucida*, *Vivre l'orange* resembles or reassembles something of both Barthes's works, for the fragmented form of *A Lover's Discourse* and the wavering, or pluralist vocality of *Camera Lucida*, traverse traditionally partitioned categories of writing.²⁶

He is face down and naked. His clothes are all over the carpet. Empty beer bottles are strewn about with butts squashed into their divorced lids. Where were you? I ask. Oh some crazy party that went on for days, he says. Rolling over and smiling at me, he scrounges for a cigarette. I have to end this now but I cannot start. Instead, I kiss him softly and stroke his hair. Ritchie leans up on one arm and runs his agile hands over my throat and neck. The rain starts pouring down. Water runs in streams from the gutters and down the sides of the house. Ritchie drags himself out of bed, a fag hanging from his mouth.

What is it to 'to Love Love'?²⁷ And what is it to love and lose your mother? Barthes seeks an 'essence' – not what is quintessential to photography or death but what he missed out on knowing and could only access after his mother had died – the girl that she was before he knew her. And here the primary question appears: 'did I recognize her?' – primary because Barthes's

traumatic loss is not evacuated upon the 'discovery' of his mother in The Winter Garden Photograph. It seems that her 'essence' eludes him because it is concealed under or more accurately within the detail of the object, be it the photograph or the lover. One explanation for this circumvention is that both the lover and the object are subsumed since 'the subject manages to annul the loved object under the volume of love itself...' under the 'figure' of *annulation/annulment* in which 'it is love the subject loves, not the object'.²⁸ Resonating with Walter Benjamin's Angel of History in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, another explanation is offered in *Camera Lucida*, where Barthes posits history as a central repressive paradox of modern society, writing that 'History is a memory fabricated according to positive formulas, a pure intellectual discourse which abolishes mythic Time...'²⁹ These two rationales conjoin in Barthes's 'living soul': 'I am the very contrary of History, I am what belies it, destroys it for the sake of my own history,' so to be a lover is to desire the past and be at once exiled and at the same time present in the place of being.³⁰

Holding out a wrist, he indicates that I should approach. I gaze at his soft curled lips and wild greyed hair. He pulls back the bathrobe from my leg and starts to plant kisses over my eyelids. The robes fall back from our torsos. Our skin melds. I say I am leaving; this is the last time. I am weak in the face of him and the contradiction. I roll over and offer him my body. He takes it as a gift; without much fuss. He fucks me gently at first, but as he gathers force, I begin to cry. The rain pours down again, and I mourn for the passing of our winter and the loss of him.

Love can be lost in itself, subsumed in a 'missed' encounter, and in Barthes's writing, these terms and others, like 'latency' and 'blind field', reveal an attention to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories.³¹ Yet the impact of Lacan on poststructuralism, especially on Derrida, Cixous and Barthes is all too often overlooked. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes directly links Lacan's work to photography, when he writes, '...the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular... in short, what Lacan calls the *Tuché*, the occasion, the Encounter, the Real...'³² For Barthes, the *Tuché* undoubtedly serves as a prompt for his conceptualisation of the Punctum, as the point of recognition that prises or pierces the representational field. And the Punctum forces itself through the sticky, receptive substance between the subject and its object like the impressionable wax tablet of the unconscious under Freud's mystic trace paper, generating for the subject the meaning of the desired object-thing. What 'sticks' or 'pierces' is not the representation but something beyond recognition, which Barthes describes in *Camera Lucida* as the 'adherence' of the referent.³³ And now I think of the *Punctum* as an unwitting attack that 'shoots out of [the photograph] like an arrow and pierces me,' I also imagine how the onset (or onslaught-slaughter) of love-as-desire strikes me like an arrow.³⁴ Who else but Cupid would be the archer?

I watch Ritchie languidly recount a few days that have seen him go from one high to the next. The act of recollection reminds him that it doesn't need to end just yet. His wonderful arm stretches out for a metal pellet on the nearby table and his mouth pulls stiffly across his face in a strange grin. At first I think he is smiling at me but then I see that it's directed at the Soda Stream bottle, which is about to give him a hit. It's springtime and after the downpour the sun ploughs through the blue sky again. Still feeling the caress he has run over my bare skin, I start to take off my clothes. Ritchie reclines. The soda cylinder drops from his hand and rolls onto the worn carpet. I bend forward, now stripped to my underpants and pick up the spent pellet. Ritchie doesn't lift his head.

The leading essay in Jennifer Friedlander's *Feminine Look: sextuation, spectatorship, subversion*, 'Overlooking the Real in Camera Lucida', examines the potential of reading Barthes's Punctum alongside Lacan's concept of the Real. The purpose of Friedlander's essay is to lay out the conditions of a subversive strategy for the politics of spectatorship through photography, from a specifically psychoanalytic positioning of the 'Punctum' as 'feminine' pole of 'sexuation'.³⁵ She posits Lacan's notion of the 'real', as the elusive 'it,' is *hidden from us behind the lack of representation*. As a Lacanian missed encounter, that loss, Friedlander contends, is inevitably presented in the 'form of a trauma'.³⁶ Friedlander contends that critics of *Camera Lucida* have frequently passed over the consequence of the Lacanian Real in this text, claiming furthermore that he 'betrayed the poststructuralist project by embracing an reconstructed realism' in this and other late works. Friedlander's argument at this point illuminates one of the other primary misrecognitions of the conjunction of photography and desire in the wont of perceiving detail *as* reality.

Barthes is emphatic on the traumatic nature of the excruciating search for this misleading, evasive facet in a string of comments throughout *Camera Lucida*: 'The Photograph... immediately yields up those "details" which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge'; 'It supplies me with a collection of partial objects and can flatter a certain fetishism of mine'; 'A detail overwhelms the entirety of my reading; it is an intense mutation of my interest'; 'to scrutinize means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side (what is hidden is for us Westerners more "true" than what is visible). Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing.'³⁷ The misapprehension of the 'detail' also feasibly has its origins in the conception of photography. In his historical analysis of the invention of photography *Burning With Desire*, Geoffrey Batchen delineates Daguerre's concern regarding the figment of photography as an effect or a fiction in which spectators had already begun to insist on its detail as its reality, writing that, 'Detail he claimed for photography, but reality he left to others'.³⁸ Anyway, as Friedlander reminds us in *Feminine Look*, 'the nostalgia evoked by Barthes has little to do with a real "lost object" but instead centers on a notion of the gaze as a "stain of the Real" that violates the image's symbolic consistency'.³⁹ Friedlander adds that in actual experience and remembered or imagined events there exists a phenomenal aspect, which an unconscious effect produces – an effect that Freud posited as a 'psychical reality'.⁴⁰ But we should not expect to find the evidence of a 'reality stain' either. Note in *Camera Lucida* how Barthes emphasises the 'lateral' dimension of the realm beneath or beyond the photograph as he describes his desire to, 'live in the illusion that it suffices to clean the surface of the image in order to accede to *what is behind*...'⁴¹

Through the 'unconscious effects' of binary forces we are inherently polarised; conjoined at the same time as we are subsumed in the encounter. Which is why, perhaps, we defer or refuse the trauma of the Punctum instead of inhabiting, as we do, the dynamic of the two.⁴² In *A Lover's Discourse*, desire is equated to the object of love, and in *Camera Lucida* the object of love is embedded in photography. In both instances a form of trauma is produced for Barthes because love and the photograph are 'affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb, like condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures'.⁴³ Although the photograph, Barthes proposes, 'mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially' it is, he warns, 'never, in essence, a memory... but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory'.⁴⁴ Trauma is thus registered for Barthes on the body of this dead man as a counter-historical figure, on the corpse of the condemned man, a spectre, a projection of the death of self in love.

When Barthes makes a Freudian correlation between his mother and a longing for the *heimlich* in a memory of a familiar landscape, at least one kind trauma is ameliorated or assuaged.⁴⁵ His association of the corporeal bond with the mother is reasserted in the metaphor of the umbilical cord 'links the boy of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.'⁴⁶ Batchen raises this notion, delineating in *Photography Degree Zero* the direct physical and perceptual link between the photograph and the thing it represents'.⁴⁷ It is this inseparability that I wish to highlight here, as an exemplification of the bond between the discourse of the lover and their subject. The umbilical cord, moreover, is a way to conceptualise the co-presence of *Studium* and *Punctum*, and to the tracing of the lover's voice.⁴⁸ For the cord is so much more than an index. It is a life support system. It represents, thereafter, the origins of a human life, one that is severed at birth yet indubitable in the psychic life of the child, as the binary of child-mother-child.

It is another common 'misrecognition' to take *Camera Lucida* as a direct exposition of death.⁴⁹ *A Lover's Discourse*, and *Camera Lucida* luxuriate in emotional spectrums of mourning and yearning as a resistance to the iconographic structuring of language and the vocabulary of images. While Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida* that we should 'enquire as to the anthropological place of death and the new image', on the other hand, in *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes proposes that this relation of death and its image is for the subject probably a means of the deferral of loss, saying that 'if the day comes when I must bring myself to renounce the other, the violent mourning which then grips me is in the mourning of the Image-repertoire itself'.⁵⁰

The first few days are blacker than coal. I buy a camera in the city and drag my heavy feet back home. I see Ritchie's things in a pile on the floor. I can't remember anything else from that day. I pull out the new camera and take a series of shots of the empty corners of the room. The weekend comes around and I make a big effort to distract myself. A gig is on at The Forum, an old theatre in the city. The crowd is buzzing. I dance, trying my best to be happy, but the trick backfires. The more I repress my sadness the more I feel the agony. How come Ritchie can do it so well? I head home. When I arrive, the camera is on the bed where I've left it. I'm struck how odd it is that the machine can't photograph itself. But as I see myself outside its body I realise how much better it is to be an exile of the in-built mirrors of narcissism.

Contrary to a reductive parallelism or to assertions that *A Lover's Discourse* is literally about photography or that *Camera Lucida* is about love, it is in the dialectical relation of the two books that an alternate 'reality' emerges. His *Reflections on Photography* and the *Fragments of a Loving Discourse* of an amorous subject simulate a cooperative, horizontal distribution of the topic, ideally to be shared among 'the United Readers and Lovers'.⁵¹ In *Camera Lucida* Barthes concludes that we can chose one 'two ways of the photograph'...'to be subject to its spectacle to the civilised code of perfect illusions, or to confront it in the wakening of intractable reality'.⁵² In the final pages of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes, further to this, identifies a 'link (or knot) between Photography, madness and something whose name I did know, I began by calling it: the pangs of love... Is one not in love with certain photographs?'⁵³ Here, the madness of photography is a simulation and replication of love's madness. Under the heading *fou/mad*, Barthes writes, 'I am mad to be in love. I am not mad to be able to say so, I double my image: insane in my own eyes (I know my own delirium), simply unreasonable in the eyes of someone else, to whom I quite sanely describe my madness: conscious of this madness, sustaining a discourse upon it'.⁵⁴ Barthes's refusal of unitary exposition places the reader in a suspended realm of a wounding encounter –

the Punctum – the 'unjustifiable cut in the supposed continuum of meaning'. Similarly, in *Tales of Love* Kristeva writes that the lover 'reconciles narcissism and hysteria. As far as he is concerned, there is an idealizable other who returns his own ideal image (that is the narcissistic moment), but he is nevertheless an other.'⁵⁵ For Barthes, intolerable reality is an affirmation of lunacy, of the 'vast disorder of objects' and experience, including the essence of his mother in her 'impossible science' of 'unique being'.⁵⁶ Who cannot have substituted one love for love another in *umbilical* longing? Look back at the lonely camera on the bed. See how we misrecognise the 'photographing' machine in place of desire, mistaking its historicising *tuché* for the lover. Yet, as Barthes says, 'underneath the figure,' there is still something of the 'verbal hallucination'.⁵⁷ And I see now that my memory of love is a 'lost, remote photograph, one which does not look "like" her, the photograph of a child I never knew'.⁵⁸

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¹ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978; and *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (La Chambre Claire: note sur la photographie)*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.

² Excerpts from the short story 'Contract with witches, Lily Hibberd, unpublished, 2010.

³ For further description of the mechanism of the camera lucida, see Geoffrey Batchen 'Palinode, an introduction to *Photography Degree Zero*,' in *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, 10-11.

⁴ *Camera Lucida*, 6.

⁵ *Camera Lucida*, 6.

⁶ *Camera Lucida*, 90.

⁷ *A Lover's Discourse*, 31.

⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S Roudiez. New York: Colombia University, 1987, 33.

⁹ *A Lover's Discourse*, 31.

¹⁰ *Camera Lucida*, 27.

¹¹ *Camera Lucida*, 3.

¹² *Camera Lucida*, 7 & 90.

¹³ *A Lover's Discourse*, 1.

¹⁴ *A Lover's Discourse*, 3.

¹⁵ *A Lover's Discourse*, 1.

¹⁶ *Camera Lucida*, 90.

¹⁷ Barthes's associative citations and lyrical intonations moreover echo the 'conceptual poetry' of Frederic Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. See Frederic Nietzsche, *The Gay Science; with a prelude in rhymes and an appendix of songs*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1974.

¹⁸ *Camera Lucida*, 91.

¹⁹ In *Photography Degree Zero*, Batchen suggests that Barthes's performative style of writing invites the reader to induce something from the text that 'exceeds the intentions of the author', *Photography Degree Zero*, 8.

²⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Exscription', *Yale French Studies*, 78 (1990): 47–65.

²¹ It is important to note that the two books were also realised after Barthes had made a deliberate return to the subject, to the 'I', a notion that is articulated in his earlier conceptualisation of 'decentred' writing in *The Death of the Author* (1967). Often misconstrued as an eradication of the authorial agenda and persona altogether, Barthes rather eschewed the figure of the 'author' in the context of shifting or unhinged relations of the 'readerly' to the 'writerly' text. This is illustrated in a semiotic analysis and literary critique of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine* in *S/Z* (1970). Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 4–5.

²² *A Lover's Discourse*, 1.

²³ This reminds me of Sigmund Freud's 'mystic writing pad', in which a tablet of wax as a material allegory of the unconscious and the perceptual apparatus of the mind or memory, over which is laid a sheath of trace paper that bears the temporary exposition of the 'writing' of the conscious mind. 'The Mystic Pad is a slab of dark brown resin or wax with a paper edging; over the slab is laid a thin transparent sheet, the top end of which is firmly secured to the slab while its bottom end rests upon it without being fixed to it. This transparent sheet is the more interesting part of the little device. It itself consists of two layers, which can be detached from each other except at their two ends. The upper layer is a transparent piece of celluloid; the lower layer is made of thin translucent waxed paper. When the apparatus is not in use, the lower surface of the waxed paper adheres lightly to the upper surface of the wax slab.' See, Sigmund Freud, 'Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud*, v.19, ed. James Strachey London: Hogarth, 1961, 227–232.

²⁴ *A Lover's Discourse*, 1 & 3.

²⁵ In *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Writing and Difference* (1967), Derrida asserted that writing could be fragmented, disembodied or anonymous, and that the 'voice' could be plural, or lost in a chorus of other voices. In *Glas* (1974), we can see how the 'voice' becomes a textual entity, and the wavering between the authorial position in an enactment of *différance* in its three concurrent essays that run down the page in columns. Note that semioticians Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure, and the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin were crucial to Derrida's work. See, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1993; and *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. & Richard Rand. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

²⁶ The poststructuralist 'feminists' of the 1960s, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, wrote of how the 'voice' might be used to unsettle dominant patriarchal conventions of writing, a practice of writing that Cixous called *écriture féminine*. Irigaray and Cixous, to this day, seek an alternate position for the voice, one that allows for a concept of 'femininity' to emerge in the fissures of a kind of speech. See Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*, trans. Joanne Collie and Judith Still. London: Athlone Press, 1992; Hélène Cixous, *Vivre l'orange*. Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1979; Cixous *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 1975; and Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

²⁷ *A Lover's Discourse*, 31.

²⁸ *A Lover's Discourse*, 31.

²⁹ *Camera Lucida*, 93. And, Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. Fontana: London, 1973. For further elucidation on this topic see, Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989.

³⁰ *Camera Lucida*, 65.

³¹ *Camera Lucida*, 49 & 57.

³² *Camera Lucida*, 4.

³³ *Camera Lucida*, 6.

³⁴ *Camera Lucida*, 26.

³⁵ Jennifer Friedlander, *Feminine Look: sextuation, spectatorship, subversion*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008, 9.

³⁶ Friedlander, 11.

³⁷ *Camera Lucida*, 28, 30, 49 & 100.

³⁸ Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997, 4.

³⁹ Friedlander, 13 & 143.

⁴⁰ Friedlander, 13.

⁴¹ *Camera Lucida*, 100.

⁴² Ulrich Baer contends in *Spectral Evidence: Photography of Trauma* that 'Trauma is a disorder of memory and time. This is why in his early writings Freud used the metaphor of the camera to explain the unconscious as the place where bits of memory are stored until they are developed, like prints from black-and-white negatives, into consciously accessible recollections. In his later work, Freud qualified his use of the camera metaphor...' Baer is interested, however, to trace the origins of the first use back to Freud's training at the hospital Salpêtrière in Paris,

famous for the singular concept that photography was instrumental in conceiving the modern idea of 'hysteria' (as examined by Georges Didi-Huberman in *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpetriere*, trans. A. Hartz, London: The MIT Press, 2004). Baer argues that the early identification in Freud's metaphor of 'camera-as-mind' begs the 'question of the link between photography and trauma', making the link between the notion of trauma as a blockage of experience into memory, an operation that the camera performs as it 'traps' an event. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: Photography of Trauma*, Mass.: MIT, 2002, 9.

⁴³ *Camera Lucida*, 6.

⁴⁴ In *Spectral Evidence: Photography of Trauma*, Ulrich Baer states that, 'Because trauma blocks routine mental processes from converting an experience into memory or forgetting, it parallels the defining structure of photography, which also traps an event during its occurrence while blocking its transformation into memory'. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: Photography of Trauma*, Mass.: MIT, 2002, 9. See also, *Camera Lucida*, 14 & 91.

⁴⁵ *Camera Lucida*, 40.

⁴⁶ *Camera Lucida*, 81.

⁴⁷ *Photography Degree Zero*, 12.

⁴⁸ *Camera Lucida*, 42.

⁴⁹ In *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Eduardo Cadava, writes on reading and regarding of photographic images 'in time', as a way we learn about death or 'learning to die'. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 1997.

⁵⁰ *A Lover's Discourse*, 31.

⁵¹ *A Lover's Discourse*, 5.

⁵² *Camera Lucida*, 119.

⁵³ *Camera Lucida*, 116.

⁵⁴ *A Lover's Discourse*, 121.

⁵⁵ Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 33.

⁵⁶ *Camera Lucida*, 6 & 71.

⁵⁷ *A Lover's Discourse*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Camera Lucida*, 103.