

Introduction: Photographic Interventions

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Images and Words: The State of the Debate

Since the publication in 1989 of *Poetics Today*'s double issue "Art and Literature" (10:1 and 10:2), as well as the special issue devoted to "Lessing's Laokoon: Context and Reception" ten years later (20:2), the multiple and varying relations of the visual and the verbal have become key issues within the humanities in general and in the formation of new inter-, multi-, or transdisciplinary fields of study in particular.¹ Many theorists have positioned themselves against Lessing's distinction between the verbal as a temporal art and the visual as a spatial art: instead, they accentuate the similarities between word and image and, hence, renounce the plurality of the arts. As early as 1970, Roland Barthes (1970: 7) had urged his readers

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1. Various models and definitions exist of what constitutes an inter-, multi- or transdisciplinary object or field of study. Referring to Roland Barthes, Mieke Bal (2003: 7) has suggested a definition of *interdisciplinarity* as the creation of a new object "that belongs to no-one"—i.e., an object that cannot be accommodated within any existing discipline (*intra*-disciplinary) but which also defies study by simply grouping a number of disciplines around it (*multidisciplinary*). A truly interdisciplinary object, then, demands the creation of a new discipline (such as photography studies or visual culture studies). *Transdisciplinarity*, on the other hand, would entail abolishing disciplinary boundaries altogether.

to stop thinking of the verbal and visual arts as substantially different and so to appreciate better both literary and visual works as texts. His call was taken up in the early 1990s, when Mieke Bal (1991: 5) defended the verbal aspects and structured textuality of visual artifacts, arguing that a new cultural paradigm exists based on the assumption that “the culture in which works of art and literature emerge and function does not impose a strict distinction between the verbal and the visual domain. In cultural life, the two domains are constantly intertwined.”

The paradigm shift alluded to by Bal has since been widely recognized as a landslide event in the humanities and associated with the idea of a “pictorial” (W. J. T. Mitchell 1994), “iconic” (Boehm 1994), or “visualistic turn” (Sachs-Hombach 2003), following upon the “linguistic turn” of the 1960s and 1970s (Rorty 1967). However, it would be a mistake to assume that these theorists of the visual turn want the study of images to take precedence over literary studies. Rather, one of the important points raised by W. J. T. Mitchell (1986, 1994) and others concerns the mutual interdependence of images and words and the impure and mixed medi-ality of visual as well as verbal artifacts (but see Boehm 1995). Indeed, the institutionalization and disciplinary formation of the newly emerging field of visual culture studies, with which many scholars of the visual turn associate themselves, aims to overcome the old dichotomy of word and image.² For instance, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2001: 3) define “visual culture” as “the shared practices of a group, community, or society, through which meaning is made out of the visual, aural, and *textual world* of representations” (our emphasis).

The main implications of the emerging visual culture paradigm thus lie in the areas of cultural theory and analysis and of interdisciplinary practice. The visual turn nevertheless constitutes a reaction to the growing presence of images in contemporary culture. There, new visual media, such as photography, film, and television, and new forms of intermedial combination in illustrated newspapers and magazines, in billboard advertisements, and on the Internet play a key role. That historically much older media, especially literature, are also affected by the rise of the image is testified to by the increasing presence of photography in fiction, with which this special issue is concerned. In order to position the contributions in this issue vis-à-vis existing research, we begin our introduction with an overview of

2. There are a number of good introductions to visual culture studies (Mirzoeff 1999, Barnard 2001, Sturken and Cartwright 2001). See also James Elkins’s (2003) critique of the visual culture paradigm. For a juxtaposition of visual studies and art history, see Holly and Moxey 2002.

the wider field of text-and-image studies in the humanities. In the second section, we introduce the particular issue of photography in literature in some more detail. In our search for a contemporary critical idiom resting on the photographic image, it is important to understand what is distinctive about photography and its use in literary fiction (as opposed to other kinds of visual images). Our third section therefore discusses theories in photography that regard the photograph as a special kind of image which is distinct from older forms of pictorial representation and which needs its own analytic tool kit. Finally, we briefly present what the articles collected here contribute to these debates.

The visual culture paradigm is based on the recognition that images are invariably traversed or impregnated by language, because all images are accompanied by some form of speech or writing (Burgin 1982: 144), be it in the form of a caption, a title, a verbal interpretation in a museum catalog, or the conversation of spectators. Moreover, art historians and visual culture scholars alike stress that the image itself frequently incorporates writing or alludes to verbal narratives and that visual art can in and by itself be “descriptive” and thus fulfill representational functions more commonly associated with language (Alpers 1983). In fact, Bal (1991, 1996) argues that images, just like texts, can be read and that semiotic theories developed in literary scholarship can be fruitfully employed for the analysis of visual artifacts (Bal and Bryson 1991). Sturken and Cartwright (2001: 25–31), too, draw on semiotic theories to explain how spectators negotiate the meaning of an image, while Irit Rogoff (2002: 24) points out that “visual culture opens up an entire world of *intertextuality* in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are *read* on to and through one another” (our emphasis). Conversely, scholars of visual culture stress that writing and speech call forth images (Christin 1995, Esrock 1994) and that even “‘pure’ texts incorporate *visuality* quite literally the moment they are written or printed in visual form” (W. J. T. Mitchell 1994: 95). Other areas of intersection between the visual and the verbal have been identified in verbal and visual reactions to vision (Horstkotte and Leonhard in press), in verbal descriptions of visual perception (Jay 1993, Brennan and Jay 1996), and in the narrativizing of visual culture (Shohat and Stam 2002).³

3. The recognition that the relation between the visual and the verbal may be more complex than suggested by Lessing’s dichotomy has also led to the institution of international forums, such as the International Association of Word and Image Studies (IAWIS), the publication of entire journals devoted to the issue (*Word & Image*, *Visual Studies*, *Material Word*), as well as the organization of many international conferences focused entirely on the question of word-and-image relations, including one at Cerisy-la-Salle in 2003 entitled “Texte/

Although the study of word-and-image relations remains characterized by a multiplicity of methodologies (e.g., semiotics, phenomenology) and topics of interest (poetry and painting, literature and painting, photography and literature, literature and maps, visual poetry, iconicity, and so forth), recent interpretations of Horace's *ut pictura poesis* have fostered new modes of inquiry that bridge many of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Questions of how to map the interaction of word and image and, more specifically, of whether these interactions are of sign type, reference, or figuration have given rise to a critical interdisciplinary discourse that forms an alliance of theory, criticism, and art. As Rogoff (2002: 28) states, "it is clearly one of the most interesting aspects of visual culture that the boundary lines between making, theorizing and historicizing [images] have been greatly eroded and no longer exist in exclusive distinction from each other." This alliance has led to new critical directions in art history (Cheetham et al. 1998, Harrison 2001), literary theory (Steiner 1991, Baetens 1993, Baetens and Ribière 2001, Louvel 2002), cultural studies (W. J. T. Mitchell 1994), and film studies (Metz 1990), among other disciplines.

The field of word-and-image relations also reflects and is guided by the interests of contemporary culture as expressed in its artistic practices. Marjorie Perloff writes that "transgression, the crossing of boundaries, displacement . . . constitute the modality of a whole series of contemporary art works and art events" (quoted in Gilman 1989: 22). Cultural artifacts that collapse the distinction between word and image—a distinction that in the 1980s grounded the study of word-and-image relations under the now-contested emphasis on difference—continue to fashion, fuel, and in an important way, justify the fundamentally interdisciplinary critical practice that the study of word-and-image relations necessitates (Morley 2003).⁴ Accordingly, most scholarship continues to focus on various forms of bi-, inter-, or transmedial artifacts, since it is here that the relation between visual and verbal media, and their integration through acts of reception and interpretation, is most pressing.

A number of suggestions have been made for how one medium gets to be included in another: for instance, through transcription (Cavell 1985: 3ff.), transposition (Clüver 1989), interference (Craws 1989), and ekphrasis (Heffernan 1991, 1993; Krieger 1992; W. J. T. Mitchell 1994; Boehm

Image: nouveaux problèmes." Other academic directions in the inquiry into the interaction of word and image include the formation of the Center for Word-Image Studies at Pratt and the Scottish Word and Image Group (SWIG).

4. For an overview of critical literature on word-and-image relations that warns against the blurring of boundaries separating the disciplines of the humanities, see Gilman 1989.

1995; Yacobi 1995, 2000, 2002; Wagner 1996; Clüver 1997; Klarer 2001). Of course, the applicability of such models of interart transfer depends on the specific forms of integration used in the artifact under scrutiny. The theory of intermediality commonly distinguishes between “manifest” and “hidden” intermedial references: manifest intermediality results from actual combinations of two media, whereas “hidden” intermediality is constituted through the implicit evocation of one medium *within another* (Wolf 1998, Rajewsky 2002). However, such binary oppositions do not account for the broad range of degrees to which one medium can be said to contain or include another. At the low end of this spectrum of interart integration is the allusion within one medium to another, whether in the form of an ekphrastic description of a visual artifact within a literary text or in the guise of an image’s reference to a prior verbal text, for instance, in depicting a biblical story or myth.⁵ A higher, more integrative form is reached in the case of an illustrated text or, conversely, an image which is accompanied by a title: here, both media are present, although one of them remains dominant. The highest degree of integration appears in forms of collage or montage, where both media are indispensable.

Current artistic practices of inter- and multimedia art (such as video and installation art) notwithstanding, however, the scholarship on word-and-image relations remains ambivalent concerning the mutual compatibility of words and images: Can the two arts ever form a whole, or are there simply various forms of combination in which the two media nevertheless remain distinct? Among those who argue for the possibility of mixed media art is Claus Clüver (1989: 62), who attempts to dispel the long-standing belief in the semantic incompatibility between verbal and visual texts by pushing beyond the word-image opposition to develop “a full-fledged theory of intersemiotic [or intermedial] transcriptions.” In many modern multimedia texts, he contends, “the interpenetration of visual and verbal signs is such that the meaning constructed from the text as a whole will be quite different from the meanings derived from the signs alone” (ibid.: 57). A similar mode of reasoning underlies Peter Wagner’s examination of multimedial allusions that direct the interpretation of both verbal and visual texts. Wagner (1996: 16) has been particularly influential in arguing that in “iconotexts”—defined by him as artifacts where “the verbal and the visual signs mingle to produce rhetoric that depends on the co-presence of words and images”—text and image are mutually interdependent in their ways of producing meaning. Iconotexts integrate the semantics and

5. On narrativity in pictures, see Kemp 1989; Wolf 2002; for narrativity in ekphrasis, see Yacobi 1995, 2000.

rhetoric of the verbal component and visual signs into one artifact and thus urge, if not force, readers to consider their union when engaged in the negotiation of meaning (ibid.: 24–25).

Despite the growing popularity of inter- and multidisciplinary studies that theorize an integrated set of reading practices, however, some researchers working in word-and-image relations continue to stress the distinct nature of or incompatibility between images and texts. As Darrel Mansell (1999: 187) notes, a “good case can be made that . . . language and image are irreconcilable sign systems.” The German art historian Hans Belting (1996) has argued that there exist mutually exclusive “pictorial” and “textual cultures” (“Bildkultur” vs. “Textkultur”). Another prominent art historian arguing against the applicability of theories and methods from the textual paradigm to the study of art is James Elkins. In a monograph provocatively entitled *On Pictures and the Words That Fail Them*, Elkins (1998: xii) describes “how the apparently stable, irreducible elements of images give way under pressure of inquiry into much more detailed, unruly, historically specific practices that cannot support a simple translation into signs or narratives.” “To see what a picture is,” Elkins (ibid.: 47) concludes, “is to see what about it cannot be described. Pictures are always partly nonsemiotic, and that is enough to stall interpretations that attempt to say directly what images mean without attending to what they are as images.” Gottfried Boehm (1995: 30), too, emphasizes the “principled difference of the image” and argues that “the logical structure of the image is grounded in an exclusively visually accessible, iconic difference” (our translation). Image and text, Boehm maintains, may be translated into each other, but they cannot fuse into an intermedial image- or iconotext. Silvie Bernier (1990: 20), studying the relation between text and illustration in Quebec literature, claims that the semantic distinctiveness of the image needs to be recognized, as does the constraint on meaning that the image imposes on the verbal text. In what she calls “mixed texts” (as opposed to the more integrative concepts of the image- or iconotext), there is a hierarchy that governs the relation between word and image, albeit one that changes according to the particular arrangement of text and images. Although presented on the same page, Bernier contends, text and image remain semantically distinct.

To sum up, no consensus exists as to the precise delimitation of the field of text and image studies, of its objects of study, or of corresponding theories and methods. Moreover, to date no systematic or comprehensive overview of image and text relations exists, despite W. J. T. Mitchell’s (1986, 1994) attempts in this direction and Áron Kibédi Varga’s (1989) groundbreaking

structural system for describing word-and-image relations.⁶ The very possibility of a truly integrative image- or iconotext is contested. Hence, the field remains heterogeneous, ranging from the study of visual perception and how it intersects with language (Elkins 1996, Sturken and Cartwright 2001) to the visual reading of literary texts (Bryson 1988, Gandelman 1991, Bal 1997, Mergenthaler 2002) to considerations of ekphrasis (Krieger 1992; Heffernan 1993; W. J. T. Mitchell 1994: 151–82; Yacobi 1995, 2002; Boehm and Pfothenhauer 1995; Clüver 1997) and integrative iconotexts (Montandon 1990, Wagner 1996).

Photography and Literature

A similar heterogeneity besets the field of photography in literature. Witness the sharp divergence there between numerous publications that deal with a wide variety of topics and texts, on the one hand, and the lack of comprehensive overviews or systematic methodologies, on the other. This is not so surprising, because photography in literature has only very recently emerged as a distinct field of research. Until a few years ago, photo-text relations constituted a marginal topic of interest within the broader field of word and image studies. Now, however, photography in literature is widely recognized as one of the focal points of word and image research, with entire conferences and seminar series and a growing number of publications devoted to the subject.⁷ Although photography in literature certainly grew out of word and image studies and thus remains related to it, it also grapples with its own distinct set of concerns geared to the specificity of photographic images, their particular aesthetic merit and forms of social use (see Jacobs 2006a). Kindred fields of inquiry concern the relationship of the still photograph to narrative (Bryant 1996, Hughes and Noble 2003),⁸ literary reactions to the changing cultural status of the photograph

6. See also the collections edited by Wolfgang Harms (1990), Klaus Dirscherl (1993), Thomas Eicher and Ulrich Bleckmann (1994), and Silke Horstkotte and Karin Leonhard (2006).

7. Several conferences and workshops over the past few years have promised to lead to an increasing institutional recognition of photography in literature. To name but a few examples, the University of Manitoba hosted a huge international conference on “The Photograph” in March 2004 (a selection of contributions has been published in the special issue “The Photograph,” *Mosaic* 37:4 [2004]); in July 2005 the Photography Research Group at the University of Durham (U.K.) organized a symposium entitled “Thinking Photography—Again”; and since fall 2006 the Institute for Germanic and Romance Studies (IGRS) at the University of London has been conducting the seminar series “Photography: Theory, Practice, and Debate.” Consider also the small but growing number of edited collections dealing with photography in literature (Bryant 1996, Rabb 1998, Jacobs 2006b).

8. See Gualtieri 2006 on the “instantaneity” of photography in fiction.

(Koppen 1987, Plumpe 1996, Armstrong 1999), the interactions between photographic and literary theory (Garrett-Petts and Lawrence 2000, Petit 2006), and the emergence of a “photo-poetics” or “verbal equivalent of photographic techniques and processes” (Robinson 2006: 269).

The lively current debates on photography and literature have drawn attention to the increasing presence of photographic images not only in the classic genres of illustrated nonfiction, such as (auto-)biography, historiography, and memoir writing, but also within the area of fictional writing in a stricter sense. As a result, the exact delimitations of fictional and nonfictional writing become increasingly blurred.⁹ Because of the photograph’s persistent use as documentary evidence, the presence of photography in literature almost automatically challenges accepted distinctions between fiction and nonfiction. Due to their fragmented, discontinuous, static nature, photographic images (apart from the relatively rare case of image sequences) cannot inscribe a “before” or “after.” That images do not narrate gives rise to a self-consciously contrived reality effect, as the photograph lends itself to a (mock-)documentary aesthetic that may be at odds with the literary fictions with which it is combined. How, then, do we look at authentic photographs when they are reproduced in fictional narrative? Almost always, the inclusion of photographs in literature leads to an instability of genre concerning both the photograph and its contexts. In a paradoxical movement, photographs, when taken out of their original contexts and included in a fictional narrative, become fictional themselves. Inversely, the narrative is ostensibly turned toward the real (i.e., it is substantiated). Analyses of photography in fiction thus need to distinguish carefully between photography’s evidentiary moment and the photograph’s function within a literary narrative.

Since the multiple discovery of the photographic process in the 1830s (by Joseph Nicéphore Niepce, Louis Daguerre, and William Fox Talbot), a wide and diverse group of writers of fiction have made photography, photographs, and photographers important points of reference in their stories. On the whole, the use of photography in literature has revolved around a shared concern with issues that inform the very process of representation, especially the relationship between fact and fiction (or the documentary and the aesthetic), dramatized action and subjective description, reading agent and material object. However, as shown by the articles collected in this issue, photographs have been used in literature for a wide

9. See the discussion of how new genres bridge the fiction/nonfiction gap, such as documentary fiction (Foley 1986) or docu-fiction (as in the recent special issue “DokuFiktion,” *Non Fiktion* 2 [2006]).

range of different narrative purposes, from aide-mémoire to constructive force, from documentary evidence to critical idiom.

Like all bimedial artifacts, literary texts that incorporate photographs can do so to a wide range of degrees. Shortly after the invention of photography, nineteenth-century literature became preoccupied with the new medium's aesthetic merit and its consequences for the other arts, as in the idea of a photographic writing.¹⁰ Soon, however, there emerged more direct modes of integration. Especially notable among them are ekphrases of individual photographs (or daguerreotypes) or the taking of photographs as a plot element, as in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*. In her seminal study of photography in nineteenth-century American literature, Carol Shloss points out that the photographic image was unlike any earlier kind of picture in the ways it changed practices of literary production and reception. Shloss (1987: 14) convincingly analyzes the photographic code as a way in which to "read and receive written texts" and draws an extended parallel between the creation of a literary text and the act of taking a photograph. In the course of the nineteenth century, Shloss (*ibid.*: 255) argues, the use of the camera made writers of fiction "more aware of the implications of using social observation as a precondition of art." For fiction, photography meant an increasingly self-conscious exploration of seeing and being seen. Nancy Armstrong (1999: 4) expands on this argument to emphasize its hermeneutical ramifications as they were shaped during the mid-Victorian period. Photography, she argues, "became basic psychological equipment for that readership and their definitive way of classifying both things and people." This relatively new form of literacy validates the integration of visual and verbal literacies, a situation that "presents a potentially disruptive challenge to the hegemony of word over image" (Garrett-Petts and Lawrence 2000: 3) and, in so doing, opens up new and exciting avenues of critical exploration.

The proliferation of photographic images and a heightened awareness of a photographic literacy has had a significant impact not only on the way reality is perceived but also on how it is narrated. Regarding the epistemological assumptions behind photography, Megan Rowley Williams (2003: 5) proposes that "[a] paradoxical and almost compulsive desire to narrate the single meaning behind the photograph defines our modern negotiation of the relationship between word and image." Susan Williams also notes the singularity of photographic truth, the photograph's particular way of

10. Cf. the research on uses of photography in French (von Amelunxen 1992), British (Armstrong 1999), German (Koppen 1987, Plumpe 1990), and American (Shloss 1987, Davidson 1990) nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature.

showing historical reality, and its impact on fiction. In her examination of portrait photography in antebellum American fiction, Williams (1997: xi) draws attention to the competitive relation between word and image, fiction and photography: “[Antebellum] writers were attracted to the ability of the photograph to reveal hidden truths, but they also realized that such truth-telling challenged the pictorial power of their own art. In response to this threat, they began to redefine the pictorial power of narrative by using fictional portraits to create an alternate form of representation.” Photography’s influence on how the world is related was so pronounced that a new, visually oriented form of narrative came into being—irrespective of whether actual photographs were used or not. As Armstrong (1999: 7–8) notes, “In order to be realistic, literary realism referenced a world of objects that either had been or could be photographed.”

The ekphrastic evocation of photographic images and the idea of a visual writing in Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu* are the subject of an exhaustive monograph by Mieke Bal (1997). Pointing to the distinction between visual and verbal images (ibid.: 4), between material photograph and mental image (ibid.: 200), Bal names yet another way in which photography can be made productive for literary writing: photography can serve as a constructive principle for literature, that is, as a form of *mise en abyme*. She specifies that “the photographic mechanism can be seen at work in the cutting-out of details, in the conflictual dialectic between the near and the far, and in certain ‘zoom’ effects” (ibid.: 201). Moreover, writers like Franz Kafka have relied on photographs as a source of inspiration, especially when writing about remote and exotic locations (Duttlinger 2006).

Besides such indirect, mediated, or ekphrastic references to photography, photographs have also had a very concrete, manifest entry into fiction. A more integrative degree of photo-text bimodality is reached in the use of photographic images as illustrations: for instance, the photo-gravures by Alvin Langdon Coburn which appeared on the frontispieces of Henry James’s New York edition (Bogardus 1984, Nadel 1995, Adams 2000, McWhirter 2006), the reproduction of Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographs in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (Gillespie 1993, Humm 2003, Pedri 2005), or the use of photographic images in the second edition of André Breton’s *Nadja*.

While the photographs in these photo-texts¹¹ have been treated by pub-

11. The term “photo text” (unhyphenated) was introduced by Jefferson Hunter (1987) to describe the collaborative work of writer and photographer. Following Marsha Bryant (1996), we use it here to include all composite forms of photography and literature, irrespective of the provenance and aesthetics of the photographs in question.

lishers as subordinate illustrations, which are often left out of later editions, collage and montage techniques of photography and text developed in the later twentieth century in conjunction with contemporary art practices, especially British pop art, and under the influence of techniques of film montage. Such developments have forced editors and readers to reconsider photography's contribution to literature. Notable in this respect are the works of postwar German writers Alexander Kluge (see Mark Anderson's contribution to this issue) and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann. More recently, the development toward ever more integrative forms of photo-text has culminated in a virtual omnipresence of photographic images in (post-)post-modern fiction by writers such as W. G. Sebald or Jonathan Safran Foer.¹² They rely on scrapbooking techniques, influenced by literary predecessors like Alexander Kluge as well as by forms of image-text combination in illustrated news or on the Internet.

Besides criticism dealing with the literary *history* of the uses of photography, a second field of study concerns the response of literary *theory* to photographic images and its intersections with photographic theory. It is this second aspect with which the articles in "Photography in Fiction" are concerned. Since the invention of photography, the proliferation of photographic images has received critical attention, and research in the later twentieth century continued to focus on issues raised since the new medium's inception, such as the ontology of the photographic image (Bazin 1975) and its relation to (literary) realism and to the real (Ortel 1997). The beginnings of a commercial studio photography led to Walter Benjamin's still-influential critique of the photograph's capacity for infinite reproduction, which distinguishes it from older types of images (Benjamin 1972; cf. Krauss 1998).¹³ The claim that photographs are not art has long hampered the medium's serious consideration and its integration into the canon of academic disciplines. Although Victor Burgin's (1982) attempt to "think photography," as well as Vilém Flusser's "philosophy of photography" (2000), have established photography as a theoretical object constitutive of cultural intervention and philosophical discussion,¹⁴ most twentieth-century writings on photography remained preoccupied with

12. The articles by Mark Anderson, Timothy Dow Adams, Marianne Hirsch, and Silke Horstkotte in this issue deal with aspects of Sebald's work. Cf. also Harris 2001; Long 2003; Shaffer 2003; Duttlinger 2004; Horstkotte 2005a, 2005b; Steinlechner 2005; Barzilai 2006; Tischel 2006; and Gnam 2007.

13. See also Carolin Duttlinger's article in this issue.

14. For overviews of photography theory, see Kemp 1980–83, Squiers 1990, and Price and Wells 2000. The capacity of images to "think" and function as theoretical objects is discussed in Bal 1999; esp. 1–22.

the photograph's technical production (Batchen 1997), its aesthetic evaluation (Beloff 1985), its uses and effects.

Foremost among these are the social uses of photography (Bourdieu 1965), be it as family photographs (Sontag 1977; Hirsch 1981; Beloff 1985: 179–204) or as tokens of identity (Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001). Other privileged themes include the oft-repeated connections between photography and memory (Hirsch 1997, Edwards 1999, Batchen 2004, Ruchatz 2004), photography and mourning (Liss 1991, Creekmur 1996, Cadava 1997), and photography and trauma (Baer 2002, Duttlinger 2004). While these are doubtless crucial issues, they have often been privileged to the detriment of other, equally important questions concerning, for example, the reception of photography (rather than its production), the spaces of photography (as opposed to its limitation to an art of time), the representational aspects of photography, the newly emerging practices of digital photography in a “post-photographic” era,¹⁵ and the paradigmatic function of photography in postmodern writing.

The Photograph: A Special Image

What distinguishes a photograph from other images? Why study photography in fiction as a topic on its own, related to but distinct from other studies of word and image relations? More than anything else, it is the photograph's mechanical production and its supposed indexicality which have set the study of photographic images as well as their use in literature apart from other images. Theorists who have linked the photograph's specificity to its mechanical origins include Bazin (1975), Sontag (1977), and Barthes (1984), among others. As Rosalind Krauss (1981: 26) specifies, “photography is an imprint or transfer of the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints.” The product of an automatic apparatus, “a photograph is always a photograph of something which actually exists” (Walton 1984: 250). It is the photograph's indexical quality that makes it the most realist of images and links it to the real world. Christian Metz (1990: 156), borrowing Charles S. Peirce's taxonomy, reminds us that the indexical is “the process of signification (semiosis) in which the signifier is bound to the referent not by a social convention (= ‘symbol’), not necessarily by some similarity (= ‘icon’), but by an actual contiguity or connection in the world: the lightning is the index of the storm.” Born of a photochemical process, this line of reasoning goes,

15. The term is William Mitchell's (1994).

the photograph is a physical trace of (the light reflecting off) that which existed before the camera in the real world. The photograph, in short, is a concrete impression of a particular object in the real world.

In his extended exploration of the “distinctive nature and value of photographic art,” Jonathan Friday (2002: 3) points out the relationship between the photograph’s indexicality—the photograph’s immediate contact with the things of the world—and its implicit authority. He argues that photography’s unique photochemical process not only distinguishes photography from painting and drawing but also affects “the way in which photographs are made, how they are related to the world they depict and their status as evidence” (ibid.: 44).¹⁶

However, and notwithstanding the persistent belief in the superiority of the photographic image as a record of the real world, numerous theorists of photography have remarked on the difficulty besetting those who would describe precisely what the photograph’s connection to the real is. Stanley Cavell (1971) stands out among them for the way in which he at once opposes and acknowledges the most compelling arguments of how a photograph partakes in a privileged relation to the real world. He writes:

We might say that we don’t know how to think of the *connection* between a photograph and what it is a photograph of. The image is not a likeness; it is not exactly a replica, or a relic, or a shadow, or an apparition either, though all of these natural candidates share a striking feature with photographs—an aura or history of magic surrounding them. (Ibid.: 17–18)

Cavell’s description of the photograph as not being a likeness or replica (terms which allude to a relation of similarity or iconicity between a photograph and its referent), a relic (or a trace of something which no longer is), a shadow (which intimates the photograph’s indexical quality), or an apparition (with its strong allusion to a return of that which no longer is) is coupled with a provocative suggestion that these descriptions are inexplicably compelling because of the photograph’s privileged relation to

16. Other theorists who draw a link between the photograph’s indexical nature and its special realism include Rudolf Arnheim (1974: 155–57), Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston (1985: 31), Marianne Hirsch (1997: 248), and Jan-Erik Lundström (1999: 61). Revealingly, a number of theorists who oppose the idea that photographs possess a unique indexical relationship to the world tend to admit that the everyday use of photographs sees them as evidence of the actuality of the objects they represent, precisely because they are traces of that object (Adams 2000: 4–5). See, for example, Corey Creekmur (1996: 75) or Joel Snyder (1980: 502), who, although one of the sharpest critics of the idea that a photograph is a trace of the real, admits: “It seems to me that the conclusive refutations of copy or illusion theories somehow fail to be convincing; we are left with a strong feeling, after all the refutations are advanced, that there must, nonetheless, be a natural or privileged or unreasoned relation between realistic picture and world” (see also Snyder and Allen 1975: 151).

the real world. By drawing on notions of aura (as Walter Benjamin uses the term),¹⁷ history (as John Tagg conceives of it), or magic (as is often claimed by Roland Barthes) to explain both descriptions of photographs and photographs as objects in themselves, Cavell betrays the frustration that fuels discussions of what exactly distinguishes the photograph from other images. He is unable, in other words, to express what, if anything, is peculiarly “photographic” about the photograph.

Despite such obvious conceptual difficulties and despite the recourse to numerous creative techniques that expose as constructed the sense of the photograph’s privileged relation to the real (collage, montage, salient examples of framing, posing, retouching, and the use of filters, up to the new possibilities offered by digital manipulation software), the almost automatic association of the photograph with the real, the authentic, and the referent proves difficult to break. Indeed, the “myth of *photographic truth*” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 17)—the unquestioned assumption that the photograph shows what “has been” (Barthes 1984)—continues to govern the perception of photographs, even though we *know* “that the ‘objectivity’ of technical images is an illusion” (Flusser 2000: 15). As Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2001: 17) specify: “It is a paradox of photography that although we know that images can be ambiguous and are easily manipulated or altered, particularly with the help of computer graphics, much of the power of photography still lies in the shared belief that photographs are objective or truthful records of events.” The use of photographs as reliable documents in courtrooms and on passports and other official documents attests to how photographs are perceived to be truthful records of the real world. Belief in the photograph’s objective truthfulness persists even in what William Mitchell (1994) calls a “post-photographic era,” an age in which the photomechanical image is being replaced by digitally manipulated or constructed images.

A second feature that sets the photograph apart from other images is its indiscriminate recording of all the details that were present before the camera’s eye, unlike a painted canvas, where the artist makes choices as to what to include. Since the early days of the new medium, critics have remarked on the photograph’s unselectiveness or all-inclusiveness and linked it to the seemingly authorless quality of the photograph. In an article for the *New Yorker*, Janet Malcolm (1989) poignantly called this aspect of photography “the camera’s perverse noticingness, which promotes to center stage objects that the eye normally relegates to the background.” The photograph works to alter our perception of the world by drawing attention to a

17. On which see Carolin Duttlinger’s contribution to this issue.

marginal detail, one that would go unnoticed if it were not for the fact that it was photographed and thus framed. Ultimately, the automatic inclusion of daily, ordinary, even banal details within the photograph's frame affects the way the world is seen. Through the everydayness of photographic aesthetics, the familiar (and oftentimes overlooked) aspects of the real world are more readily perceived and thus gain in importance.

Another notable difference between photographic and other visual images, and one which crucially directs its use in literature, concerns the photograph's use as a commemorative image (Hirsch 1997, Edwards 1999, Batchen 2004). Linda Haverty Rugg (1997: 23) dwells on the mnemonic power of photography to specify that "the line between memory and photographs blurs, with photographic-era children uncertain as to whether their memories of childhood are memories of events they witnessed or photographs they have seen." Susan Sontag (2003: 84–85) also comments on the strong fusion between photography and memory, suggesting that photographs are very particular instruments of remembrance. Rethinking photography's depiction of war and disaster, she observes that "atrocities that are not secured in our minds by well-known photographic images, or of which we simply have had very few images . . . seem more remote." Her meditation on the reception of war photography in contemporary society leads her to conclude: "In an era of information overload, the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form for memorizing it" (*ibid.*: 22). In the easy equation of photography and memory, the photograph is the medium that connects the present to the past, thus oscillating between life and death. Due to this bracketing of photography with memory, the study of photography favors a distinct set of discursive frameworks that not only revolve around memory but also involve such related topics as postmemory or a second-generation memory that has been constructed through narratives (Hirsch 1997, 2001; Liss 1998), traumatic memory (Baer 2002), death (Sontag 1977, Barthes 1984), mourning (Creekmur 1996), and bereavement (Cadava 1997).¹⁸

A privileged topic of photography studies concerns photography's function within the family, where it likewise serves as a tool of remembrance as well as of family formation (see, e.g., Beloff 1985: 179–204). Julia Hirsch (1981: 32) adopts a business model to accentuate photography's formative role in conceptions of family; she writes: "Family photography, like family portraiture, sustains the notion of the family as a corporate entity," thereby stressing the influence of earlier pictorial practices,

18. The last aspect is of particular interest to scholars who study postmortem photography (Burns 1990, Ruby 1995).

such as the painted family portrait, on the taking and use of family photographs. According to her, family photography authenticates not how a particular family is, but rather how society perceives family, a perception that is communal because it is based on the established models of family representation that photography helps consolidate and promote. By projecting an accepted model of family, that is, by showing family (its power relations, its group dynamic, the roles of its individual subjects, etc.) as it has come to be idealized through representation, the family photograph functions to perpetuate a highly constructed image of family. As with all societal myths, prevalent conceptions of family affect the taking of a photograph. At the same time, however, family photography fulfills an ideological function: it adopts, proliferates, and legitimizes the set of techniques developed by a given society to regulate and, indeed, naturalize the concept of family.

That this regulative effect is closely tied to the mechanics of the camera, to the frequency with which family snapshots are taken, and to the omnipresence of family photographs (aspects which distinguish family photography from earlier forms of pictorial representation) is stressed by Marianne Hirsch (1997). She examines the reading of photographs by family members as well as the processes (both conscious and unconscious) that direct the taking of family photographs. Following Pierre Bourdieu (1990), Hirsch (1997: 10–11) specifies that “the camera and the family album function as the instruments of [a] familial gaze,” one that “situates human subjects in the ideology, the mythology, of the family as institution and projects a screen of familial myths between camera and subject.” The camera, in other words, interrupts and shapes, records and constructs family relations. As an apparatus whose “social functions are integrally tied to the ideology of the modern family” (*ibid.*: 7), photography is instrumental in inscribing the individual subject within a family group. It also exerts a forceful influence on how society thinks about the family, one of its most valued and fundamental social groups. In short, photography is implicated in the proliferation of sameness and the constraint for assimilation (see Barrett 2000).

That photography confirms, creates, and naturalizes standard models of conduct is in line with the ideas proposed by a growing group of researchers who link photography with discourses of power and state apparatuses (Tagg 1988, Solomon-Godeau 1991, Lalvani 1996, Hamilton and Hargreaves 2001). Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1991: xviv), for example, closely examines the dense interweave of the social and the economic, the cultural, and the political in the production and reception of photographs; she insists on the indivisibility of photography from its historical underpin-

nings, arguing that “photographs are routinely used to confirm the truth of dominant ideologies.” The photograph is not, indeed cannot be, a neutral picture of daily life. The camera can only produce highly coded images which are governed by the relevant historical specifications—the conditions of existence and institutionalized knowledge that operate unnoticed in the gestures of everyday life. Accordingly, photography is a powerful social technology that works alongside dominant discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices to produce, offer, and institute social realities. Thus, the photograph not only interpellates its subject in the ideological field of the “photographic gaze” (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 100). The photograph’s particular power to record the real world reaches beyond the photographic frame to communicate the photograph’s subject as it intersects with a network of social practices. Hence, the photograph positions that which it images within social and cultural settings that constrain the way it is conceived.

The need to examine the interaction between photography and literature in terms of interpretative strategies that recognize the distinctive qualities of photographic representation has been duly noted by Marsha Bryant (1996) in her introduction to *Photo-Textualities*, one of the few collections of critical essays that deal exclusively with photography in fiction. It is unfortunate that many literary scholars who approach the topic rely unquestioningly on Roland Barthes’s still-influential *studium/punctum* dichotomy (1984), while more nuanced theories of photographic reception, such as Victor Burgin’s (1982) concept of reading photographs, are often undeservedly ignored. As Burgin (*ibid.*: 144) stresses, photographic images have no stable meaning or reference:

The intelligibility of the photograph is no simple thing; photographs are *texts* inscribed in terms of what we may call “photographic discourse”, but this discourse, like any other, engages discourses beyond itself, 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.

Burgin reminds us that the meaning of a photograph is far from self-evident; instead, it is the result of a dialogic interaction among the photograph, its contexts, and its spectators. The critical appraisal of photographs inside and outside of fiction therefore requires a careful consideration of the image, the changing discourses that inform it, and both past and present contexts. The articles collected in this special issue have attempted to highlight the processual quality of this reading, which combines semiotic and affective responses.

Photography in Fiction

The essays in “Photography in Fiction” build on twentieth-century debates relating to photography in order to reexamine and reframe the oft-repeated associations between the photograph and memory, death, identity, or witnessing. Taken together, the articles collected here invite reconsideration of some of the most popular notions informing the study of photography, in the belief that such investigations will lead to alternative approaches to word-and-image relations and, in particular, those between photography and fiction. The critical (re-)appraisal of such popular notions as, for example, Benjamin’s aura, Hirsch’s postmemory, and Lessing’s time/space distinction through the examination of photography in fiction—so we hope—gives rise to new directions in the analysis of the photographic image as well as of photography’s role in fiction. Starting from the premise that the photographic image is a special type of image whose history intersects with literary history, the articles collected here explore the complex reading practices that ensue when the photographic image mixes with literary fiction. Whether a close analysis of photography in a specific literary text or a critical proposal of a new way of reading photographically, each essay considers how the complex interrelation of photography and fiction affects the understanding of both the photographic image and the literary text and of the notion of the fictional.

Following Liliane Louvel’s lead in “Photography as Critical Idiom and Intermedial Criticism,” the issue thus aims to develop a critical idiom based on the photographic image and to take into account the visual quality of texts. The issue is divided into three sections. The first part, “Photography as Critical Idiom,” considers photography as a critical idiom and explores several aspects of photo-text interactions that have hitherto been neglected in image-text studies. Taking up Kibédi Varga’s (1989) call for a set of criteria for describing word and image relations, Louvel attempts an overview of the multiple and varied forms of photo-text interaction found in twentieth-century fiction while simultaneously setting up a field of inquiry for a new, truly intermedial criticism. Louvel argues persuasively for the ambiguity of photography as situated between document and icon. Accordingly, the presence of photography in fiction more or less automatically upsets or, better, subverts the distinction between fiction and nonfiction. Moreover, not only does the photograph stand uneasily between document and icon, it also constitutes a form of visualization that is at once an art of time and an art of space, because the photograph superimposes a past on a present moment.

One aspect that crucially determines the reception of intermedial photo-texts concerns the spatial layout of photography and printed text.

Silke Horstkotte's article "Photo-Text Topographies: Photography and the Representation of Space in W. G. Sebald and Monika Maron" explores the consequences of different photo-text arrangements. To this end, she reads the photograph as a layered space linking represented reality with the space of its reception while also taking into account the problems that ensue when a meaningfully arranged photo-text is rearranged in its translation into another language.

We have entitled the second part of this collection "Moving Beyond" to indicate a point of departure for the theoretical debates touched upon in the essays by Carolin Duttlinger, Marianne Hirsch, and Mark M. Anderson. Duttlinger's "Imaginary Encounters: Walter Benjamin and the Aura of Photography" revisits Benjamin's aura, a much-used (if not overused) concept of photography theory, especially in what concerns photography's association with death. She points out that the aura of photography is not an intrinsic property of the medium but rests on an interpersonal and reciprocal dynamic of (photographic) reception. Aura thus triggers a process of reception and encounter as well as challenging preconceived methodological oppositions between criticism and autobiography, theory and fiction.

Another central term of photography studies in general, and of photography in literature more specifically, is the concept of "postmemory," which refers to the photograph's function in the intergenerational transfer of memory (Hirsch 1997, 1999, 2001; Liss 1991, 1998; Long 2003, 2006; Hoffman 2004; van Alphen 2004). In an essay especially written for this collection, "The Generation of Postmemory," Marianne Hirsch defends the concept against some of the criticisms that have been leveled against it and considers the role of photography for fictional memory transfers. What specific bodily, psychic, and affective impact, Hirsch asks, does the trauma of the Holocaust and its aftermath still have at the turn of the twenty-first century? The ways in which one trauma can recall or reactivate the effects of another exceed the bounds of traditional historical archives and methodologies, but they are powerfully evoked in works by second-generation writers and visual artists relying largely on photography. Through a reading of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Hirsch argues that photography functions as more than a powerful medium of transmission in these texts: photographic images related to the Holocaust provide the postgeneration with a space both of authentication and, paradoxically perhaps, of projection and invention.

Anderson, in "Documents, Photography, Postmemory: Alexander Kluge, W. G. Sebald, and the German Family," takes up the postmemory concept and applies it to a different context—that of post-World War II Germany. He points out that the prevalence of "slow" and "cold" docu-

mentary images in German literature (as opposed to the trivial, immediacy-seeking images in Western pop art) can be traced back to the prominent status of images in National Socialism, which led to a deep-seated distrust of the image in postwar Germany. Moreover, the problematic documentary status of the photograph (as witnessed by the scandal around the first Wehrmacht exhibition, “Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941–1944”) and, consequently, its inherent epistemological instability call attention, among other things, to the fictional processes involved in reproducing and reading photographs. Photographs, Anderson concludes, serve a crucial function in literary fiction: to introduce a set of questions about reality and its representation. By comparing Sebald’s work with that of his compatriot Kluge, Anderson highlights the impact that the Nazis’ reliance on visual propaganda strategies had on German postwar viewers and media artists alike. In contrast to the “fast” images of British and North American pop art, these two German writers rely on images that invite a careful reflection and consideration of their contexts. However, while Kluge’s documentarism relies on a form of defamiliarization that works on formal as well as on affective registers, Sebald’s use of images, arising at a later historical juncture, attempts to refamiliarize the family photographs of individuals whose trauma lies deep in their past.

The third part of this collection, “The Photograph, a Textual Excess?” explores some new directions for studying the photo-text’s uneasy status between document and fiction. Opening this final group of essays, Nancy Pedri’s “Documenting the Fictions of Reality” critiques popular traditional attitudes that inform documentary photography by analyzing the photograph’s ambiguous status in Barthes’s (auto-)biography *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, where the genre’s reliance on photographic evidence is coupled with an overt demystification of the photograph’s evidentiary value. Pedri emphasizes that, in life writing, photography often raises questions about the nature of the documentary itself and concludes that the photograph stands as factual evidence not so much because of any privileged link it may have to the real world, but rather because it invites (or even demands) the imaginative speculation of readers.

As Timothy Dow Adams points out in his contribution, “Photographs on the Walls of the House of Fiction,” the status of photography in fiction has undergone dramatic changes since the age of photographic realism studied in detail by Nancy Armstrong (1999). Novelists writing in the nineteenth century described and sometimes (as in the New York edition of Henry James’s works) even reproduced photographs in order to add verisimilitude to their writing, but postmodernist writers have come to use photographs as the reverse of representation: as a revelation of the

invisible, unseeable, and, indeed, unknowable. Specifically, the photograph's persistent and ubiquitous contemporary association with memory, trauma, and death turns photographic images into privileged representations of the Holocaust and of Holocaust memories.¹⁹ Paradigmatic of this kind of contemporary usage are the novels of the recently deceased German writer Sebald, whom Anderson, Hirsch, Horstkotte, and Louvel also cite in their contributions. Indeed, Sebald has probably taken the integrative aspects of photography in fiction more seriously than any other contemporary writer. His self-conscious play with photo-text layouts and with intermedial and intertextual allusions thus predestine his writing as a subject of our inquiry.

Ever since its invention, photography has been intimately bound up with the economy of the capitalist state. In his essay "Paratextual Profusion: Photography and Text in Bertolt Brecht's *War Primer*," Jonathan Long considers the problematic case of a photographic book that provides a Marxist critique of capitalism: problematic because of Marxism's long-standing suspicion of and iconoclastic aversion to the image. A test case of what Long terms "paratextual profusion," Bertolt Brecht's 1955 *War Primer* attempts to control the meaning of documentary news photographs through the excessive use of captions. However, this combinatory practice, originally born of a deep distrust of the image in Marxism, unintentionally serves to establish multiple modes of address; and it thereby creates a fluid subjectivity that is quite at odds with the kind of univocal ideological viewing position Brecht sought to impose on his audience.

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19. On photographic commemorations of the Holocaust, see Liss 1991, 1998; Zetzsche 1991; Goetschel 1997; Hirsch 1997, 1999, 2001; Brink 1998; Zelizer 1998; Knoch 2001; Baer 2002; and Didi-Huberman 2003.

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