The New Image: On the Temporality of Photographic Representation after Digitalization

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ABSTRACT
Setting off from the post-photography debate and its notions of a general crisis of representation, this article discusses the temporal relationship between image and referential reality in photographic representation; first, that is generally in terms of the semiotic concepts of icon and index, secondly in a retrospect of Pier Paolo Pasolini's heretically realist contribution to film semiotics, and thirdly in a general discussion on notions of temporality in theories of photographic representation with special reference to new media. The point made is that notions of iconicity and especially indexicality call for a systematical reconsideration after the post-photography critique, and that a stronger concept of indexicality may serve as a theoretical framework to systematize photographic representation in terms of grammatical tenses. Finally, Pasolini's theory of a cinematographic foundation of meaning is reconsidered more generally in terms of post-photography and digital aesthetics.

Keywords
Pictorial Semiotics, Cinema, Photography, Digitalization, Post-Photography, Temporality

1. INTRODUCTION
What is an "image" today? In connection with the recent debate on the digitalization of photography and the so-called "post-photographic" image, we learned that the photograph, the "chemical photograph" (or in any case our idea of it) was "dead" and that we were now entering a new "post-photographic" culture. It was a culture in which images could be conceptualized independently of the idea of photographic representation, since digitalization meant that even photography-like images could be produced without the chemical technique of photography.

The message, announced among others by photographer Sue Davis, quickly came to appear as a paraphrased echo of the painter Paul Delacroche's excited conclusion in 1839 in connection with the invention of the photograph: 'From now on, painting is dead!' Even though the critics of post-photography certainly to a certain degree had an ontological errand, and with good reason-for digital photographs were in fact very different from the "chemical" ones —the critique, as a fine representative, Danish theorist of photography, Lars Kiel Bertelsen, could celebrate in, was char-acterized more by a new creativity and general theoretical liberation of the photograph than by `the desire of the modernist aesthetics to define the media-specific ontologies, i.e., to determine how the photograph differed from other types of pictures.' [6: 9, my translation]

2. PHOTOGRAPHIC "EPISTEMOLOGY"
That this theoretical liberation came to concern the "Image" in general seemed to be clear for several observers, including Bertelsen himself, who believed that the postphotographic debate reflected a general "collapse of the logic of representation" [6:10ff] more than the consequences of the new technology, i.e., digitalization. Above all, "Photography" had been the name of an idealization of pictorial representation, rather than that of a particular medium. And what's more, rather than repeating the perhaps somewhat too rigid epochmaking pronouncements so characteristic of the critics of the post-photograph, Bertelsen, taking a point of departure in Adorno's thesis that each new insight automatically has a retroactive effect, attempted to demonstrate that the photograph could be said to have been "post-photographic" since its birth [6:10]; i.e., that the characteristics of the post-photograph that critics have attributed to digital photography may perhaps in fact be considered to be intrinsic to the photograph itself, as this has been described critically and applied creatively through its approximately 150 years' history. Bertelsen argues that the photograph, as both a popular cultural and theoretical attitude, was `a dream and a collective illusion which has served an entire ideological project. We have had a need for it. It has been a part of the construction which supported the general view of what an *image* was' [4:14]. The "image" *qua* photography was in this context the chemical and therefore "uncoded" and "authentic" imprint of a positive

given reality; it had a raw and vulgar character which early in the history of photography and cinema prevented—but with among others Andre Bazin and the other realists of film theory later made possible—the adoption of photographic media as possible art forms.[1]

Here I shall not go into any more detail regarding the content of this photograph or image's ideological phantasm. The topic is well described by the materialistic and later postmodern ideology critique and thereby in much of the body of literature now known as the critique of the visual culture. What is important, however, is to point out that even though the traditional concept of photography may have been illusory, and in any case restrictive to our theoretical world view, "Photography"— just as "Cinema"—has been something more than simply the designation of a specific artistic form; indeed, if anything, these media have been the modern way of not only to "conceiving" of the image, *but also of the world*. For Walter Benjamin, the photograph and the film were the modern media *par excellence*. The photograph, in its "simple", indexical concept, is central in connection with the transition from a culture where experience has been communicated orally, through narratives, to a culture where transmission took place in terms of writing and images. In retrospect, the photograph's stage of imprints and traces appears emblematic for the artists and critics of the modern era, who, after Charles Baudelaire and subsequently Benjamin, saw the new urban visual culture as a world of images, of signs. For Gilles Deleuze, film was the reflexive medium of the 20t" century, its philosophy. Only when the images became alive— *moving* images—did they give a true reflection of nature itself; not the eternal and unchanging ideal figures of geometry, but infinite being, becoming. And after the culmination of the strict diegetic Hollywood montage at the start of the 1940s, film art experienced a gradual liberation of the shot, that is the film image; perhaps then for the first time it was possible to cultivate a true image of Time as fleeting and transitory. This topic became richly thematicized by the "new cinemas" after the Second World War, with the Italian *neo*-realism, Jean Luc Godard and the *French nouvelle wage*, Andy Warhol's *New* American Cinema, and Wim Wenders and others' *Neue* Deutsche Kino; projects which all had in common the fact that narrativity

was challenged by the media itself in the form of the film shot with its open temporality and materiality.[2]

3. GROUNDING PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER POST-PHOTOGRAPHY

This view over the modern theoretical status of photographic representation seems in itself to indicate that "the Photograph", the "chemical" photograph, is more complicated than what one would immediately surmise on the basis of the visual culture and post-photography critique. Conversely, we should emphasize that these "photographic" modes of "conceiving" the world are not especially compatible with a traditional concept of representation. The problem of the post-photographic critique was perhaps enough so that to a certain degree, one comes to *blend concepts of representation and indexicality*. The ("chemical") photographic image's indexical character was to a special degree problematized during the post-photography debate. The indexical character of photography—i.e., that its logic of signification is based on a proximity (i.e., contiguity) or part-whole relationship (i.e., factorality [18:40ff] between image and referent, between sign and object (Charles Sanders Peirce, as known, used the photograph as example of the indexical sign aspect)—was based on the idea that the photographic image is an optical and chemical imprint of an object, like smoke from a fire, or a foot step in the snow). However, "after digitalization", an indexical character of photography was seen only as a possible effect in the image; an effect that of its "digital production". Accordingly, in this ideal conception, the post-photography-critique asserted that the postphotographic image was "more iconic than indexical", and one could by extension conclude that the digital photograph was more related to painting than to the chemical photograph. With the special "iconic" digital photography, pictorial art could thus liberate itself from the photograph's unavoidable indexical theme of "realityimage" and eventually "devote itself to a content independent of the medium".

Regrettably, this application of the semiotic conceptual apparatus is somewhat reductionist. Despite elements of truth, when the commentators of the post-photograph argue that the digital photograph is relatively less *indexical* than the chemical, it was of course mistaken to assert that pictorial art in general does not under all circumstances contain iconic, indexical, and symbolic aspects. Whether "chemical" or digital, a photographic picture is always first and foremost iconic. As Göran Sonesson argues, one could not identify the possible indexical character of a picture if it was not for a more fundamental similarity between the sign and object, that is, an iconic sign relation [19:22-23]. Further, it ought to be clear, that the "indexicalities" which characterize photographic representation, as conceptualized for example by Benjamin, Barthes and Deleuze, are internally very different. It is therefore unfortunate to avoid the indexicality problem. An important aspect in the indexicality of the photographic image is

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[1] Owing to its inherent automatism and realism as a "simple recording" of reality, it was commonly believed that photographic representation was connected with Nature in its crude materiality and therefore unsuitable as an artistic medium. In film theory, this problem is the starting point for Hugo Münsterberg, recognized as one of the earliest theorists of this medium. In his most important work, The Photoplay: A Psychological Study (New York, 1916), Münsterberg anticipates twenty-five years of development by assuming that only as a narrative medium can cinema find itself as a "true" medium in the mind of Man. When film studies looks back upon the development of film art until the fully developed Hollywood cinema of the early Forties, the telos of cinema is usually thought of as narrativity.

[2] This is the point of departure for Catherine Russell's analysis of these "new cinema waves" [17]

not just that of reality → image (i.e., the "movement" from "reality" to "image-traces" of reality; but also the relation between image and reality. This relationship is not symmetrical! The problem in much "indexical" theory of photography is that as regards the photographic image's logic of signification, no distinction has been made between the possible indexical theme in photographs (i.e., image → reality), where a point of departure is taken in the actual image, and the "myth" or story of the indexicality, where the indexical theme comes to apply to the photograph as such, i.e., as artistic form (i.e., reality → image). It is clear that an indexical thematicization must *ground itself* in the "myth" of indexicality, that is the deep cultural perception of photography (hence Peirce's concept of grounding). But this does not mean that the characteristic indexicality of the photographic image (which under any circumstances may be *thematized* and thus has important potentials for thematicization, also for digital photographs) should necessarily be conceived as representation. On the contrary, to conceive of the indexical as "simply" a *relation* between the image and the world is not only more precise; it is also conceptual liberation of the possibilities to conceive the relationship between image and the world, or even between the image and thinking (cognition) and between the image and society (communication). Seen in retrospect, postphotography critic Lars Kiel Bertelsen was undoubtedly correct when he observed that the post-photography debate was due less to digitalization than to a general collapse of the logic of representation. That this collapse had its origin in the very concept of representation itself, however, seems to be increasingly clear.

This situation was hardly so evident to critics of the post-photographic image; a situation due to this somewhat reductionist application of the semiotic conceptual apparatus. That it was observed that the digital photography was more *iconic* than indexical and thus to a greater degree related to the painting and the "genuine pictorial art" [4:17] could not simply have been on the background of the fact that the indexical aspect theme should automatically be dissolved by digitalization (the photograph was certainly labeled indexical by its physical and chemical relation of intimacy to the referent). This would have been too naive! That the "iconic" digital photograph could theoretically and artistically liberate itself from the chemical photograph was precisely by virtue of what one could call a photograph's second "loss of innocence": that from this point, it was possible to simulate a photographic presentation independent of the chemical photographic recording act, that is, one need no longer accept an apparently truthful "photograph" as the real thing. What was achieved, however, was (of course) not a kind of "natural" iconicity whereby the artist could devote himself to a "content" independent of the medium. On the contrary, the experience of digitalization consisted of *an unavoidable, extra thematicization of the medium* with reference to the possibility for digital simulation—a possibility for which the morphing technique, if anything became the exponent. It was the experience of this unavoidability which legitimized the ability, with digitalization, to speak of an "after" photography, i.e., of a *post*-photography. One could thus say that this digitalization in reality consisted "only" of the fact that the iconic theme—eventually!—added itself to the indexical one in the basic mythology of "Photography" as a specific pictorial medium.

Whether all this concerns something like an "Ontology of the Photograph" or "Ontology of the Image" is perhaps not so essential; perhaps this question is even misleading. The point is that in the mythology of the photograph, both the indexical and the iconic themes are experientially constituted. In this sense, the "Photograph" concerns a special degree of understanding, about epistemology. The question after digitalization and the critique of the post-photographic image must be: Can one, after the "death" of photography, still say that by extension of a modern tradition from Benjamin to Deleuze, we "conceive" of the world with the help of photographic images even though these images have been liberated from a traditional concept of representation? And if so, do we think about the world differently with so-called digital photographs than with the chemical ones? These questions, as far as I can see, are not clearly formulated in the debate around the photograph. This is regrettable, for they seem to point to interesting factors concerning image, world, and thought; factors which are not perhaps so strange even for Photography "as such". In this sense, it is tempting to pursue Adorno's thesis of the retroactive effect of new insights: where the chemical photograph realized the impressionists' dream of achieving an absolute self-reflexivity on behalf of the world ("to show the world as it really is" by making available its neutral, purely positive photographic image), can one then not say that *the digital image realizes the conceptualists' dream of an absolute self-reflexivity on behalf of the image?*—that is, to show the image "as it is really is" by making available a neutral world; a "world" here understood—not as "content" of a kind of purely iconic mediation (Peirce's "hypo-icon"); but as a completely mediated, neutral thematic possibility. Following Gianni Vattimo's analysis of his contemporary culture of visuality and simulation, we must think of the world as a `world of images of the world' [20:117]. Herein lies certainly something of the theoretical and artistic liberation which the post-photography critics could rightly emphasize!

In sum, one can say about digitalization as experience that the "Image" seems further liberated from the vulgar repres-entational thinking, whereby the photograph is conceived of as a kind of simple continuous and amorphous analogical depiction of a specific chunk of reality. After digitalization, photography has created a kind *of double reflexivity* in relation to the world; a reflexivity which has contributed to a general "discretization" of the photographic image, i.e., that in a semiotic sense, the image object can then be conceived as an assemblage of discrete units dependent upon the image's iconic and indexical thematicization. This question, as we know, has afflicted semiotics beginning with Barthes, who in several instances insisted on the fundamental "codelessness" of the photograph [1:51ff], observing that the "meaning" of the image could be justified only by the fact that as *analogon*, it "transmitted" a world of meaning (*un monde du sens*, as Christian Metz had it). That the codeless dimension in the photograph was not continuously analogic but, rather, "punctuated" seems also to be evident to Barthes himself in his later texts on photography, cf. the concept *punctum* [2].

In the following, I will attempt to take "one step forward" (or, rather, a genealogical step backwards) by showing how this double reflexivity can be conceptually incorporated into a radically realistic relationship between reality and image. This post-photographic critique, I argue, seems to offer no basis for abandoning the idea of an indexical dimension in the photograph.

On the contrary, it is possible to reassess this indexicality in a far more radical way than previously and hereby liberate it further from the ideological phantasms which, according to the post-photography critique, are linked to the so-called chemical photography; phantasms which must primarily be found in the crude analogical perception of representation. As a point of departure, I will incorporate Pasolini's realistic film theory and emphasize the temporal aspects which I also find especially relevant for understanding the iconic re-thematicization after digitalization.

4. PASOLINI AND THE DEATH OF THE IMAGE

One of Deleuze's important—and overlooked—points of departure in his work with cinema as a way of conceiving the world in broader terms was Pier Paolo Pasolini's contribution to film theory [7:28]. Pasolini's own fate has become something of a morbid paradox in relation to the theses he himself developed. Although this Italian film director, poet, critic, and activist has long been dead and buried, one can nevertheless say that Pasolini lives; that he lives onward, not only by virtue of his corpus of films, poetry and essays; but also—regrettably—as a "corpus" in more literal sense. As is well known, Pasolini's remains were exhumed a few years ago in connection with an investigation into the tragic circumstances of his murder; an interest which had sown doubts around the original murder case, in which the original accused was a male prostitute; but which subsequently led to a reopened investigation by the Italian police. The paradox of this situation consists of the fact that Pasolini himself regarded death as that event which gave human life its full significance. In one of his heretical contributions to his contemporaneous film theory environment, the film semiotics of the late 1960s,[3] he writes that

> Man ... expresses himself primarily by his action ... because it is with it that he modifies reality and engraves it on the soul. But this action lacks unity, that is, meaning*, until it has been completed* .... In a word, so long as he has a future, that is, an unknown quantity, man is unexpressed. There may be an honest man who, at sixty years of age, commits a crime; such a blameworthy action modifies all his past actions, and therefore he appears as something different from what he had always been [15:236]

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[3] Pasolini's film theoretical work made its entry onto the film semiological scene which dominated at that time. Today, however, his fundamental problems are not especially related to those of film semiotics, and Pasolini's theses, the terminology of which explicitly addressed semiotics, has also been subjected to significant critique from semiotics proper, among others by Umberto Eco, who considered his realism to be naive. In retrospect, one can say that it was a case of a "mutual misunderstanding" of the fact that Pasolini should be a film semiotician, that is at least in the strict semiological sense.

Of course, this problem will be known to the biographers who venture to write the "story" of a person before his or her death (or even before the completion of the person's "life's work" or professional career). As Pasolini writes: "Until I die, no one can guarantee to really know me, that is, to be able to give a meaning to my action, which therefore, as a linguistic moment, can be deciphered only with difficulty" (ibid.). We have here an absolutely final significance on the basis of an absolutely finalized life course.

> It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, *because, as long as we live, we have no meaning*, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and to which we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable; a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. *Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives* [Pasolini 15:236].

Using a cinematic metaphor hardly fortuitously chosen, he observes that

> death chooses the truly meaningful moments (which are no longer modifiable by other possible, contrary or incoherent moments) and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable, and uncertain—and therefore, linguistically not describable—present into a clear, stable, certain, and therefore easily describable past. *It is only thanks to death that our life serves to express ourselves.* [15:236-237].

When we consider Pasolini's own fate *post mortem*, however, we must inevitably inquire whether death is really necessary for the meaning of life, i.e., life as completed story, or whether it is precisely the opposite: that life as a story in itself "contains" a death in order to be meaningful. Biographers who embark upon a description of living persons may for their part well imagine these persons as already being deceased in order to be at all able to tell the story of the person straight away in simple past tense; they may, as the journalists say, have "seen the story" even before it is told. Only by the fact that Pasolini "lives", that he "lives" onward (as corpse), are we led to the morbid state of affairs that precisely this person has succeeded in escaping or "surviving" the biographers' story-telling; this despite the fact that it was indeed this very Pasolini who described the function of death precisely as giver of meaning. Although unceasingly lending himself to story-tellings, historiographies, Pasolini lives onward as a "chaos of possibilities".

In this sense, Pasolini appears emblematic of the open, "uncut" film image, the camera shot, which as Catherine Russell writes, is characteristic of the "new cinemas" after the Second World War: i.e., the French New Wave, New American Cinema, etc. Pasolini describes the relationships between the "futureness" of the open, reality-oriented film shots and the "pastness" of the closed "cut" as it enters into the cinematic story.[4] He defends the

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[4] "To cut" a film entails "cutting out" something, while "montage" means to add on. When "cutting" occurs, one edits out what is left over in relation to the general principle of the "story", i.e. *diegesis* (as if the story of the film was given in

film shot's realistic and materialistic ontology whose justification derives from the diegetic film's articulatory basic elements in metafictional sense being conceived as infinite in duration and as the material documentation of what in principle is just one out of an infinite amount of possible camera points-of-view in relation to the referential—or to be more precise, film-producing-reality. In order to illustrate this idea, Pasolini refers to the amateur film accidentally taken during the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, the "Zapruder film" (named after the man who made it, Abraham Zapruder), and which subsequently constituted principal documentation in the investigation of the Kennedy assassination.

> Let us look at the 16-mm short that a spectator in the crowd filmed of the death of Kennedy. It is a sequence shot, and it is the most typical sequence shot possible. The spectator-cameraman, in fact, did not choose any visual angles; he simply filmed from where he was, framing what his eyes saw—better than the lens. Therefore the typical sequence shot is a "subjective".
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> In the possible film on the death of Kennedy all the other visual angles are missing: from that of Kennedy himself, to that of Jacqueline, from that of the assassin who was shooting, to that of his accomplices... Supposing that we had some short films shot from all these visual angles, what would we have? A series of sequence shots which would reproduce the real things and actions of that hour, seen contemporaneously from various visual angles: seen, that is, through a series of "subjectives". The subjective is therefore the realistic boundary of every audiovisual technique [15:233].

The hypothetical reservoir of shots or "subjectives" will in principle unfold and be developed by the same present temporality as the referential; a "present participle", as it is called in grammar (a presence of internally integrated, "participating" instances, where the integration is constructed around the uncompleted actions): "This is just what is *happening*, while the camera is just *starting* to record": a happen-*ing* and a record-*ing*. As Pasolini has it, `reality speaks only with itself.' (15:234). In this conception, the film shot, the reality and the human life share from the outset common conditions of existence with reference to the possibility to "express itself completely" as Pasolini says. One can say that in relation to the story, in this case, the story of the murder of John F. Kennedy, Pasolini seems to argue for the existence of a "cinematographic ecology of meaning"; an ecology of possible

open shots in the world; a kind of conceivable conditions of possibility for all images, in that the world and life in its infinity can be depicted in infinite cinematography, infinite "drawing of movement".

As could be expected, Pasolini considers this cinematographic ecology as something which in itself is meaningless or perhaps even meaning-emptying. Elaborating further on his example, he asks:

> In the very moment in which we, even for purely documentary reasons (for example, in a projection room of the police who are conducting an investigation), see all these subjective sequence shots one after the other, that is, we add them together even if not physically, what do we do? We make a sort of montage, albeit an extremely elementary one. And what do we obtain from this montage? We obtain a multiplication of "presents"; as if an action, instead of unfolding only once before our eyes, unfolded more times. This *multiplication of "presents"* in reality abolishes the present; it renders it useless, each of those presents postulating the relativity of the other, its unreliability, its lack of precision, its ambiguity. [15:233-4]

According to Pasolini, the analytical multiplication of shots from the same scene "abolishes" the present. The present tense of a set of juxtaposed shots is no longer the same as the present temporality of the referential, of "life" as a unique, uncompleted action; that is, the so-called presence of internally integrated and mutually "participating" instances, hence the notion of a present participle. When juxtaposed analytically, each shot is only "postulating a relativity"; it is a kind of present tense that awaits not the completion of a referential action but the completion of the material in some other sense, as if by some cognitive instance that may "see the story" in the apparent meaninglessness of the mix of shots. The alternative to the simple juxtaposition of subjectives is "coordination", that is montage. Pasolini's film metaphors in the thesis of "death as the instantaneous montage of life", as mentioned, were hardly coincidental. In Pasolini's conception, the montage is a "coordinating" instance which "sees the story" in reality and in its shedding off cinematographic images, like a snake shedding its skin:

> Their coordination in fact is not limited, like juxtaposition, to destroying and rendering vain the concept of the present (as in the hypothetical projection of the various shorts, screened one after the other in the projection room of the FBI), *but to render the present past*.
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> ... After this work of choice and coordination, the various visual angles would be dissolved, and the existential subjectivity would give way to objectivity; there would no longer be the pitiful pairs of eyes-ears (or camera-recorders) to capture and reproduce the escaping and so scarcely cordial reality, but in their place there would be a narrator. This narrator transforms the present into past [15:235].

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advance as a kind of transcendental content "before" the actual editing of the film). Montage, in contrast, means that the story is constructed from individual elements. As a syntagme, a "cut" must thus be defined as a purely diegetic element; while a "shot" denotes the smallest element of the montage (from cut to cut). One can say that the terms "cutting" and "montage" in this sense denote, respectively, a "top-down" and "bottom-up" idea in terms of technically and cognitively producing a work of film.

In this theoretical idea, being able to "see the story" entails being able to see the actions, the events and the life as completed movements, possibly before they have found a material or technical conclusion in themselves; it entails having written an obituary before death takes place. In Pasolini's perception, the brilliant intentionality of montage is subdued and absolutely authoritative, operating as it does without allowing an individual shot to last longer than what is justified by the narrative causal logic and by the experience of the story. In film studies, there is a tradition for identifying this form of montage with what is historically the most widespread system of representation, "analytical, dramatic montage" (Bazin) or simple "classic Hollywood montage", as modern film theory has it. It is a montage which analyzes the drama and its space in relation to a strict narrative economy.

5. THE GRAMMATICAL TENSES OF THE IMAGE

What we are left with after Pasolini is a radically realistic notion of the relationship between reality and image, and a significantly more sophisticated concept of the indexical themes in temporal sense. We are familiar with Barthes' [2] apparently simple identification of the temporality of the indexical or chemical myth in the photograph: "That-has-been": that which is there, in the photograph, has in fact once been.

> For the *noeme*: "That-has-been" was possible only on the day when a scientific circumstance (the discovery that silver halogens were sensitive to light) made it possible to recover and print directly the luminous rays emitted by a variously lighted object. The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. [2:80]

In relation to this "frozen" perfect tense of "that-has-been" in Barthes, we find in Pasolini a coexisting complexity of tenses; first a "participating" present tense of "living" and "cinematographic recording", a present participle: a "being-living for recording" in a cinematographic world, that is in relation to the stories of Life and its actions. The result of the coordinating instance of montage is designated by Pasolini as "historical present": a "cinematic understanding" of Barthes' present-perfect in the photograph. For can one not say about the diegetic film both "Once upon a time" (i.e., simple past) as in all other diegetic forms, *and* "This is happening"? This is taking place right now in a present tense form up there on the screen: Pasolini's notion of a past tense in the cinema is 'A past that, for reasons immanent in the cinematographic medium, and not because of an aesthetic choice, always has the qualities of the present (*it is, in other words a historical present*).' [15: 236]

In a sense one is again finding in the film theatre the same participatory present tense of the so-called "pre-filmic" life, that is, the present participle. However, the present temporality being discussed here is perhaps certainly as much a film shot's fleeting "disappearing time" in relation to the establishment of the experience of history as the time of that which is "taking place up there" on the screen. For in relation to the montage and diegesis, the shot has either always already disappeared or is disappearing in the experience of the story, depending on which

temporal perspective is applied. Christian Metz, in his attempt to establish a semiotics of film, observes that `The rule of the "story" [*histoire*] is so powerful that the image, which is said to be the major constituent of the film [*cinéma*], vanishes behind the plot it has woven ... so that the cinema is only in theory the art of images' [13:45, original French terms added]. Metz thus argues that the image, the film shot, does not actually "exist" in the experience of a film: 'To go from one image to two images is to go from image to language' [13:53]. On this actually metaphysical foundation, Metz ends by defining the film object as `the object which is perceived by the spectator during the show' [14]. The "film" is then defined ontologically as object in the experience of, not shots and montage, but of diegesis, of story: "Once upon a time". According to Metz' reductionist approach to cinematic ontology, it is only in "theory that film is a pictorial art". However, it must then precisely be on the basis of a theoretical and not empiricist or diegetic-historicist point of view that Pasolini's special (historical) present-temporality must be identified. A deconstructive reading of Metz will end with the film shot manifesting itself as a punctual "appearance-disappearance": that the film shot exclusively comes forward in order to disappear in the experience of diegesis [10:49ff], and that this situation implies a punctual realization of the spectator as subject.[5] Presenttenseness in Pasolini's concept of the cinematic "historical present" may thus be termed as a "disappearing" or better: a "It's-just-about-to-disappear", i.e., a kind of punctual "before" of the present participle. It is a "participating" present tense form, not in relation between the world and cinematography but between cinematography and story.

We nevertheless find a double, coexisting temporality a la Pasolini in Barthes. As Danish art theorist Rune Gade observes, one can say that

> the photograph's having-been-there indicates correctly enough past tense, but this past-temporality is complicated by the photograph appearing (embalmed) in its own arrested present... Phenomenologically, this special past tense form has consequences for the experience of the photograph because in this tense it always inevitably becomes an "inviting sign of my future death." [2:118] This is the element in the photograph which Barthes calls catastrophic because allowing the two tenses to collide and coexist (in a futureperfect) ultimately also destroys time; "it is dead and it must die" [2:117], goes the certain, melancholy proposition about time with which every historical photograph confronts us, and which thereby also indirectly pronounces a verdict over each and every individual's life, prophesizing everyone's death. [9:44-45, my translation, references adjusted to the English edition].

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[5] In employing the Lacanian conceptual apparatus, I [11] have attempted to show how this temporality can be derived from a hedonistic radical empiricism on the background of a reading of Barthes' essay "Leaving the Movie Theatre" [3].

This disastrous future-perfect is perhaps even further complicated. Barthes points out the situation most clearly when he refers to a Winnicott patient "shuddering over a catastrophe which has already occured" [2:96]; i.e., a traumatic past linked up to a disastrous future. Maurice Blanchot—again referring to Winnicott—has described this temporality especially well in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1986). 'We are on the edge of disaster without being able to situate it in the future: it is rather always already past, and yet we are on the edge or under the threat, all formulations which would imply the future—that which is yet to come' [6:1].

This *past future*, if you will, seems to imply a kind of "traumatic realism", complicating our effort to distinguish the other temporalities from psychological character types and experiential categories as we might find them in typical literary genres. Is the tense of melancholy and melodrama not present-perfect or future-perfect? Is the tense of the paranoia and the thriller not referred to in the punctual "before present-participle"? *"It-is just-about-to-happen"* (hence the punctual suspense of the image frame in the thriller, constantly to be transgressed by the evil intruder). Without venturing further on this point here, I wish simply to observe that the grammatical tenses of the image are irrevocably connected to the temporality of the subject and of the narrative genres. However, I can conclude that the "Image", with its complexity of tenses, apparently lends itself to very different temporal contexts and possibly assumes a genealogical function in relation to narration and subjects.[6]

Jacques Derrida, in his analysis of Barthes' Camera Lucida [2], 'Les morts de Roland Barthes', touches upon Barthes' invocation of "Death" or the "trauma", as the photography book's unique, past and future axes greatly allow themselves to be problematized [8]. Hence the article's title, with the impossible "deaths" in the plural. The paradoxical aspect of the *punctum* concept, according to Derrida, is that in spite of, or perhaps precisely because of, its uniqueness, it redoubles itself in infinite, metonymic relations: there is one single "Death" and there is one single "trauma", but there is always one more image in Barthes' endless series of investigated photographs in *Camera Lucida*:

> As the place of the irreplaceable singularity [i.e., the loss of the mother] and the unique referential [i.e., the loss of the referent by its unique detail], the punctum irradiates and, what is most surprising, lends itself to metonymy. As soon as it allows itself to be drawn into a system of substitutions, it can evade everything, objects as well as effects. This singularity which is nowhere *in* the field mobilizes everything everywhere; it pluralizes itself. If the photograph bespeaks the unique death, the death of the unique, this death repeats itself immediately, as such, and is itself everywhere [8:285, my inserts].

"Death", the unique death or the death of the unique, is for Derrida thus dissolved as genealogical instance for the punctum's metonymic effect. We are left with time itself:

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[6] I would still assert that such a temporal genealogical function in the "image" makes possible a partially aesthetic justification of psychoanalysis with reference to, for example, its theory of the fundamental character types.

For is not Time the ultimate resource for the substitution of one absolute instance by another, for the replacement of the irreplaceable, the replacement of this unique referent by another which is yet another instant, completely other and yet the same? Is not Time the form and punctual force of all *metonymy in its last instance*? [8:288].

Time is inserted here as genealogical justification for the *punctum*'s metonymic breeding power. Time is thus regarded as a more primary instance than the "Photograph" as concerns the ontological status that Barthes attributes to this concept. But is the "Image" which appears as a theoretical possibility after the realistic photo theory precisely not inseparable from a concept of time as in any case grammatically complex or multidimensional size? Yet, this only appears to be the experience of the analysis of the so-called chemical photograph.

6. THE DIAGRAMMATIC IMAGE

With the digital or post-photographic image, the indexical myth is integrated with the iconic as common ground for the thematicization of the image's relationship to its referential world. This means that an extra dimension is added to the given context, that is the indexical complexity of tenses. One of the most canonized and thankful examples of post-photographic art is that of the American photographer (or rather then, pictorial artist) Nancy Burson's *oeuvre* of photo "composites", that is, images based on a simple morphing technique and a common concept of "amalgamating" referents on the basis of a specific idea. In *Warhead I* (1982) the faces of political leaders, i.e. "heads of states", from countries with nuclear weapons arsenals are "morphed" together such that the relative dominance of the individual facial expressions in the morphing are in direct proportion to the relative percentage of estimated number of warheads in the period 1982-85! The various "heads" of state—Reagan, Breshnev, Deng, Mitterand, and Thatcher—are all more or less recognizable in this picture, and the theme naturally reflects the Cold War era of the early 1980s. "Warhead I" is a digital photograph; hence, the indexical aspect is to a certain degree suspended in favor of an iconic, relational or proportional presentation of the facial expressions of the various Cold War leaders. The indexical theme is still manifest, however, not in the form of the (iconic) features of the individual heads of state (Breshnev's eyes, Reagan's nose, Thatcher's upper lip?) nor hardly in the form of their individual relation to a photographic representation. Rather, the indexical theme is primarily given by an *internal relativity*, that is the proportional relationship between the facial features; a proportional relativity expressed and thus indeed explicitly thematized in actual percentages. This form of indexically mediated iconicity is reminiscent of Peirce's concept of the diagram; an iconic sign relation where the sign relates to its object in terms of similarity pertaining to a relativity in the object. Whereas the metaphor is symbolically mediated and the image (or hypo-icon) is iconically mediated iconicity, the diagram is mediated indexically; it is a form of indexicality which possesses a higher degree of abstraction than the simple

referential indexicality of the "classical" chemical photograph; an abstraction which has come about by virtue of digitalization's integration of the iconic theme in the photograph's founding mythology as a medium. As a true post-photographic image, Burson's "Warhead" composite thus demonstrates that photographic representation no longer "adheres" to the referential world, and that the indexical theme is integrated in a more abstract way than in the chemical photograph. Burson's point is that the proportionality of warheads among states with nuclear arms is a particularly pertinent object of study for the pictorial artist using digital photography as a medium; pertinent because this medium is particularly suited for representing relations and proportions.

Does this formalistic analysis exhaust the entire meaning content in this naturally strict conceptualist image? Of course not! The playing with facial expressions in percentage ratios refers to a theme which lies outside the diagrammatic of the image, i.e., the Cold War period with the well-grounded and widespread fear of first strike attack with atomic weapons from east or west. On the basis of this image-external theme, the composite "Warhead" figure appears, rather, as the threatening "warhead" in a phantasmagoric presentation of pure evil in the form of atomic weapons-based aggression. This ghostly warhead seems to pop up out of nowhere; it is not even indexically mediated as in traditional photographs, and thus seems to be able to relate itself in an almost unmediated way to the picture's usual limitation: the frame and the image surface. The warhead figure, as a result of the suspension of primary indexical mediation, is a sublime object in a paranoid, indeed future-temporal imaginary world. This peculiar presence is markedly different from what is traditionally associated with the photograph. Even though the figure lies there in the image, it is not there yet; but it awaits us as a possible future disaster. Peirce observed that the diagram—like mathematical equations which can be reformulated and solved—has a being-in-future, an *esse in futurum* [16]. Is it not precisely the diagrammatic, i.e., the indexically mediated iconicity which invokes this ghost-like future temporality? The chemical photograph was primarily the image of the past (but also the future of the past); the digital photograph is of the future only insofar as the thematic of the primary, indexical photograph is suspended. The "Image", the photographic image after digitalization, seems to "contain" all possible tenses and in terms of Derrida's analysis is inseparable from Time as such. On this background, we can conclude that the Image is dead! And even twice dead: first by the chemical and the digital photograph's instituting of an artistic and theoretical reflexivity in relation to the world and second in relation to art. Long live the Image! After "chemicalization" and now digitalization, the image finally seems to be immortal.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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