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Memento Mori: Photographic Memory and Temporality in Literary Death

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Memento Mori: Photographic Memory and Temporality in Literary Death

By

Madison Elkins
M.A., Emory University, 2020

Advisor: Walter Kalaidjian, Ph.D.

An abstract of
a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

Memento Mori: Photographic Memory and Temporality in Literary Death
By Madison Elkins

From the time of its public release around 1839, photography has challenged prevailing conceptualizations of death, time, and memory. Among these were the ideas that objects and people move through time in a linear, chronological fashion; that the faces of the dead cannot be depicted or recalled with exactitude; that memories are internal and impermanent. A foundational claim of this dissertation is that photography also transformed the literary representation of these concepts.

Beginning with photography's invention and ending in the late 1970s just before digital photography became commercially popular, I investigate textual narratives of photography in American fiction to chart some of the ways photography transformed the structure and construction of time and memory in literary representations of death. Each chapter takes up a common cultural photographic practice (postmortem photography, family photography, and high-speed photography) and pairs it with one or more literary texts that center death, dying, or remembrance of the dead. Working within established rubrics of photography theory, my project centers photography as a crucial element in literary representations of death. In literature, as in life, death is often the crucible in which time and recollection are pressured, reformed, and crystallized. If we consider literary narratives that delve into death, we find that they turn to photography to blur the boundaries of death and life; to expand memory beyond the internal, individual mind; to collapse the narrative planes of past, present, and future; to wrench nonnarrative, unspeakable death into narrative spokenness; to map the unmoored.

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"How these shadows last": Introduction

> All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.
>
> —Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

> Hence the charm of family albums. Those grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost indecipherable, are no longer traditional family portraits but rather the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration [...]; for photography does not create eternity as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its own proper corruption.
>
> —André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image"

> If one truly wants to know what photography means, [. . .] what happens to the world when photography happens to it, and the effect it has on everyone, as a new medium and a new image in the history of representations [. . .] one has only to ask the writers.
>
> —Jérôme Thélot (trans. Ari J. Blatt)

In 1861, Oliver Wendell Holmes reported on a relatively new temporal experience of death: "It is hardly too much to say, that those whom we love no longer leave us in

dying, as they did of old. They remain with us just as they appeared in life; [. . .] a fresh sunbeam lays this on the living nerve as if it were radiated from the breathing shape. How these shadows last, and how their originals fade away!"[1] This shadow that outlasts the original, the sunbeam's trace of the living, breathing body, is the photograph. And even if such photographs are, admittedly, only "shadows," for nineteenth-century viewers they nonetheless registered as the transcendence of the rigid divide between the living and the beloved dead: "those whom we love no longer leave us in dying."

From the time of its invention in 1839, photography has challenged conceptualizations of death, time, and memory. Among these were the ideas that objects and people move through time in a linear, chronological fashion; that past moments, objects, or the faces of the dead cannot be depicted or recalled with exactitude; that memory is interior, individual, and not externally sharable or verifiable. The photograph displaced non-existent past into existent present, intangible to tangible, imagined to evidenced.

Considering "photography's ability to dissolve the distancing effects of space and time by preserving the past look of things and people into the present," as Alan Trachtenberg put it,[2] or "slice" and "freeze" time into atomized moments, as Susan Sontag observed, and embarking from the well-established critical position that, as Sarah Burns and John Davis argue, the daguerreotype and subsequent photographic technologies "challenged the prevailing visual habits of mind and changed forever the nature of representation,"[3] this project asks: How were textual narratives forced to

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[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture," 14.
[2] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*.
[3] Sarah Burns and John Davis, *American Art to 1900*, 388; Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*, 28–32.

reorient their treatment of death, time, remembering, and memory in the wake of the photograph? More specifically, how did photography fundamentally alter the vocabulary, chronology, and construction of narrated time and memory in the experience and memorialization of death in American literature and culture?

Of course, photography existed alongside other technological innovations—such as railroads, telegraphs, telephones, and films—that made it possible to interact with or experience space and time in new ways.[4] But photography played a particularly active role in inspiring new conceptions of time, and especially shifting temporal conceptualizations of memory and death, in no small part due to (1) its popularization as a means of memorializing the dead (postmortem/memorial photography), (2) its development and marketization to the public as a means of documenting one's own life narrative and family history, and (3) its proliferation as a primary means of recording public and personal histories and news events.

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[4] Like photography, these technologies were similarly lauded for their time-defying effects. In 1844, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that with the telegraph, "time and space has [*sic*] been completed annihilated" (quoted in Iwan Morus, "'The Nervous System of Britain'"). Writing in 1872 about the railroad, John Muir marveled, "thus are time and space—and travelers—annihilated" (quoted in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "Railway Space and Railway Time"). An early advertisement for the telephone used similar terms, with the catchy line, "time and dist. overcome" (quoted in Eula Bliss, "Time and Distance Overcome," 85). Several studies have discussed the spatial and temporal aspects of these nineteenth-century technologies. On telegraphs, see Morus, "The Nervous System of Britain"; on railroads, see Schivelbusch, "Railway Space and Railway Time"; on telephones, see Bliss, "Time and Distance Overcome." For discussions of photography in the context of these and other nineteenth-century innovations in communication, transportation, and media, see Damian Sutton, *Photography, Cinema, Memory*; Anne M. Lyden, *Railroad Vision: Photography, Travel, and Perception*; and Simone Natale, "Photography and Communication Media in the Nineteenth Century," the latter of which covers a variety of technologies including telegraphs, railways, stereographs, daguerreotypes, and the expansion of the postal service. I join these scholars in considering the impact of technology on the human experience of time; my project suggests that we can look to literature as one key indicator of this impact.

Ultimately, I argue that a radical reorganization of time—especially evident in literary interpretations of death and remembrance of the dead—is one of the most significant, revolutionary possibilities that photography as a representational medium and/or the photograph as a visual artifact offers the literary text. This dissertation considers textual narratives of photography in American fiction, beginning with the years following photography's public release in 1839 and ending with the late 1970s before digital photography became commercially popular,[5] to investigate the way photography transformed the structure and construction of time and memory in literary representations of death. Taking up a number of literary texts that include direct and indirect representations of death, dying, and/or the remembrance of the dead, I explore the ways photographic temporality collided with, altered, and sometimes seemed to contradict the lived, human experience of time and memory.

There are multiple ways a literary text can incorporate or intersect with photography, but this project focuses exclusively on what I will call textual narratives of photography, or any instances where photography is *filtered* or *mediated* through the textual mode of representation. This includes the textual description of photographs; characters or narrators looking at photographs, talking about photographs, imagining photographs, taking photographs, or seeing photographic visions; as well as any other instance where the concept of photography appears explicitly encoded in text.[6] This

[5] The advent of digital photography created another shift in experiences and literary expressions of memory, time, and death; my project deals only with the first shift, which is strongly linked to the material nature of analogue photography. My project might provide a jumping-off point for other scholars who attend to digital photography, social media, and other more recent phenomena as it relates to memory and time in literary representations of death.
[6] This organizing principle depends on the explicit presence of photographs/cameras/photography in the text. I do not, for example, consider texts that

excludes material relationships—an actual photograph on the page—since such photographs are not filtered through what we might call a "textual frame" of representation. Instead, I look to the description, action, and narrative innovations of photographs explicitly coded in text, and the implicit effects or considerations these reveal. Literary photographs like these, as Joseph Millichap argues in *Language of Vision*, are intentional mediations of the photographic medium.[7] They call attention to the photograph as mediation of memory, temporality, and death.

The translation, in other words, is telling—precisely how authors *write* the photograph reveals especially contentious nodes of photographic meaning and also reveals a revolutionary reckoning with photographic innovations. This dissertation argues that there is something significant about precisely *where* photography creates ruptures in traditions of literary expression, especially those points where traditional tensions in fictional narratives—the construction of narrative, time, memory—intersect photography's own concerns. These moments expose not only where these ruptures occurred, but also how they are expressed and articulated within the textual mode. These ruptures can arise when the textual medium of novel or story mediates the photograph; in reading texts that narrate the photograph for these ruptures, then, I also

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do not have an explicit textual reference to photographs/cameras but rather exhibit formal similarities to photography (e.g., a description of light and shadow that could be read as photographic, or other instances where a text is somehow "like a photograph"). While I certainly don't ignore such formal similarities in the texts I investigate, and instances where writing takes on a photographic register often forms an important aspect of my critical interpretations, formal similarities alone are not the qualifying principle of the texts I have selected to study. This is primarily because formal similarities are a weaker form of "textual mediation"; writing in a photographic *way* does not require the narrative to engage with an actual textual description of a photographic image or a photograph-taking process.

[7] Joseph R. Millichap, *The Language of Vision*, 5.

consider the extent to which the photographic medium itself can be said to narrate.

From an understanding of photographic modes of narration, we can begin to piece together the possibilities that authors had at their disposal. But what *is* the narrative capacity of a photograph? If we define "narrate" as "tell a story," we presuppose a sequence of events, a context. If "to narrate" is simply to *tell*, we may not require wholeness in the telling. This project allows flexibility in the term "narrate," avoiding, for example, the more confining, yet more common, understanding of narrative as a related sequence of events. This is a helpful approach in a discussion of *photographic* narrative, since photographic meaning is commonly understood to be "confined" by atemporality, fragmentation, or lack of objectivity. In a photograph's fixed, atemporal moment, for example, we might note a lack of narrative temporal sequence, a missing sense of before-this and after-that; in the fragmentary details a photograph presents outside of its original context, we might surmise that the wholeness, the context, of the narrative is not only missing, but impossible to contain. But I would argue that when we define narration as a kind of wholeness, which would lead us to the assumption that the photograph could "narrate" only insofar as it could be said to produce *its own* whole, temporally situated meaning, we leave out the possibility that fragmented, subjective, and atemporal meaning may amount to some kind of narrative action.[8]

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[8] In his introduction to *The Photographer's Eye* (1966), for example, John Szarkowski identifies the photographic medium as one at odds with narrative capability—he clearly indicates that because they are essentially a "fragment," photographs cannot "tell a story" (134). In his view, photographs may capture a portion of the truth as details that can then be invested with symbolic meaning, but whatever "truth" can be found in a photograph will appear "not as a story, but as scattered and suggestive clues" which cannot be assembled "into a coherent narrative"; the photographer can "only isolate the fragment, document it, and by doing so claim for it some special significance" (137). A

Instead, this project understands photography as a semi-narrative medium by considering the ways a photograph might produce fragmented narratives, whose temporality and meaning are therefore both fragmented.[9] These alternative narrative temporalities, my project will show, imbued literature as well. If photographs may lay no claim to intrinsic, ineluctable meaning, or if such a meaning is communicable, we might also consider the ways the photograph, fragmentary in its temporality and incomplete in its meaning, might call upon or engage new narratives *both past and present and future, individual and collective*. I argue that it is in fact *because* of this fragmentary frame and its attendant open-endedness that the photograph calls upon other discourses—language, memories, other photographs—to combine with the photograph's incomplete narrative to in turn create *new* narratives relative to its contextualizations and proximities. Perhaps this lack of self-sufficiency in the photograph opens, or even demands, this opportunity, particularly in its textually mediated representations.

I therefore embark from a position that takes photography's innate fragmentary, atemporal, incomplete meaning as a given in—but not a preclusion to—attributing photographic narrative, creating an understanding of photographic narrative as a *dialectical* system that collapses boundaries between past, present, and future, between

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theory of photographic narrative, Szarkowski would seem to say, is doomed from the start. I would suggest that even "scattered and suggestive clues" offer *some* narrative capability, depending on context; fragmentation does not preclude narration, in other words.

[9] While I propose the general categorization of "semi-narrative," this allows for a wide range of variability. It is important to note that different photographs contain different narrative capabilities. Ari J. Blatt, for example, suggests that certain types of photographs—particularly "staged, expressly narrative stills" (such as the work of Anna Gaskell, Gregory Crewdson, Melanie Pullen, among others)—"brim with latent narrative impulse" and encourage viewers to "read" the photograph "for the plot" (Ari J. Blatt, "Phototextuality").

life and death, between self (now) and ancestry (then), between memory and history. From here, we might begin to understand how photography fundamentally altered literary representations of time and memory, and how the complexities of narrating death might be productively filtered through this dialectical system.

Each chapter takes up what we might loosely define as a common cultural photographic practice—or ubiquitous points of contact between the public and photography—and pairs it with one or more literary texts, in chronological order. These pairings are accompanied by readings of photographs in the respective practice or point of contact; my readings of these images will serve to anchor, illustrate, and expand experiences or representations of death, memory, and time. Each of the texts I've chosen (both canonical and non-canonical fictional narratives including the novel, novella, and short story) contain textual narratives of photography and representations of death that engage deeply with the concepts of time and memory, and each text offers perspectives on how its accompanying photographic practice or point of contact influenced these concepts. The photographic practices I've chosen to highlight—postmortem photography (chapter one); family photography (chapter two); and high-speed and news photography (chapter three)—each represent a major shift in the practice of photography as it relates to time and death, and, when viewed chronologically, offer a sampling of the intersections of photography, death, and American literature during the era of plate and film (tactile, analog) photography—from the time of photography's public release in about 1839 until the late 1970s, just before the digital era of photography began.

Chapter one considers postmortem photography (photography of the bodies of the recently deceased, usually made for private, family use), a tradition that arrived right

on the heels of photography's birth, which I place in conversation with *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Applying Roland Barthes's and Kris Belden-Adams's assessments of photographic temporality, I argue that in the text, death helpfully refracts and illuminates photographic mechanisms of temporality and memory. *Seven Gables* demonstrates how one author grappled with the photograph's ability to transgress the liminal boundaries of death and life; characterize the anterior future as well as the cyclical, genealogical time of death; and visualize narrative planes of past, present, and future.

Chapter two takes up the cultural practice of collecting and viewing family photographs and albums alongside Katherine Anne Porter's *Old Mortality* (1937) and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Reading Martha Langford's theories on orality and family photography and Marianne Hirsch's work on photographic postmemory and the familial gaze, I examine how each of these texts investigate the dynamics of family memory, familial death, and remembering the dead through the family photograph. Both works suggest the family photograph may have inspired writers to reconsider the dynamics and forms of memory-making, specifically the creation of family memory through the viewing experience and, importantly, the narration that attends these viewings, as well as the temporal experience of mnemonic recollection in the medium of the family photograph. Both *Old Mortality* and *Absalom, Absalom!* engage with what Langford calls the "oral-photographic framework" of family photographs. With this concept, Langford refers both to the performative oral tradition of telling stories while looking at family photographs and also to the way that "the fabric of memory in oral consciousness" is specifically "*met* in the photographic tradition": "our photographic memories," in other words, "are nested in a performative oral

tradition," and oral tradition likewise evokes photographic memories.[10] Faulkner's and Porter's texts investigate the oral-photographic framework of the family photograph, suggesting that for these writers, this photographic practice offered a new way of writing and conceptualizing family memory—especially family memory of the dead—as both oral and photographic in its formation and in its temporality.

Building on the ideas of temporality, death, and memory developed in the previous chapters, chapter three reads Cynthia Ozick's "Shots" (1977), a short story narrated by a photojournalist, alongside advancements in high-speed photography, such as fraction-of-a-second news photographs. "Shots" illuminates two key temporal paradoxes in the idea that a photograph can "stop time." The first is the concept of the photograph as an immortalizing *memento mori*: the photograph "stops" time by stopping death, immortalizing the photographic subject, yet this very immortalization creates in the narrator (who inhabits the role of viewer/photographer) an awareness of death, transience, and mortality. The second is the concept of the photograph as an infinitesimal slice of time, what Kris Belden-Adams has described as the "normative expectation," following advancements in high-speed photography, that the photograph represents "a brief instant, or 'atomized,' view of time."[11] Yet this concept, too, presents its own paradoxes—as Sontag and others have noted, the immobilization of a tiny slice of time in fact makes the onward flow of time, or "time's relentless melt"—which can be experienced as motion but also transience, change, and ultimately mortality—all the more acute.

In its textual mediation of photographs and the temporal experience they

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[10] Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, viii.
[11] Kris Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*, 17.

engender in the narrator, "Shots" gives the photograph's temporal paradoxes full expression, ensnaring the narrator in a net of apparently contradictory ideas about photographic time. I offer one way we might untangle this net, arguing that "Shots" exemplifies these two variations of stopped time (the photograph as immortalization; the photograph as sliced time) but also complicates them in the viewer's temporal experience (photograph as *memento mori*; photographic time as durational) to reflect on the ways an awareness of our own inevitable death precludes an experience of time as a linear, static vector comprised of a succession of discrete instants.

A Review of Scholarship on Literature and Photography in Relation to Time, Death, and/or Memory

Like much scholarship on literature and photography, this dissertation pulls from the work of Barthes and Sontag, but I also engage the ideas of theorists writing from within the field of photography, including Marianne Hirsch's theories on photographic postmemory and the familial gaze; art historian Martha Langford's work on family albums; and photography scholar and historian Kris Belden-Adams's writing on photographic temporalities, among others. In other words, even though I am assessing textual narratives of photography (rather than photographic images embedded in text), my project frequently turns to photographic theories, as it can bring a more nuanced reading of the photograph not only as evidence or record of reality but as a complex network of temporality, materiality, subject, object, observer, and continually shifting meaning.

The closest kin to my project might be Jennifer Green-Lewis's 2017 book, *Victorian Photography, Literature, and the Invention of Modern Memory: Already the*

Past, which analyzes canonical texts to argue that Victorian literature should be read as an important record of photography's historiography, and that photography offered a groundbreaking intervention in memory. Taking up the arc of Victorian literature from the 1840s to early modernism, her book suggests that this scholarly conversation is burgeoning and active, if not yet widespread. My project joins Green-Lewis's in working to mitigate this gap in scholarship.[12]

While the field of scholarship that considers both photography and literature is not new or sparse, Green-Lewis's project is in the minority of literary studies that examine photography's effects on concepts of memory and time, despite the wealth of archival artifacts and writings indicating that photography's radically new temporality fascinated both writers and the general public.[13] There are a few book-length literary studies that consider photography with a slight emphasis on temporality, such as Mary Bergstein's *In Looking Back One Learns to See: Marcel Proust and Photography* (2014), although most of these primarily focus on a particular author, like Bergstein. There are also some article-length studies exploring memory, time, or death at the intersection of photography and literature.[14] Whereas these studies are limited by length

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[12] While my work builds on Green-Lewis's scholarship, it also departs from her project in significant ways. First, my dissertation expands on Green-Lewis's treatment of memory to explore the related concepts of time and death. Second, whereas Green-Lewis limits her study to the long nineteenth century (encompassing the Victorian period and early Modernism), my project extends to the 1970s, making a case for photography's continuing influence and allowing for a discussion of photographic technologies and practices that did not end with the Victorian era but continued to evolve and shift. Finally, while Green-Lewis offers a thorough understanding of British literature, my project offers, as far as I can confirm, one of the first assessments of photography's influence on and memory, time, and death in American fiction.

[13] See chapter one for a detailed discussion of circulating public commentaries around the time of the daguerreotype's release.

[14] Examples of article- or chapter-length literary studies that explore some (but not all) of these elements include Maggie Humm's "Memory, Photography, and Modernism:

(in the article's case) and/or focus (in the single-author studies), my project will select texts from a variety of authors and eras, which will ultimately allow me to take a longer view (though not a comprehensive one) of the effect of photography on literary representations of death.

Though literary studies on photography and temporalty certainly exist, to date the majority of scholarship on literature (especially fiction) and photography nevertheless concentrates not on temporal concerns but on the truth claims of the photograph, often in relation to realism or detective fiction.[15] This gap in scholarship is especially glaring when considering the interest among photography theorists (from Bazin to Barthes, Sontag to Berger) in death, memory, and time, as well as widespread cultural practices like memorial photography, war photography, and family albums that demonstrate photography's entanglement with death and memory. Clearly, there is a need for projects devoted to the study of photography's inextricable influence in literary expressions of temporality, death, and memory.

Other scholars studying the intersection of photography and literature have done excellent work in mapping photography's contribution to a culture of glances, gazes, and spectatorship, its creation of a literary aesthetic of photography, and its influence in shaping cultural imaginaries of race, disability, and gender. My project is particularly

The 'dead bodies and ruined houses' of Virginia Woolf's Three Guineas" (2003); Emily Hyde's "Photography, Literature, and Time" (2023); and Joanna Madloch's "Remarks on the Literary Portrait of the Photographer and Death" (2016).

[15] Examples of this approach include Nancy Armstrong's *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (2002); Augustus Rohrbach's *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Race, Realism, and the US Literary Marketplace* (2002); Daniel Novak's *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2008); Stuart Burrows's *A Familiar Strangeness: American Fiction and the Language of Photography, 1839–1945* (2010); and Julia Breitbach's *Analog Fictions for the Digital Age: Literary Realism and Photographic Discourses in Novels after 2000* (2012).

indebted to the methods and work of these scholars, especially Nancy Armstrong (*Fiction in the Age of Photography*), Stuart Burrows (*A Familiar Likeness*), Carol Schloss (*In Visible Light*), Joseph Millichap (*The Language of Vision*), Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (*Staring: How We Look*) and others who read literature's engagement with photography as an indicator of cultural values, social movements, or the broader philosophical concerns of an era. Building on the topics these scholars have investigated, I suggest that we turn our attention to time, memory, and death; and I suggest we'll find that one of photography's most significant, lasting, and transformative influences in American literature and culture since 1839 is its transformation of the narration of time, the experience and memorialization of death, and the mechanisms of memory.

Perhaps the most important contribution that my project offers the field of literature and photography is an explicit focus on representations of death. As far as I have been able to confirm, there is currently no book-length survey on the intersection of photography, literature, and death in American literature. My project engages the rich and pervasive body of scholarship on death in the theory and history of photography. While building on these conversations, my project also branches out in bringing this conversation more fully into the field of literary analysis. In scholarship on literature and photography that does consider linkages between photography and death (e.g., the work of Kimberly Juanita Brown, Fred Moten, or Joanna Madloch), the emphasis often falls not on the temporality of death, but on other (equally important) concerns, such as violence and mourning.[16] My project builds on these works, but offers a more sustained

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[16] See, for example, Fred Moten's incisive, important contribution to *Listening to Images* (2017). Moten's essay, "Black Futurity and the Echo of Premature Death," was

and focused attention to the temporality of literary representations of death.[17]

Likewise, although several anthologies and monographs offer an extended analysis of death in literature, they do not focus at length on photography. Of the forty-two short essays in the 2020 *Routledge Companion to Death and Literature*, only one touches on photography in any detail (and only as it relates to documentary films) and none focus on the intersection of photography, literature, and death. The 2019 *Narrating Death: The Limit of Literature* is devoted to death and narrative broadly considered. It does include one essay on photography—Kevin Riordan's "Photography and First-Person Death: Derrida, Barthes, Poe"—which considers Derrida's and Barthes's essays on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" in the context of both theorists' writings on photography. However, since Poe's story does not itself contain any mention of photography, it is less a reading of photography and death *in* literature and more an analysis of Derrida's and Barthes's interpretations of the text. With this project, I aim to demonstrate that any comprehensive assessment of temporality, memory, and/or death in literature must acknowledge how photography revolutionized the literary representation of these concepts.[18]

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written in response to the wide public proliferation of photographic representations of police violence against Black men, and "grapples with the grammar of black futurity at a crucial historical juncture that has witnessed a string of hauntingly similar killings of unarmed black men at the hands of or in the custody of police."

[17] One exception is Eliza Richards' article, "'Death's Surprise, Stamped Visible': Emily Dickinson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Civil War Photography" (2009), which breaks ground in outlining the intersections of poetry, photography, and death. Yet, as an article, its purview is limited, and the field still lacks a comprehensive study that attempts to track the longevity of this photographic influence. I will argue that narrative prose—which, by nature of its narrative form, is materially concerned with temporality—is an especially privileged site for investigating authorial occupations with temporality, recollection, and death.

[18] Of the few studies that investigate a wide range of literary representations of death, none of them—that is, none that I have found to date—incorporate any consideration of

Historical surveys considering photography's transformational effect on death and temporality have been better charted in circles of photographic theory and history, and I will expand on this conversation. Theories of photography have very often linked photography to death; it has indeed become something of a truism that, as literature and visual culture scholar Christopher Rovee has put it, death is "no mere theme but one of the main conceptual nodes of the medium."[19] Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and André Bazin are perhaps the most notorious for their observations, which have extended, like those of Foucault or Freud, well beyond the realms of their disciplines. Each photograph is both postmortem and premortem; "the Photograph," Barthes writes, "represents that very subtle moment when [. . .] I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death."[20] "Life is a movie. Death is a photograph," Sontag summarizes.[21] More recently, Hagi Kenaan's 2020 *Photography and Its Shadow* argues that photography's "invention irreversibly transformed our perception of the world along with our relationship to time and to death."[22]

Photography scholar Jay Ruby's 1995 *Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America*, the first comprehensive study of photography of the dead and dying, along with museum curator Audrey Linkman's 2011 *Photography and Death* (which explores the postmortem photograph in the Victorian era and traces the relationship between photography and death up to the twentieth century), both go a

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photography. Studies of photography's influence on narrative temporality are likewise sparse, although slightly less so.

[19] Christopher Rovee, review of *Photography and Death*.

[20] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 14.

[21] Susan Sontag, *The Benefactor*, 215.

[22] Hagi Kenaan, *Photography and Its Shadow*.

long way toward fleshing out the historical relationship between photography and death, particularly in the Victorian era. Hagi Kenaan's 2020 *Photography and Its Shadow* and Rachael Harris's 2020 *Photography and Death: Framing Death throughout History* are more recent examples. Ruby admitted in 1995 that the topic of death is "generally avoided, ignored, or undervalued by more traditional scholars,"[23] and a reviewer of Linkman's text notes in 2011 that "books confronting the subject of death still find significant obstacles obtaining a publisher and a reading audience."[24] But as Ruby argues (and as Barthes, Sontag, Bazin, Kracauer, and others who've been fascinated with death in their studies of photography likewise argue, by implication), photography of the dead and dying, as well as the use of photography in mourning or memorialization, provides key insights into American cultural attitudes, expectations, and rituals surrounding death—and, by extension, American understandings of time and memory.

This project seeks to connect these conversations about death in *literature* with these conversations about death in *photography*, ultimately arguing that death, as a major facet of our experience of human time, is key to understanding the way these two mediums overlapped. My project seeks to chart the conceptual affiliation between photography and death *in* literature, and in doing so, I hope to offer another facet to established theories and conversations about photography and death. Within these established rubrics of literary theory and photography theory, I want to privilege the

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[23] Jay Ruby, *Secure the Shadow*, 2.
[24] Kenaan's and Harris's works, as well as the recent Routledge book series, "Studies in Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time," which includes books published between 2016 and 2023, hints at the possibility that death studies may be gaining more traction with publishers. And pandemic retrospectives that consider collective death, mourning, and the temporality of illness are sure to proliferate in the coming decades.

centrality of photography as a prevailing thematic or theoretical node of literary representations of death, using the organizational framework of attendant photographic practices as another way to approach this relationship.

I choose to investigate death both because it offers a useful angle through which to enter these conversations and because of its unmistakable prominence and unique role in texts that consider photography, memory, and time. Narrated death takes on various modes. Death can be a prism that, when held up, inspected, helpfully refracts and illuminates the subtle mechanisms of temporality and memory. Death can be the crucible in which time and recollection are pressured, reformed, and crystallized. Death can create the tragic desire to restore non-existent past into existent present, to hold and remember and record; photography is one compelling answer to that desire. If we consider literary texts that delve into the world of death, we will find that they turn to photography to blur the boundaries of death and life, to expand individual memory into collective, generational memory, to collapse the narrative planes of past, present, and future, to wrench nonnarrative, unspeakable death into narrative spokenness, to map the unmoored.

Chapter 1

"Time, all at once": Postmortem Photographic Temporality in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*

> We have miniatures in our possession, which we have often held, and gazed upon the eyes in them for the halfhour! An electric chain seems to vibrate, as it were, between our brain and him or her preserved there so well by the limner's cunning. Time, space, both are annihilated, and we identify the semblance with the reality.
>
> —Walt Whitman

"Some Delusion of Necromancy": Introduction

In March 1839, the Philadelphia-based journal *The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* reprinted an article from London's *The Spectator* describing an "invention [. . .] that seems more like some marvel of a fairy tale or delusion of necromancy than a practical reality: it amounts to nothing less than making light produce permanent pictures, and engrave them at the same time, in the course of a few minutes."[25] This delusion of necromancy was the daguerreotype.

Made commercially available in 1839, gaining an American presence in the early 1840s and growing in popularity until about the 1860s, the daguerreotype was one of the first photographic technologies to produce a stable image in a preservable, widely

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[25]Anon., "Self Operating Processes of Fine Art," 341–343.

disseminated form.[26] It was a sensation. This article, one of the earliest circulating American reports of the new technology, captures the characteristics that so astonished nineteenth-century viewers about the daguerreotype. For all its "rigidity and fixedness" it had "the appearance of shadowy insubstantiality." For all its fidelity, its detailed accuracy, it also seemed somehow magical—the stuff of fairy tales, invested with the dark power of necromancy. The invention of photography transformed our human impulse to catalogue and remember the past, particularly the dead.[27] And the shock, joy, and impossibility of seeing these perfectly preserved moments of the past created shockwaves in American understandings of mortality, memory, and time.

Even before early photography infiltrated popular societal practices, responses varied widely. The daguerreotype sparked fascination, fear, distrust, excitement and, of course, an entire commercial industry and cultural practice that eventually made its way across America. Its ability to capture an object, scene, or person with seemingly perfect accuracy astonished mid-nineteenth-century viewers. The daguerreotype seemed to embalm the object or person photographed, allowing for images of the past—moments that had occurred, people who had once lived, but now were dead—to persist in the present, even if the image was an unstable one, flitting here and there across the mirrored surface, flashing into view at one angle, then reverting to a negative image the

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[26] Although it was more widely discussed and more widely available, the daguerreotype was not the only photographic technology introduced around 1839; the calotype and talbotype, for example, were other circulating photographic technologies of this time period.

[27] As I have already mentioned, theories of photography have often linked photography to death. For more on how the daguerreotype influenced American culture, see Richard Rudisill, *Mirror Image* (1971); Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*; Helmut Gernsheim, *The Origins of Photography* (1976); John Wood, *America and the Daguerreotype* (1991); Merry A. Foresta and John Wood, *Secrets of the Dark Chamber* (1995).

next. Faced with this stunning invention, writers attempted to articulate the opportunities that photography offered textual representation. "The daguerreotype seemed to demand verbal articulation," Susan Williams argues, and as such it "prompted an extraordinary outpouring of American writing."[28] Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, written and published in 1851, just twelve years after the daguerreotype's invention and at the height of the medium's public popularity, is one of the first canonical American novels to offer an extended meditation on photography, not only as a plot device but as a nexus for the text's philosophical and representational questions.

A world without the photograph is now perhaps difficult to imagine, but when the daguerreotype swept across the country, it astonished and enthralled, even enraged. The variety and pitch of these reactions ranged from hyperbolic hysteria to skepticism, from scientific interest to hushed astonishment at the daguerreotype's "magic." Nathaniel Parker Willis' 1839 article, "The Pencil of Nature—A New Discovery," casts photography as "the real black art of true magic." Willis maligns what he calls the "automatic" nature of the daguerreotype, or nature's uncanny ability to replicate itself with perfection, and exclaims, "What would you say to looking in a mirror and having the image fastened!!"[29] Edgar Allan Poe, writing within a year of Willis, offers a more positive take on the daguerreotype as a scientific invention with "unforeseen potential." Like many of his time, Poe associates the daguerreotype with "truth," noting that "the closest scrutiny of the photogenic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of

[28] Susan S. Williams, "'The Inconstant Daguerreotype,'" 161–174.
[29] Nathaniel Parker Willis, "The Pencil of Nature—A New Discovery," 70–72.

aspect with the thing represented."[30] What Willis finds to be detestable in the daguerreotype—this pesky, uncanny "truth"—Poe celebrates.

By the time Hawthorne began writing *Seven Gables* in 1850, daguerreotype portraits (both of the living and the dead) had become popular among middle- and upper-class Americans. Just two years before *Seven Gables* was published, American author T. S. Arthur informs readers of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a popular American women's magazine, that daguerreotypists could be found in nearly every county and city "square [. . .] limning faces at a rate that promises soon to make every man's house a Daguerrean Gallery."[31] Even though it was considered a costly luxury just "a few years ago," Arthur notes that now "it is hard to find the man who has not gone through the 'operator's' hands from once to half-a-dozen times, or who has not the shadowy faces of his wife and children done up in purple morocco and velvet, together or singly, among his household treasures."[32] By 1849, then, daguerreotype portraits are not only an increasingly commonplace practice, but one that is both fashionable and necessary: "From little Bess, the baby, up to great great-grandpa', all must now have their likenesses."[33] Far from the tenor of Willis and Poe's reactions a few years earlier, Arthur's lightly disparaging tone hints at the mundanity of it all, suggesting that

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[30] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Daguerreotype," 20–22. As Alan Trachtenberg notes in "Photography: Emergence of a Keyword," the popular association between photography and "truth" was so strong that "daguerreotype became a common verb that meant telling the literal truth of things." Trachtenberg also notes, however, that this was not the only popular opinion. The idea of photography as "scientific truth/objective" and, on the other hand, photography as "witchcraft/animate" were both in the public discourse at the same time. The "identity" of the medium was not a given, but still in flux (Trachtenberg, "Photography").

[31] T. S. Arthur, "American Characteristics," 352.

[32] Arthur, "American Characteristics," 352.

[33] Arthur, "American Characteristics," 352.

daguerreotypy has become a fixed part of his readers' lives.

I offer Arthur's account not only to emphasize that Hawthorne could hardly have avoided daguerreotypy if he tried, but also to underscore that reactions to the daguerreotype were often contradictory and, especially in the first decade following its invention, still in flux. Hawthorne was writing in a cultural climate that both touted the groundbreaking nature of the invention at the same time it was becoming a common practice. While the daguerreotype was no doubt a source of fascination—perhaps especially for viewers who, like Poe and Hawthorne, concerned themselves with the art of representation—it also became a part of the everyday experience of living and dying in mid-nineteenth-century America. For however astonishing this "delusion of necromancy" was, it nonetheless seeped into the grain of everyday life. Viewers like Hawthorne reckoned with photography as a groundbreaking medium at the same time they encountered it in "every square" as an expected part of life in mid-nineteenth-century America.

Hawthorne appears to have been intrigued by this combination of mundanity and gravity. The character Holgrave, a young daguerreotypist who figures prominently in *Seven Gables*, is as much an artist as a capricious tradesman who "had his bread to earn," taking up and dropping trades with "the careless alacrity of an adventurer." The narrator informs us that "his present phase, as a Daguerreotypist, was of no more importance in his own view, nor likely to be more permanent, than any of the preceding ones," which included stints as a peddler, a schoolmaster, a country salesman, and even a "public lecturer on Mesmerism" (or hypnotism), for which, the author assures us, "he

had very remarkable endowments."[34]

Holgrave's work as a daguerreotypist is cast in this particular section as nothing more than his attempt to make a living, though the reader can sense the wink—the narrator clarifies, with a careful distance, that Holgrave's low estimation of his work as a daguerreotypist is "his [Holgrave's] own view." It seems the reader ought not to take Holgrave at his word; the narrator doesn't. Elsewhere in the text, Holgrave is unmistakably enthralled by daguerreotypy, and he often speaks dreamily about its potential as an artform, echoing the gravity and wonder of many nineteenth-century accounts of photography. "I make pictures out of sunshine," he declares, musing that "[t]here is a wonderful insight in heaven's broad and simple sunshine. While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it."[35] In the character of Holgrave and his meditations on daguerreotypy, *Seven Gables* exemplifies circulating questions about photography that had not reached consensus in the public sphere. Questions like who is the artist—the sun, the heavens, the chemical process, Holgrave? What kind of truth, if any, does the picture present—purely the visual realm, or some deeper "secret character"? Is daguerreotypy an art with a "wonderful insight," or is it, as he says, merely a commercial scheme, a "present phase" of "no importance?"

Hawthorne lived and wrote in this milieu, an environment saturated with a burgeoning photographic technology and a flurry of cultural reactions to that invention. His documented interactions with daguerreotypy indicate that he was personally acquainted with the medium—he traveled to Boston to obtain his first photographic

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[34] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, 166–167.
[35] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 177.

portrait in 1841, sat for at least five daguerreotypes (as well as other types of photographic portraits as technologies continued to developed), and commissioned a photograph of his two children.[36] But his letters suggest that he began thinking about the representational possibilities of the daguerreotype just months after its arrival, indicating he was following the developments of the technology as well as the debates surrounding its invention. In a December 1839 letter to Sophia Peabody, an avid painter he would eventually marry, he writes:

> I wish there was something in the intellectual world analogous to the Daguerrotype [*sic*] (is that the name of it?) in the visible— something which should print off our deepest, and subtlest, and delicatest thoughts and feelings, as minutely and accurately as the above-mentioned instrument paints the various aspects of nature. [37]

Like Poe, Hawthorne echoes public discourses about the daguerreotype's accuracy and minute detail, which indicates both the pervasiveness of this association as well as Hawthorne's interest in following the discussion.[38] More telling, though, is the distinction he creates between two "worlds": a visual world and an intellectual one

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[36] Susan Williams, "Daguerreotyping Hawthorne and Poe," 14. For a detailed account of images made of Hawthorne, see Rita K. Gollin, *Portraits of Nathaniel Hawthorne*.
[37] Nathaniel Hawthorne, letter to Sophia Peabody, 11 December 1839, in *Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 384.
[38] The earliest descriptions of the daguerreotype highlighted its seemingly infinite accuracy. One of the first accounts to appear in America (in February 1839) explains that with a magnifying glass, "We then see the minutest folds of drapery, the lines of a landscape, invisible to the naked eye. [. . .] We distinguish the smallest details, we count the stones of the pavement, we see the moisture produced by rain, we read the sign of a shop. Every thread of the luminous tissue has passed from the object to the surface retaining it" ("Chemical and Optical Discovery," 276–77). This article was derived from the Parisian newspaper *Constitutionnel*, and several versions of this account appear in various American newspapers between February and April 1839.

(which here is decidedly *not* visual). His desire for an instrument that could produce an image of the non-visual intellectual world suggests an abiding interest in the translation between the two. His use of the phrase "print off," if we read creatively, may even suggest that this kind of translation between the daguerreotype and the intellectual (perhaps even textual) world would be borne out and worked through on his printed page.[39]

Set in mid-nineteenth-century New England, Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* follows the cursed generations of the Pyncheon family in the titular seven-gabled house. The house, we are told, was originally built in the seventeenth century by Colonel Pyncheon, on land that he stole from Matthew Maule, an alleged wizard. Vengeful and bitter, Maule placed a curse on Colonel Pyncheon, declaring that "God would give him blood to drink." In fulfillment of this curse, on the very day his house was completed,

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[39] Other literary writers of Hawthorne's time shared his interest in the camera. Edgar Allan Poe's well-known interest in daguerreotypy, for example, led him to publish articles on the subject in *Alexander's Weekly Messenger* and *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* and, as many have argued, profoundly impacted his writing. Melanie Hubbard and Eliza Richards have noted similar influences in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, and Heike Schaefer, among others, has done the same in Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson's works. I join these examinations of early American writers' responses to photography in arguing that the daguerreotype was a groundbreaking technology not only in the genre of visual art or image technologies but also in the field of American literature. For Poe's own thoughts about the invention, see "The Daguerreotype" [1] in *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, January 15, 1840 (Brigham, *Edgar Allan Poe's Contributions to* Alexander's Weekly Messenger, 20–22); "The Daguerreotype" [2] in *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, May 6, 1840 (Brigham, 82); "Improvements in the Daguerreotype: A Chapter on Science and Art" in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, April and May 1840 [attributed to Poe]. For the daguerreotype's influence on Poe's writing, see Kevin J. Hayes, *Poe's "Spectacles" and the Camera Lens*; Naomi Miyazawa, "Poe, the Portrait, and the Daguerreotype"; Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, "The Horror of Taking a Picture in 'The Tell-Tale Heart.'" For influences of the daguerreotype on Emily Dickinson, see Eliza Richards, "'Death's Surprise, Stamped Visible'"; and on stereographs and Dickinson see Melanie Hubbard, "'Turn it, a little.'" For photography in the work of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, see Heike Schaefer, *American Literature and Immediacy*.

Colonel Pyncheon died in his study, sitting directly beneath his own painted portrait, blood flowing from his mouth. The curse, we are told, did not end with Colonel Pyncheon but persists, echoing across generations—every future generation spawns a Pyncheon who resembles the hard, unbending original, and each one dies suddenly in the same manner, with blood gurgling in his throat.

The novel opens several generations later, in the mid-nineteenth century. The ancient house, now decrepit and decaying, is currently inhabited by Hepzibah and her brother Clifford, two dusty descendants of the Pyncheons. They have taken two tenants: Phoebe, their effervescent country cousin, also a Pyncheon, and an enigmatic daguerreotypist named Holgrave. Hepzibah, Clifford, and Phoebe are continually threatened by Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, this generation's version of the seventeenth-century Colonel, who has designs to drive Hepzibah and Clifford out of the house. Just as it seems he has succeeded, Judge Pyncheon (or "the Judge," as the narrator often refers to him) dies in accordance with the curse: blood running from his mouth, in the exact same spot as his ancestor the Colonel. An entire chapter is devoted to the Judge's death scene, a striking narrative aberration that seems to fall outside the novel's usual temporality. Holgrave creates a daguerreotype of the dead Judge, then shows it to Phoebe. Over the Judge's postmortem daguerreotype, with his body in the next room, Phoebe and Holgrave declare their love for one another. In the end, he and Phoebe are engaged to be married, Hepzibah and Clifford are rich, and they all move out of the seven-gabled house to live in the sunny country. In a final twist, Holgrave reveals to Phoebe that he is actually the descendant of the spurned magician (and her ancestors' old enemy), Matthew Maule.

This chapter focuses on Hawthorne's *Seven Gables* but turns frequently to other

writings of the mid-nineteenth century—articles, letters, and other contemporary texts—that reveal where and how literary forms confronted and mediated photographic modes of representation.[40] To position Hawthorne as an author interested in visual mediums is to join an extensive discourse on the subject. Scholars such as Carol Shloss, Alan Trachtenberg, Marcy J. Dinius, Susan Williams, and others have long contextualized Hawthorne as an author writing very much in the age of the daguerreotype, and many of his works have been understood as meditations on visual art and photographic technology.[41] When considering Hawthorne's reaction to early photography, critics often position Hawthorne as skeptical of this modern technology—as a challenge to be met in the literary marketplace, or a new art that challenged the value of subjectivity. Susan S. Williams, for example, reads the novel as an attempt to assert the power of the literary over the visual, a sign of Hawthorne's anxiety about the literary marketplace. Others, like Trachtenberg, note Hawthorne's ambivalence about the medium, suggesting that *Seven Gables* recruits the daguerreotype for its own purposes at the same time it resists its association with objectively recorded reality.[42] These scholars have done much to explore the ways we might consider daguerreotypy in *Seven Gables* and in nineteenth-century literature in general, but as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, they all tend to concentrate on how the daguerreotype (and subsequent photographic

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[40] See the introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of what I mean by *mediation* of photography.

[41] See Carol Shloss, *In Visible Light* (1987); Trachtenberg, "Seeing and Believing (2000); Susan S. Williams, "“The Inconstant Daguerreotype”"; Marcy J. Dinius, *The Camera and the Press American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* (2012).

[42] Ronald R. Thomas similarly investigates the daguerreotype in *Seven Gables* as proof of the real in criminal photography and detective fiction. Like Trachtenberg, Thomas focuses on photographic reality, though his attention turns instead to the American politics evident in Hawthorne's employment of the photograph through Holgrave (Thomas, "Double Exposures").

technologies) interacted with the concepts of reality and truth, fiction/nonfiction, and/or mimesis.[43] This chapter builds on the impulse to consider *Seven Gables* as a meditation on photography, but I turn from these well-explored questions of reality/truth to the text's narrative expression of time, particularly in its representation of death.

Applying Roland Barthes' and Kris Belden-Adams' assessments of photographic temporality, I argue that in the text, death helpfully refracts and illuminates photographic mechanisms of temporality and memory. Death creates the desire to restore non-existent past into existent present, to remember and to record; in *Seven Gables*, photography is, perhaps, one compelling answer to that desire. In considering literary texts like *Seven Gables* that mediate the photograph, we will find that they often turn to photography as a way to navigate the liminal boundaries of death and life; to characterize the anterior future[44] as well as the cyclical, genealogical time of death; to visualize narrative planes of past, present, and future.

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[43] I take these considerations up in detail later in this chapter. Dinius reads the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter (which I also analyze here) through a similar lens, focusing on the question of subjectivity and objectivity. The chapter, she argues, is "the romantic equivalent of a Daguerreian portrait" that demonstrates how Hawthorne "foreground[s] the artistic subjectivity of Daguerreian image making [. . .] to defend the place of subjectivity in art." Dinius's reading is similar to Susan William's in that they both saw the novel as a response to daguerreotypy as a potential threat—whether a challenge to be met in the literary marketplace or a new art that challenged the value of subjectivity. My project is a continuation of these studies, but offers a much-needed turn to the temporal shift daguerreotypes created. See Dinius, *The Camera and the Press,* 50.
[44] Roland Barthes' concept of anterior future can be defined as the representational paradox of time within the photographed moment, the "anterior future" of a death that simultaneously *will be* and *has not yet happened*. Barthes gives the example of a historical photograph showing subjects that, in the viewer's present time, must be dead: "They have their whole lives before them; but also they are dead (today), they are then *already* dead (yesterday)" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96).

Photographic Temporalities: A Brief Overview

This chapter assesses multiple (but not all) varieties of photographic temporality in Harthorne's text, embarking from the view that photographic temporality is not monolithic but complex and variegated, encompassing numerous levels of temporal experience and, therefore, influencing mid-nineteenth-century temporality in a variety of ways.[45] As Belden-Adams notes, photography can "reorganize time's passage, [. . .] freeze or slow" a temporal moment (what she calls "atomized time"), and/or "give form to time's fluctuating conditions," to name a few.[46] Jan Baetens and Hilde van de Gelder have similarly cautioned against considering photography's purview of time as a singular, monolithic entity.[47] They suggest that photographs instead be viewed as the subjects of "a complex social process" that uses the photograph to "produce social meanings and interactions that evolve in time and through time."[48] In referring to "photographic time" or "photographic temporality," then, I do not mean to imply that there is a single type of interaction between "the photograph" and "Time." As Belden-Adams points out, "Many scholars tend to discuss photography's expression of time as if it is singular and coherent. It is neither. Photography, as the product, embodiment and

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[45] There are several co-extensive conceptions of time that photographs allow us to see. A few of these are: atomized time (present sliced into thin instants, frozen, fragmented); time as unified (past, present and future combined, or some amalgamation of past-present-future); time as movement or the lack of movement (stasis, linear or nonlinear progression, or cyclical movement); "time" as shorthand for transience (via Sontag, "time's relentless melt") as opposed to "time" as shorthand for eternal unchangingness, or comprising all past moments. (My thanks to Jason Francisco for his suggestions on this list of photographic temporalities.) For overviews of additional concepts of time, see Kris Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*; Robin Le Poidevin, "The Experience and Perception of Time"; Barry Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness."

[46] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*; Belden-Adams, "Modern Time," 2.

[47] Jan Baetens and Hilde van de Gelder, *Photography and Time*, viii.

[48] Baetens and van de Gelder, viii.

faithful servant of a complex and variegated modernity, is equally variously temporally stratified."[49] At various points in *Seven Gables*, the mediated photograph halts the passage of time; it collapses delineations between past, present, and future, offering a photographic temporality that is cyclical and repetitive; it expands to reframe the novel as a representational paradox of Time, Barthes' "anterior future." Recognizing that there is no single expression of photographic temporality, this chapter investigates the various ways the textually mediated photograph affected and inspired expressions of temporality and death in *Seven Gables*.[50]

Many works of the Romantic period evinced a philosophical preoccupation with the passage of time (and, implicitly, with death).[51] British Romanticism, John House and Belden-Adams argue, evinced a "compulsion" to explore temporality before photography was ever invented.[52] The cloud studies of nineteenth-century English painter John Constable, for example, demonstrate "a unique Romantic compulsion for stilling the ephemeral (manifested in nature) as a lasting visual image," a compulsion

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[49] Belden-Adams, "Modern Time," 2.
[50] Again, I would emphasize my distinction between "the photograph" and the "textually mediated photograph." I am concerned with the photograph as it has been interpreted, included, narrated in the medium of language. The extent to which an *actual* photographic image represents (or does not, or cannot, represent) a particular temporality or reality is a related but, ultimately, different topic from what I discuss here. Whatever we might say now about the photograph's ability to represent reality, I am more concerned with the fact that nineteenth-century viewers and writers often took photographic reality at (nearly) face value, and therefore explored this concept in their work.
[51]See Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*; Belden-Adams, "Modern Time"; Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Victorian Photography, Literature, and the Invention of Modern Memory*; Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*; and Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*.
[52] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*, 3.

House also described as proto-photographic.[53] House's study of nineteenth-century artists (including Constable as well as French Realist and Naturalist paintings of peasants) likewise suggests that artists of the century were interested in exploring time visually, and investigated a variety of visual senses of time—the cyclical, transformative, and instantaneous.[54] Speaking more generally about the movement as a whole, Belden-Adams argues that "Romanticism itself embodied a proto-photographic manifestation of the 'desire to photograph'—a yearning to fix time's fleeting passage and still its fugitive nature."[55] With *Seven Gables*, Hawthorne joined a literary tradition and cultural moment already attuned to the temporal possibilities of the photograph.

Many early responses to the daguerreotype often centered on the temporal experience of viewing a photographic image, the uncanniness of seeing a moment reproduced outside its moment in space and time. Walt Whitman describes the thrill of photography's temporal shift in his 1846 article for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, "Visit to Plumbe's Gallery." Regaling readers of the wonders of John Plumbe's New York daguerreotype studio and gallery, he writes: "The *pictures* address themselves before all else," demanding more notice than the fashionable crowds that gather there, which "alone are enough to occupy a curious train of attention."[56] Blending the faces of these

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[53] Belden-Adams, "*Photography, Modernity, Temporality*," 3; John House, "Seasons and Moments," 195.
[54] John House, "Seasons and Moments."
[55] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality,* 3. While Belden-Adams does not necessarily suggest that Romanticism somehow called upon the sciences to produce such a machine, I would emphasize that the photographic desire she references was a speculative one. Peter Galassi points out that it is ahistorical to suggest that the daguerreotype "satisfied needs that existed before its invention." Rather, he suggests, "the period in which photography arrived spawned a great volume of speculative tinkering, whose spirit and products [including photography] fostered as well as answered such needs" (Galassi, *Before Photography*, 11).
[56]Walt Whitman, "Visit to Plumbe's Gallery," n.p. (first page of issue).

in-flesh viewers with the ghostly daguerreotype portraits hanging on the walls in a "Phantom concourse," Whitman writes:

> What a spectacle! In whatever direction you turn your peering gaze, you see naught but human faces! There they stretch, from floor to ceiling—hundreds of them. Ah! what tales might those pictures tell if their mute lips had the power of speech! [. . .] Indeed, it is little else on all sides of you, then a great legion of human faces—human eyes gazing silently but fixedly upon you, and creating the impression of an immense Phantom concourse—speechless and motionless, but yet *realities*. You are indeed in a new world—a peopled world, though mute as the grave.[57]

He undercuts the "reality" of these portraits, so striking in their likeness to real human faces; how can these *phantoms*, silent as the grave, float so convincingly among the living? It is this liveliness that enthralls Whitman particularly: "Plumbe's beautiful and multifarious pictures all strike you, (whatever their various peculiarities) with their *naturalness*, and the *life-look* of the eye—that soul of the face! In all his vast collection, [. . .] we notice not one that has a dead eye." Whitman is struck by this link between viewer and subject, eye to (not dead) eye, that seems to transcend the uncanny disconnect between liveliness and death, the *now* of the viewer and the *then* of the subject:

> We have miniatures in our possession, which we have often held, and gazed upon the eyes in them for the halfhour! An electric chain seems to vibrate, as it were, between our brain and him or her preserved there so

[57] Whitman, "Visit."

> well by the limner's cunning. Time, space, both are annihilated, and we identify the semblance with the reality.

Whitman captures here what captivated so many others, but perhaps especially writers, about the new technology. In catching a fragment of time and "preserving" it, in allowing a relic of the past to persist, unchanged, in the now, the photograph interrupted previous experiences of time as a more or less linear passage, in which the dead remained rooted firmly in the past, separated from us by "time, space," only brought back by an internal memory that was at best a "semblance" which one could never, as Whitman says, "identify […] with the reality."[58] Whitman's description of the striking effect of his miniatures—how subject and viewer are linked by a thrumming "electric chain" that "annihilates" boundaries of space and time—encapsulates the temporal experience this new medium engendered in many nineteenth-century viewers, and exemplifies the way photography was often linked with death.[59] Whitman locates the photographic temporality within the consciousness of the viewer, the "brain," suggesting that the temporal awareness originates there. Like Whitman, Hawthorne was an interested observer of the daguerreotype's invention whose livelihood centered the

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[58] In "Song of Myself," Whitman contrasts "well-taken photographs" with the permanence of "your wife or friend close and solid in your arms," suggesting that though the boundaries of space and time might perhaps be annihilated in the moment the viewer is held in thrall of the thrumming chain, it disintegrates. After all, Whitman is careful to note that we *identify* the semblance with the reality; not that the semblance *is* the reality. Whitman's poem "My Picture Gallery" (which first appeared in an 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass*) is another example of his interest in photography. In this poem, he again links daguerreotype images to the nexus of life, death, and memory. See Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 48. Also see Ed Folsom, "'This Heart's Geography's Map.'"

[59] This fascination with photography's kinship with death has, of course, spanned across the centuries of its existence, from Whitman's musings on the daguerreotype to Barthes' famous discussion of his deceased mother's childhood photograph in *Camera Lucida*. This dissertation maps how the connection between the two affected literary narratives.

art of representation; *Seven Gables* suggests he aimed to explore some of the same concerns in his own work.

An "atmospherical medium": The Preface and Photography

Critics considering Hawthorne and the daguerreotype have long identified the preface, particularly its meditation on the two concepts of "Romance" and "Novel," as a crucial passage. While all agree that the preface foregrounds the importance of photography in *Seven Gables*, precisely what the preface says about photography is the subject of much critical controversy. All agree, however, that the preface indicates Hawthorne was thinking about writing in photographic terms. Situated within and building on these critical conversations, my reading here builds on this work, then diverges from it to consider the preface in the context of the postmortem photography tradition. The way the preface maps its concerns about the Romance/Novel dichotomy onto concurrent discussions about the nature of photography suggests that the text was recruiting photography as a new medium ripe for opportunities of textual mediation. Specifically, the preface offers the first instance in which *Seven Gables*, described here as a "Romance," seems to coopt a temporality of the photograph.

In the preface, a speaker self-identified as "the Author" compares the characteristics of the "Novel" and the "Romance," and states unequivocally that the book readers hold in their hands is a "Romance."[60] In the preface's definition, the primary

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[60] What definition "Romance" may have held for Hawthorne outside of the preface's description here—including where and how he described the term in other writings—has been the subject of much critical controversy but falls outside the scope of this project. For more on how the term relates to his other works and to Romanticism more broadly, see Michael Davitt Bell, "Arts of Deception."

difference between Novel and Romance lies in the degree to which either genre engages with direct mimesis of reality with "fidelity" or "truth." He defines the Novel as "aim[ing] at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience."[61] On the other side is the Romance—the camp to which *Seven Gables* belongs. While the Romance "must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart," it differs from the Novel in that it "has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. [. . .] If he think fit, [the writer] may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture."[62]

The seemingly mimetic properties of the Novel (its adherence to "minute fidelity" in recording not only "possible" but "probable" occurrences of ordinary everyday life) contrast with the atmospheric manipulation of the Romance that, according to the preface, parades the misty ghosts of the past in broad daylight. Whereas a Novel might be taken as an extended meditation on reality, a Romance is the purposeful manipulation and mixing of that reality. The preface concludes with a disclaimer that while "the Reader may perhaps choose to assign an actual locality to the imaginary events of this narrative," the "personages" therein are of the author's own making—another reason Hawthorne requests that "the book may be read strictly as a Romance."[63]

At least ostensibly, it must be conceded that this description may at least partly

[61] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 1.
[62] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 1.
[63] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 3.

function to stave off any criticism from readers who, expecting a “Novel,” find fault with the puzzling, implausible plot to come. It proactively identifies this implausibility as a conscious, artistic choice. This book is *art*, the preface claims—shadowed, malleable, beholden only to the “truth of the human heart”—not a failed attempt at capturing the probable or ordinary with a “minute fidelity.” And because it is loosely based on a real house in a real place, it functions as a kind of “all persons fictitious” disclaimer.[64] Regardless of where critics fall on the preface, most agree that it cannot be taken at face value. It may or may not reveal how Hawthorne thought of his book; it certainly hints at how Hawthorne wanted *others* to think about it. In either case, I would argue, the preface nonetheless reveals several things important to the novel’s relationship to photography.

Written in a photographic register, the preface strongly suggests that Hawthorne views the work as a “picture” as much as a text, with lights and shadows that might be enhanced, enriched, or softened according to the author’s (or, we might say, daguerreotypist’s) purpose. Even the aesthetics of this description bring to mind the physical appearance of daguerreotypes, the mirrored surface of the image creating a “flitting” effect when tilted. The phrase “flitting away from us” directly parallels Phoebe’s later description of daguerreotypes as “dodging away from the eye, and trying to escape altogether.”[65]

The preface also reveals the text’s interest in the intersections between

[64] The real “House of the Seven Gables,” built in 1668, is located in Salem, Massachusetts.
[65] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 91.

photography and literature in the very distinction between "Novel" and "Romance."[66] This association, which the preface to *Seven Gables* similarly defines by each genre's relationship to truth, strongly echoes contemporary meditations on daguerreotypy at the time; at the time of its invention, Shloss argues that "the camera and the daguerreotype were quickly, almost instinctively, fit into a system of thought that recognized truth in a certain style of nonsubjective vision."[67] In his 1840 *Description of the Daguerreotype Process*, for example, François Fauvel-Gouraud described the moment of the photograph—the moment of exposing the treated plate to light—as "receiving the image of nature,"[68] and Talbot's manual *The Pencil of Nature* explained that photography was a "process by which natural objects may be made to delineate themselves."[69] Samuel F. Morse described daguerreotypes, prefiguring the preface's depiction of the Novel, as "painted by Nature's self with a minuteness of detail which the pencil of light in her hands alone can trace," not simply "copies of nature" but actually "portions of nature herself."[70]

Alan Trachtenberg takes up the photographic nature of the Novel/Romance definitions in his article, "Seeing and Believing: Hawthorne's Reflections on the Daguerreotype in *The House of the Seven Gables*":

> This literary distinction between two kinds of mimesis—one strictly

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[66] Similar photographic distinctions like the one between "Novel" and "Romance" appear elsewhere in Hawthorne's writing, such as in the preface written for the 1851 edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, where he warns that "the book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages" (Hawthorne, "Preface").
[67] Shloss, *In Visible Light*, 33.
[68] François Fauvel-Gouraud, *Description of the Daguerreotype Process*, 4.
[69] William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*.
[70] Samuel Prime, *The Life of Samuel Morse*, 400.

> adherent to an imitation of the probable and the ordinary, the other less constrained and freer to deploy atmospheric effects—corresponds to a distinction already well formulated in theories of photography at the time, between merely mechanical and self-consciously artistic uses of the new medium."[71]

Trachtenberg quips that "this correlation" has been "an apparently irresistible subject," and has resulted in "much speculation as to where the daguerreotype falls on the spectrum of novel/romance and their attendant forms of mimesis."[72] This was true at the time Trachtenberg published his article in 1997, and scholars writing today have continued to mine this interpretation of the preface.[73] In considering the preface, such critics have sought to answer whether Hawthorne's daguerreotype is closer to the preface's definition of Novel (record of reality), or more aligned with the Romance (art that arrives at the truth of the human heart). For many scholars, understanding whether the preface's Romance or Novel correlates (generally speaking) to the daguerreotype is crucial in deciphering the daguerreotype's role in the text.

Because this is such a dominant direction in scholarship considering the daguerreotype in *Seven Gables*—and offers a sense of where the literature stands to date—it may be useful to provide a brief overview of these interpretations here. Their arguments go something like this: If the preface suggests the daguerreotype is antithetical to *Seven Gables*' own purpose and/or genre, then we might read its role in the text accordingly—as a base practice and lowly foil to the higher art of the novel. Or, if

[71] Trachtenberg, "Seeing and Believing," 461.
[72] Trachtenberg, "Seeing and Believing," 461.
[73] This includes Cathy N. Davidson, Marcy J. Dinius, and Megan Rowley Williams, among others.

the daguerreotype aligns with *Seven Gables*' own genre, we might read the photograph as the ideal the book seeks to attain. This question is not a simple one to answer, not least because of the inherent contradictions in characterizations of early photography at the time, but also because of the reductive nature of the question. For one, the photograph was certainly not always associated with mimesis. Photographic historian John Wood, for example, describes the daguerreotype diorama in much the same way Hawthorne describes his Romance. "The diorama," Wood writes, "will always subjugate fact to effect," and will bend historical fact in service of "the greater good of aesthetic accuracy," or what he calls "the bending of the world to loveliness."[74] And yet, as Morse and Talbot's writing shows, daguerreotypes *were* often viewed as a neutral record, an automatic copy of the world as it is.[75] So where on the spectrum of Novel and Romance, scholars have asked, does Hawthorne's daguerreotype fall?

For one set of critics (Carol Shloss, Megan Williams), the "Novel" the preface describes has characteristics commonly associated with photography at the time of its invention, like the ability to depict "minute fidelity" and the reality of ordinary experience.[76] These scholars suggest that Hawthorne's view of the daguerreotype, like William Henry Fox Talbot's or François Fauvel-Gouraud's, aligns with the minute fidelity of the novel, and therefore implies that Hawthorne finds the daguerreotype to be at odds with his own project—the "Romance." In another set of interpretations (Cathy N. Davidson, Marcy J. Dinius), the daguerreotype aligns not with the "Novel" but firmly

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[74] John Wood, *The Scenic Daguerreotype*, 17.

[75] As Carol Shloss points out, both photographers, sitters, and laymen "fail[ed] to regard the photographer as an active participant in, and shaper of, procedures and events. […] Photographers tended to see the form as autotelic and to ignore their role as manipulators and originators (Shloss, *In Visible Light*, 32).

[76] Megan Rowley Williams, *Through the Negative*, 15–38.

with "Romance." These readings generally argue that Hawthorne's text is *not* a critique of the daguerreotype, but that instead it recruits the daguerreotype under the project of Romance.[77]

Assessing the preface in this way represents one of critics' main approaches when considering photography and *Seven Gables*. But reading the preface as a key with which to decipher the text into a kind of pro- or anti-daguerreotype dichotomy often results in explaining away the contradictions that make the interpretive potential of the preface so rich. This shifting ambivalence and ambiguity, is, of course, one of the traits inherent in the daguerreotype—self-contradictory, containing both positive and negative images within a single plane. Trachtenberg sees this ambiguity as one of the defining features in Hawthorne's employment of daguerreotypes in the text.[78] The focus on the text's ambiguity towards daguerreotypy is key. Considering the concurrent rhetoric that characterized the photograph both as record of reality *and* as illusion, Trachtenberg allows for the possibility that *Seven Gables* explores both.

Far from offering a cypher with which to translate the novel's "stance" on daguerreotypes, the preface allows for ambivalence in its view of photography. It denounces the "minute fidelity" commonly associated with the daguerreotype while, at the same time, describing the novel in photographic terms—it is a work of "fancy-pictures," an "atmospherical medium" with lights and shadows, and its effect is

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[77] Cathy N. Davidson, "Photographs of the Dead."
[78] "Sharing features of both 'Novel' and 'Romance,' of science and magic, of modernity and tradition," Trachtenberg contends, "the daguerreotype plays a strategic role in the narrative as an emblem of the ambiguity that the tale will affirm as the superior mark of 'Romance'—if not exactly 'Romance' itself, at least a major narrative resource for defining and apprehending what that term means (Trachtenberg, "Seeing and Believing," 460).

"picturesque." If we embrace the ambivalence inherent in the preface without seeking to resolve it, this ambivalence—which Trachtenberg rightfully notes as a crucial piece of the puzzle—suggests *Seven Gables* is neither "for" nor "against" the daguerreotype. Instead, the ambivalence elucidates the daguerreotype's potential to inform and influence the tenets of a narrative text most in flux for Hawthorne—concerns like reality, truth, and time. If the photograph's relationship to reality can be *both* "record" and, at other times, "illusion," then its relationship to time can (and does) vary as well.

I would also add to these critics' readings by emphasizing that the preface identifies temporality as a primary concern, and by styling time in a photographic key, sets the stage for the novel's later meditations on photographic temporality. The preface's description of *Seven Gables* echoes one of the most striking features of the daguerreotype for contemporary viewers: its uncanny ability to seemingly perpetuate the past, to pull the misty, gray epoch into "broad daylight":

> [The Romance] attempts to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events for the sake of a picturesque effect.[79]

The "Romance" (*Seven Gables*) itself appears to embody the temporality of daguerreotypes, and especially daguerreotypes of the dead. Like the cherished photograph of a loved one, now deceased, the text is a "legend prolonging itself," "gray

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[79] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 2.

in the distance" like a corpse, but somehow also here, reflecting "our own broad daylight." And in the preface, the text's identity as a Romance—or the artistic project as Hawthorne defines it—is described in the register of photographic temporality; more specifically, the temporal experience of viewing photographs of the dead.

"The very shadow": Postmortem Photography in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

The linkage between photography and death was cemented in the nineteenth century through the practice of postmortem photography. In *The Language of Vision*, Joseph Millichap contextualizes this mourning practice as part of a larger "culture of death":

> The moments of individual lives and social histories frozen by daguerreotypes raised philosophical questions of life and death, as well as of memories and memorials. America in the nineteenth century was acutely aware of mutability and mortality, so much so that it created a veritable culture of death. Photography quickly became a prominent aspect of this process by portraying individuals before and after their passing, often posed among living survivors.[80]

Images of the dead were not entirely new; earlier histories of photography initially suggested that the practice of imaging the dead arrived with the invention of the daguerreotype, but more recent scholars agree that the idea and success of postmortem

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[80] Millichap, *The Language of Vision*, 8.

photography sprung from earlier traditions of posthumous portraiture.[81] Jay Ruby notes that early photographers capitalized on a market for posthumous likenesses already occupied by "limners and silhouette makers who offered the less affluent a chance to have their images rendered."[82] The postmortem photograph became a widespread mourning practice in the years following the daguerreotype's arrival in America in part because studios and photographers were able to capitalize on the market that limners and silhouette-makers had staked out.[83] Phoebe Lloyd notes that postmortem paintings, silhouettes, and other such non-photographic portraits already "functioned as an icon for the bereaved; contemplating it was part of the mourning ritual"—posthumous photographs, then, already had a place not only in the marketplace, but also in cultural mourning practices of the nineteenth century.[84]

As photographic technologies became more accessible and widespread across America, postmortem photographs quickly became an established part of the rituals surrounding death that Lloyd describes. Postmortem photographs eventually outpaced other forms of posthumous likenesses such as paintings, and became a part of nineteenth-century death and mourning practices in a way paintings and other death

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[81] Such earlier histories include: Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (1938); Floyd Rinhart and Marion Rinhart, *American Daguerrian [sic] Art* (1967); William B. Welling, *Photography in America: The Formative Years, 1839–1900* (1987).
[82] Ruby's history of postmortem photography places the genesis of the practice in two pre-photographic posthumous pictorial traditions already present: the public commemorative portrait and the private mourning portrait. Daguerreotypists combined features of both, and "use[d] the conventions of the [public] commemorative portrait to produce privately intended postmortem portraits," depicting the deceased as though sleeping or in repose for the individual use of grieving loved ones. See Jay Ruby, *Secure the Shadow*, 27, 47.
[83] Ruby, *Secure the Shadow*, 28.
[84] Phoebe Lloyd, "Posthumous Mourning Portraiture," 73.

portraits never had.[85] Posthumous daguerreotypes succeeded, in part, because they offered a more economical method of preserving likenesses than posthumous paintings, and they were faster and easier to obtain on short notice.[86] But perhaps its place in nineteenth-century death culture had just as much to do with the temporal experiences the photograph created, as an 1843 letter from Elizabeth Barrett (not yet Browning) to Mary Russell Mitford suggests.

For Barrett, postmortem photographs seemed to offer something altogether different from painted, engraved, or sketched portraits—namely, a temporal experience (inherent to the daguerreotype itself, and different from viewing a painting) that compelled and captivated nineteenth-century viewers. Barrett begins her letter expressing general astonishment at "that wonderful invention of the day, called the Daguerreotype." Like many of her contemporaries, Barrett was amazed by the new technology: "Think of a man sitting down in the sun and leaving his fac simile in all its full completion of outline and shadow, stedfast [*sic*] on a plate, at the end of a minute and a half! — The Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvellous [*sic*]." She then turns her attention from images of the living to images of the dead, comparing memorial photographs to more traditional non-photographic posthumous images like engravings. In her description, she claims that the photograph is a superior medium for memorializing a loved one:

> And several of these wonderful portraits . . like engravings only exquisite and delicate beyond the work of graver—have I seen lately—longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world. the fact of

[85] Audrey Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 13.
[86] Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 10.

> the very shadow of the person lying there fixed for ever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think — and it is not at all monstrous in me to say what my brothers cry out against so vehemently . . that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest Artist's work every produced. I do not say so in respect (of disrespect) to Art, but for Love's sake."[87]

What is it about the photograph that, for Barrett, lends itself to memorialization? Her description suggests that the bereaved, particularly, were struck by the temporal possibilities of the photographic image, and that the photograph's realism and temporality were better suited than the artist's portrait to the purpose of memorializing a loved one. In seeking to explain herself (why it is "not at all monstrous" of her to suggest as much), Barrett's language falls into a distinctly photographic register that echoes the lexicon of daguerreotypy at the time. The word "exquisite," which evokes acuteness, intensity, and accuracy, suggests the often-celebrated detail and exactness of the daguerreotype, which, when successful, achieved an extremely high resolution.[88] "The sense of nearness" evokes the intimacy of holding a small daguerreotype in one's hands, the uncanny feeling of holding the loved one's image in the present; or perhaps

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[87] Elizabeth Barrett (Browning) to Mary Russell Mitford, December 7, 1843, in *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford 1836–1854*, 357–58. (Note that Barrett Browning frequently used two periods to indicate an ellipsis in her letter—these are present in the original and do not indicate an omission on my part.)
[88] One of the first accounts of the daguerreotype explains this minute detail: "M. Daguerre puts a magnifying glass in our hand. We then see the minutest folds of drapery, the lines of a landscape, invisible to the naked eye. In the mass of buildings, accessories of all kinds, imperceptible accidents, of which the view of Paris from the Pont des Arts is composed, we distinguish the smallest details, we count the stones of the pavement, we see the moisture produced by rain, we read the sign of a shop. Every thread of the luminous tissue has passed from the object to the surface retaining it" ("Chemical and Optical Discovery," 276–77).

she also hints at the intimacy of the daguerreotype's realism, new to nineteenth-century viewers, which depicted the scene with such apparent accuracy that the viewer felt as though they were standing in the room, seeing it with their own eyes. And with her exclamation—"the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed for ever!"—Barrett evokes contemporaneous descriptions of photography (such as "sun writing") and emphasizes the photographic process, which depended on light and shadow to fix the image to a plate. Taken together, these descriptions suggest that for some viewers like Barrett, the features that distinguished the photograph from other artistic mediums are precisely what made it ideal for memorializing the body.

While its "exquisite" detail and realism contributed to the marvel of the photograph, it is "not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases"—an artist's portrait can capture a likeness, after all. But unlike a painting, engraving, or plaster cast of the deceased person's face, the photograph was imbued with certain qualities of "nearness," a fixing of the "very shadow" that moved Barrett. Nestled in a case measuring just 4.5 inches on the short edge, this 1853 daguerreotype of Harriet Lamb is imbued with the sense of nearness Barrett describes. Viewing the daguerreotype (about 3.75 by 5 inches) is a physically intimate experience, requiring the spectator to be physically close to the image, perhaps leaning in or holding the case up to the face. The perspective of the image underscores this intimacy; notably, the image does not depict the entire body, formally laid out in her home for visitation, but instead places the viewer at the level of the coffinside, so near to her face that her individual eyelashes are distinguishable.

Figure 1. Marcus A. Root, [portrait of Harriet Lamb], Philadelphia (1853). 1/2 plate daguerreotype. Lamb-Sykes Family Papers. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

I offer these examples—Barrett's letter and Harriet Lamb's portrait—as an entry into the postmortem photograph's attendant temporalities. The postmortem photograph's intimacy and stillness, and the apparent accuracy of the image, accentuate the experience Barrett describes of viewing an image of a body that no longer exists in its pictured form—the temporal experience of viewing the postmortem photograph. While this temporality is one we now take for granted—as Barthes quips in *Camera Lucida*, "What! a whole book (even a short one) to discover something I know at first

glance?"—how the significance and implications of this experience struck viewers in the nineteenth century is perhaps difficult to imagine today. Eliza Richards argues that this "double effect generates a specific perception" modern viewers now take for granted, the effect that arises from realizing that "while the thing certainly was there, it just as certainly is there no longer," or the temporality Barthes describes as "*that-has-been*."[89] Richards joins Barthes in pointing out that this effect is met with indifference in modern viewers who have lived their entire lives with photographic technologies, but for viewers of this new medium, it powerfully affected conceptualizations of memory, time, and death.[90]

Harriet Lamb's postmortem daguerreotype generates this double effect. In the realm of the photograph, her visage will remain untouched, perfectly preserved. In this, the daguerreotype evokes Bazin's reading of how photography "embalms time, rescuing it from its own proper corruption."[91] She is "fixed for ever" in her coffin, her body embalmed, saved from the concrete corruption of time and bodily decay. And yet there is a double effect inherent in such embalmment; the body is both here, in the viewer's palm, and not-here. Her repose and peaceful expression may suggest sleep (death-as-sleep was a widespread concept in postmortem photographs, itself a kind of double

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[89] Richards, "'Death's Surprise, Stamped Visible,'" 14; Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 117.
[90] Barthes' theories of photography and death have been widely influential since the publication of his *Camera Lucida*. Writing in 2017 on the current state of theories of death and photography, Roger Luckhurst states, "A generation (and technological revolution) later, some critics still centre photography's intrinsic truth on Barthes's insistence on melancholia, traumatic absence and death. [. . .] Both Barthes and Sontag invoke an originating traumatic realism to the power of photography, and this has been installed as the dominant paradigm ever since, even through and beyond the digital transformation of the ontological condition of the photographic image" (Luckhurst, "Why Have the Dead Come Back?").
[91] Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," 18.

effect of living-in-death). But the viewer's knowledge of her death and the coffin itself unmistakably contradict this suggestion. [92] Lamb's burial vessel, in which the viewer knows she will be interred and slowly decay, both destabilizes and heightens the perfect preservation of Lamb's image. The permanence and ephemerality of her body overlap, creating a doubling effect that both acknowledges death and loss while preserving the moment, rescuing it from "its own corruption."

Memorial photographs such as this one may have offered viewers like Barrett a talisman that, in her words, "sanctified" the loved one's image through the daguerreotype's "exquisite and delicate" detail and "nearness." She is specifically drawn to the way the daguerreotype etched "the very shadow" and light of its subject to create an image that would be embalmed, "fixed for ever." But they also offered a prism through which viewers could contemplate and explore a new kind of visual temporality, one that both challenged and affirmed the chronology and permanence of death. The novelty of this experience, Richards argues, compelled writers of the nineteenth century like Hawthorne to "articulate the ways in which this new medium's duality informed modes of perception."[93]

Barrett's letter to her friend is one example of how nineteenth-century writers articulated this novel sense of duality. Let us consider another example, from another writer, that further expounds on the temporal effect of the postmortem photograph.

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[92] Daguerreotypists advised that one should "always endeavor to make the picture before the body should be placed in its coffin" (John L. Gihon, "Curious Photographic Experiences," 512–513), or at least to "take the picture so that the coffin will not show," suggesting that the commissioning public and photographers both shared a distaste for the coffin in these portraits (C. Brangwin Barnes, "Post-Mortem Photography, 449–450); but, as Audrey Linkman notes, coffins nonetheless feature prominently in the historical record (Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 31).
[93] Richards, "'Death's Surprise Stamped Visible," 14.

Nearly twenty years later, Oliver Wendell Holmes echoed many of Barrett's opinions in his 1861 *Atlantic Monthly* essay on photography, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture." Both writers, in particular, try to articulate not merely the appearance of these images, but the *experience of viewing* the postmortem image, in which temporality is the distinguishing mark. Holmes is similarly struck by the photograph's potential to preserve exact appearances of the deceased, "just as they appeared in life," even after parents forget the "faces of their children" and "our own eyes lose the images pictured on them [the daguerreotypes]." Even though the image is just a "shadow," an "impress[ion]" of the beloved, still "a fresh sunbeam lays this on the living nerve as if it were radiated from the breathing shape."[94] Both Barrett and Holmes are drawn to the potential for accurate, permanent preservation after death. And like Barrett, Holmes ascribes part of the daguerreotype's "magic" to its mechanisms, such as the role of light in both producing the image and illuminating it in the present—he emphasizes the strange temporal sensation of witnessing a loved one's face illuminated by a *fresh sunbeam* in the present. This sensation, Barrett suggests, is what causes her to "long" for "such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world." Barrett directly states (and Holmes implies) that the daguerreotype's characteristics that distinguished it—its minuteness, its photographic temporality, the way it recorded the loved one's very "living nerve" in light and shadow—cleave closer to a kind of intimacy than other mediums. As Barrett tells her friend, in the death portrait of a loved one, "Love" is by far the more significant motivator than "Art."

Such accounts perhaps explain why the practice pervaded cultural rituals of

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[94] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Sun-Painting and Sun-Sculpture," 14.

mourning and grief in the mid- and late nineteenth century in a way posthumous portraiture like paintings and engravings did not. The photograph had already struck nineteenth-century viewers as groundbreaking in both its realism and its temporality, the way it seemed to preserve a moment now lost, and for these reasons, perhaps, it seemed especially well-suited to the purpose of memorializing the dead. Building on the market of posthumous portraiture and better suited than previous mediums to the task of memorializing the deceased, postmortem photography thus became a common practice after the arrival of the daguerreotype. For Barrett, and Holmes, memorial photographs were intricately bound up with time, memory, and especially preservation.[95] A more intimate medium of mourning, early photography offered viewers a new way of experiencing—and expressing—the temporality of death.

This temporal effect of the postmortem photograph brings us to the expression of time and death in *Seven Gables*. While Hawthorne's experiences with postmortem photography cannot be directly confirmed, its popularity alone suggests that he would have been well-aware of the practice. The demand was high enough that photographic supply houses stocked the black, ornate mats used for postmortem daguerreotypes, and at least two companies created daguerreotype cases exclusively for "likeness of deceased persons, and for sepulchral daguerreotypes."[96] Between 1840 and the 1890s, daguerreotypists and photography studios commonly advertised that their services

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[95] These associations were not unique to postmortem photographs, since photographs of the living took on a similar significance once the subject had passed away. Viewing photographs of living subject, as Whitman said, "time, space, both are annihilated, and we identify the semblance with the reality."

[96] Scovil Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut and the Mausoleum Daguerreotype Case Company of New York, quoted in Floyd Rinhart and Marion Rinhart, *American Daguerrian [sic] Art*, 80–81.

included postmortem photography: Southworth & Hawes, for example, advertised in 1846 that they "make miniatures of children and adults instantly, and of Deceased Persons either at our rooms or at private residences. We take great pains to have Miniatures of Deceased Persons agreeable and satisfactory, and they are often so natural as to seem, even to Artists, in a deep sleep."[97] A studio for sale in 1854 enticed potential buyers with the promise that "pictures of deceased persons alone will pay all expenses," suggesting not only that the demand for postmortem daguerreotypes was enough to support a studio, but also that it was natural to assume the next occupants would offer the service.[98] Samuel N. Rice's 1850 advertisement for his studio even included a poem, "To a Daguerreotype," in which the speaker addresses the postmortem "[daguerreo]type" of his loved one ("and thou alone—the faithful type—/ Her other self—art all that now is left") and encourages readers not to procrastinate.[99] Such advertisements tell of a widespread demand for postmortem daguerreotypes and indicate that any daguerreotype studio would be expected to offer postmortem portrait services. While we cannot confirm Hawthorne's personal experience with the practice, we can assume he was at least generally familiar with postmortem photography, whether through advertisements (Hawthorne likely obtained his own photographic portrait from studios that advertised similarly), published accounts like Holmes's, or its ubiquity as a mid-nineteenth-century mourning practice.

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[97] Scovil Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut and the Mausoleum Daguerreotype Case Company of New York, quoted in Rinhart and Rinhart, *American Daguerrian [sic] Art*, 299.
[98] *Humphrey's Journal of the Daguerreotype,* 302.
[99] Samuel N. Rice, "To a Daguerreotype."

Reverberations: The Postmortem and the Reincarnation Plot in "The Daguerreotypist"

In the chapter "The Daguerreotypist," Holgrave characterizes the text's cyclical plot—in which characters reappear across generations—as a kind of postmortem photographic temporality that is "both a type of preservation and a type of interminable cycle of repetition," in Belden-Adams' words.[100] This cycle of repetition is borne out in the daguerreotypes he takes of the Judge (one living, one of his dead body), and in the novel as a whole.[101]

Each generation of the Pyncheons and Maules contain characters that not only *similar*; they are, the narrator suggests, reborn as the same beings. This genealogical cycle of reincarnation extends to Holgrave (reincarnation of Maule), Phoebe (reincarnation of Alice Pyncheon), and most notably, to Judge Pyncheon (reincarnation of Colonel Pyncheon). Describing this latter re-embodiment, the narrator states: "[Colonel Pyncheon's] character, indeed, might be traced all the way down, as distinctly as if the Colonel himself, a little diluted, had been gifted with a sort of intermittent immortality on earth." This is no mere family resemblance, or the usual temporality of genetic similarities across generations. Though diluted, it is "the Colonel himself" that reappears.[102] This type of temporality is one Belden-Adams identifies as "ongoing,

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[100] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*, 9.
[101] It is also reinscribed in the following chapter, "Alice Pyncheon." While I do not discuss this chapter in detail here, it offers another instance in which the past is repeated in the present. The chapter is a story within a story. Holgrave has written "an incident [. . .] of the Pyncheon family-history." In the story, supposedly based on real events, Maule (Holgrave's ancestor) hypnotizes Alice Pyncheon (a proto-Phoebe). Holgrave reads the story aloud to Phoebe, only to find that he has inadvertently hypnotized her. History has been repeated—a Maule has hypnotized a Pyncheon once again.
[102] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 19.

genealogical time," the "temporal continuum" of a bloodline perpetuated through photographs that are passed down through generations.[103]

The Colonel's "immortality" paradoxically promises both reincarnation and death, by way of Maule's original curse. That both a kind of perpetual immortality *and* preordained death (ostensibly paradoxical concepts) are implied is suggestive of the coexistence of multiple temporalities Belden-Adams identifies in certain photographs. She offers the example of a particular image, *The Leighton Family Portrait,* taken in 1899. Xeroxed and edited by later generations to include a family member that at the time of the photograph had not yet been born, and also containing the absence of four children who died before the picture was taken, *The Leighton Family* is an "amalgamation comprised of conflicting temporalities" that "offers viewers non-linear, multiple temporal vacillations between past, present, and future tenses (and combinations of these)." Belden-Adams identifies no less than ten temporalities in this portrait, and as such *The Leighton Family* "has a complicated, unfixed, and potentially endless number of ways to relate to temporality that far exceed Barthes's conception of future-anterior time."[104] Like *The Leighton Family, Seven Gables* comprises multiple photographic temporalities, all of which were represented in both popular cultural discourses of Hawthorne's time as well as in the practice of postmortem photography.

But the Colonel's successors share more than personality and fate—as the text reminds us many times, they share the same *likeness*. Descendants of the Colonel, the narrator takes pains to explain, "cut precisely the same figure in the world as he himself

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[103] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality,* 44.
[104] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality,* 60–61.

does."[105] There are literal images of the Colonel and the Judge circulating in the text—the Colonel's painted portrait looms in the study, and the Judge's daguerreotypes (one alive, one dead) bookend the narrative—that corroborate this. When viewing Holgrave's daguerreotype of the Judge (the first, taken while he was still living), Phoebe mistakes it as a daguerreotype of the old Colonel's painted portrait. They have, she says, the same "face," the same "stern eye."[106] In this way, the Colonel-Judge character is one more photographic image of the ancestors passed down through generations, a daguerreotype that walks among the living only to die, over and over again. Or as Barthes says, "this image which produces Death while trying to preserve life."[107]

Holgrave, the daguerreotypist, emphasizes again that it is literally *the image* of the individual that persists in the present: "the original perpetrator and father of this mischief appears to have perpetuated himself, and still walks the street—at least, *his very image*, in mind and body—with the fairest prospect of transmitting to posterity as rich, and as wretched, an inheritance as he has received!"[108] The Colonel-Judge, then, is not simply a kind of ghost or particularly strong familial likeness, but an actual image that has "perpetuated itself" across generations.[109] The cyclical reappearance across time—in which the Judge *is* but physically *cannot be* the very same body that inhabited

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[105] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 183.
[106] Thinking she has guessed Holgrave's trick, Phoebe says: "I know the face [. . .] for its stern eye has been following me about, all day. It is my Puritan ancestor [Colonel Pyncheon], who hangs yonder in the parlor. To be sure, you have found some way of copying the portrait without its black velvet cap and gray beard, and have given him a modern coat and satin cravat, instead of his cloak and band" (Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 93).
[107] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 92.
[108] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 195; emphasis added.
[109] Holgrave's profession and his obsession with daguerreotyping the Judge insinuates this image is photographic (as opposed to a painting).

the Colonel's past—exhibits the "temporal hallucination" Barthes identifies in the photograph that is "false on the level of perception, true on the level of time." This type of aberration is "a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality."[110]

In addition to accentuating the photographic temporality of the reincarnation plot, the chapter also contains an extended metaphor that further characterizes this temporality and presages the daguerreotype Holgrave later creates of Judge Pyncheon's dead body.[111] Holgrave constructs a metaphor in which "the Past" is *a dead body* that escapes its temporal moorings, oppressing the present and depicting the viewer's own death. The imagery and corporeal presence of "the Past" forecast the language used to describe the postmortem daguerreotype that Holgrave later creates of the dead judge (particularly the three references to the Judge's white face).[112]

An interjection from the narrator sets the stage for Holgrave's photographic metaphor: "Without directly answering [Phoebe], [Holgrave] turned from the Future, which had heretofore been the theme of his discourse, and began to speak of the

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[110] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 115.
[111] For an overview of the way the character of the photographer is often linked to death in literature, see Joanna Madloch, "Remarks on the Literary Portrait of the Photographer and Death." Madloch's article (which does not discuss *Seven Gables*) analyzes examples of the photographer in twentieth-century literature as a trickster-figure that accompanies (or causes) a subject's death.
[112] As already stated, this association is later echoed in the photographic scene of the Judge's death in the chapter, "Governor Pyncheon," and in the actual postmortem daguerreotype that Holgrave creates following the Judge's death. See the following section "The Postmortem Daguerreotype in the 'Governor Pyncheon' Chapter" for an in-depth assessment of the imagery of the judge's postmortem daguerreotype. See also Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 268–283, particularly 276, 278, and 283, as well as 303, 305.

influences of the Past. One subject, indeed, is but the reverberation of the other."[113] The narrator's statement that the Past and Future are both reverberations of one another, not a linear continuum of this-before-that, is suggestive of the way the photographed past not only persists in the present (the photograph's future) but invites a dialectical cycle between the two. As Trachtenberg writes, photography has the ability "to dissolve the distancing effects of space and time by preserving the past look of things and people into the present."[114] Holgrave seems to be thinking along these lines when he exclaims:

> Shall we never, never get rid of this Past! [. . .] It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body! In fact, the case is just as if a young giant were compelled to waste all his strength in carrying about the corpse of the old giant, his grandfather, who died a long while ago, and only needs to be decently buried. Just think, a moment; and it will startle you to see what slaves we are to by-gone times—to Death, if we give the matter the right word![115]

In response to this outburst, Phoebe says, "But I do not see it." (Perhaps only a daguerreotypist can.) That it is Holgrave "the daguerreotypist"—the title of this chapter and often how the narrator refers to the character in the text—who offers this interpretation is significant: it underscores the photographic nature of Holgrave's perspective, suggesting that his work as a daguerreotypist has informed this view of the world.[116]

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[113] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 185.
[114] Trachtenberg, "Photography," 22.
[115] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 183
[116] It also sets the stage for the later "Governor Pyncheon" chapter, and the postmortem daguerreotype Holgrave creates.

Holgrave counters Phoebe's skepticism by pointing out that everything they do in the present has been informed by the actions of "dead men," from inheriting the property of dead relatives to reading books written by authors who have long since died. Holgrave's description of the phantom, vague "dead men" then becomes corporeal and specific: "Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us!"[117] Holgrave suggests that this icy corpse that "lies upon the Present," is, in fact, "The Past." Or in other words, the past is a dead body, one that is both visual and specific; or, to flip the terms, the postmortem photograph of the dead body is the past lying upon the present.

Holgrave's next sentence further materializes the Past as a corpse, describing the body in terms that evoke the imagery of a postmortem daguerreotype: "Turn our eyes to what point we may, a Dead Man's white, immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart!"[118] At the moment Holgrave conjures this "white, immitigable face" before their eyes, evoking the future postmortem photographic image of the Judge's corpse, he turns to contemplating his and Phoebe's own deaths: "And we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be no longer our world, but the world of another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere."[119]

When Holgrave speaks of the past here, he invokes the specific genealogical history behind his concerns. Holgrave is the descendant of Matthew Maule—the "wizard" who, legend has it, cursed Colonel Pyncheon after he stole Maule's land. The

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[117] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 183.
[118] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 183.
[119] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 183.

narrator suggests Holgrave is this generation's reincarnation of Maule—their physical appearance, propensity for hypnosis, and allusions to Holgrave's "magic" emphasize the resemblance. In short, the Holgrave/Maule characters' pasts, presents, and futures include both the present-day Judge as well as the past Colonel Pyncheon. In other words, when Holgrave speaks of "the past" that weighs on his present like a corpse, he invokes the (past) dead Colonel and (future) dead Judge. The Judge is the Colonel—and therefore *is* the body, the image, and the "Past" Holgrave describes. With this generational reincarnation in mind, then, Holgrave's statements here suggest the individual, the dead body, and Time ("the Past") are all layered *within the image of the dead body*.

As Holgrave conjures the photographic specter of the dead body (which is also the past), he is compelled to describe his own afterlife (and his future) as a dead body haunting future generations. In beholding this metaphorical postmortem image he has created, Holgrave experiences Barthes' conceptualization of the future as future death. In other words, Holgrave seems to suffer from Barthes' "vertigo of time defeated": "By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What pricks me is the discovery of this equivalence. [. . .] Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. [. . .] there is always a defeat of Time in them: that is dead and that is going to die."[120] This metaphorical postmortem image (that holds the man, the image of the man, and "Death") later manifests itself in the actual postmortem daguerreotype Holgrave creates of the Judge. It is this daguerreotype, and the death scene it represents, that concerns the rest of this

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[120] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 97.

chapter.

The Postmortem Photographic Process and Aesthetic in "Governor Pyncheon"

Perhaps the most striking similarity between the old Colonel and Judge Pyncheon is in the physical circumstances of their deaths—they both die in the same house, in the same position, in the same chair, underneath the same painting (of the Colonel), of the same cause, blood running from both their mouths. The scene of Judge Pyncheon's death is self-contained within a chapter titled "Governor Pyncheon," which takes place after the Judge has died but before he has been found.[121] My analysis of the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter is comprised of two parts. In this section, I argue that "Governor Pyncheon" models both the photographic process and aesthetics of a postmortem photograph; indeed, the very scene described in the chapter later appears as an actual postmortem daguerreotype. If the death scene in the chapter models the Judge's postmortem daguerreotype, then the narrator's description of that scene here encapsulates the temporality of viewing a postmortem photograph. The last section takes up this point, suggesting that in "Governor Pyncheon," this temporality is that of Barthes' anterior future.

We begin with my first point: the description of the dead Judge in the "Governor Pyncheon" models both the aesthetics as well as the photographic process of a postmortem photograph. The chapter begins with the Judge sitting motionless in a chair. Introducing the scene, the narrator seems to be unaware (or unwilling to admit)

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[121] The title of the chapter—"Governor," not "Judge"—is an ironic reference to the Judge's doomed aspirations for a future in politics.

that the Judge is dead; he merely comments that the Judge "still sits in the old parlor, keeping house." The narrator's fixation on specific details about the Judge's physical presence is suggestive of both the appearance and the creative process of a postmortem photograph, a continuation of the Judge-as-Past-as-Image-as-Death metaphor that Holgrave constructed in "The Daguerreotypist." The narrator tells us he "has not shifted his position for a long while now. He has not stirred hand or foot, nor withdrawn his eyes so much as a hair's-breadth from their fixed gaze towards the corner of the room."[122] His upright position and pose, for example, mirrors the aesthetic treatment of the body in some postmortem photographs of the nineteenth century.

The narrator notes that the Judge sits upright, not in a position suggestive of peaceful repose. Even though the death-as-sleep tradition in postmortem photographs was the most common,[123] other treatments emerged that presented the deceased in a variety of more active poses, such as "sitting upright in a chair, a pose that is more suggestive of wakefulness and activity rather than recumbency and sleep."[124] For André-Adolphe Eugène Disdéri, a daguerreotypist in 1850s Paris, an upright position was vital

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[122] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 270.

[123] Because the primary purpose of memorial photographs was, broadly speaking, for the viewing and comfort of the bereaved, posthumous portraiture often presented the body of the deceased in various poses and settings that suggested peaceful repose: eyes closed, expression relaxed and gentle, and the hands and limbs arranged in as natural a position as possible. The images were meant to suggest sleep, not death, whenever possible.

[124] The variety of aesthetic treatments of the deceased may speak to the pragmatic concerns of photographing a dead body—in cases where the body was wasted, appeared to have suffered, or the face was unrecognizable or otherwise unpleasant, the photographer is unlikely to have attempted opening the eyes. Preparing, posing, and photographing the dead body required delicate skill, and daguerreotypists offered pragmatic, detailed advice for others in the trade. Audrey Linkman notes that in some cases, the operator's fear of contagion or the presence of unsightly visual markers of disease or death may have dictated the pose (Linkman, *Photography and Death,* 24–27, 29).

to achieving a lifelike portrait of the dead:

> Each time we have been asked to make a portrait after death, we have dressed the dead person in the clothes he normally wore when alive. We have recommended that the eyes are left open, we have seated him near a table, and in order to perform this work, we have waited seven or eight hours. In this way we have been able to seize the moment when the final contortions have disappeared and we have been able to reproduce an appearance of life.[125]

It is as though the narrator has walked in on the kind of scene Disdéri describes—a man with a peculiar rigidity and "fixed gaze," seated near a table in his usual clothing, eyes wide open. As Disdéri's account suggests, nineteenth-century postmortem photography very often portrayed the subject in their home, dressed (like the Judge) in their regular, daytime clothing and surrounded by their everyday objects.[126] He holds a watch, redolent of the clocks set to the hour of death that would sometimes appear in postmortem photographs as a symbolic cue.[127]

The Judge's open eyes, in particular, appear several times in the chapter. As Disdéri indicates, in many postmortem photographs meant to indicate wakefulness, the eyes warranted special attention. One specialist described physically opening the eyes as an important point of the process, which a photographer could "effect handily by using the handle of a teaspoon; put the lower lids down, they will stay; but the upper lids must be pushed far enough up, so that they will stay open to about the natural width, turn the

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[125] André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, *Renseignements photographiques indispensables à tous* (Paris, 1855), quoted in Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 29.
[126] Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 34, 46.
[127] Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 12.

eyeball around to its proper place, and you have the face nearly as natural as life," though these actions may not resolve the "blank expression and stare of the eyes."[128] The Judge shares this blank expression, a "fixed gaze" turned towards the corner of the room. The narrator attempts to rationalize the scene; the Judge sits upright, not moving—perhaps he is asleep. But "the Judge cannot be asleep," the narrator reasons: "His eyes are open!"[129] If not asleep, then, why such a "fixed gaze?" Cataloguing each detail of the Judge's position and appearance—details that indicate both life and death, alertness and rigid stillness—the narrator oscillates between a creeping, horrified awareness of the truth and a reluctance to admit that the subject is dead. This oscillation mimics, perhaps, the effect of the death-as-sleep euphemism of so many postmortem portraits.[130]

As these details evoke the aesthetic effect of a postmortem daguerreotype, the narrator's fixation on light (and especially how it illuminates the face) is also suggestive of the process of postmortem photography. As twilight falls, the narrator fastidiously records the effect of light and shadow on the visual appearance of shapes: "the shadows of the tall furniture grow deeper, and at first become more definite; then, spreading wider, they lose their distinctness of outline in the dark, gray tide of oblivion." Light was, of course, a major concern of any daguerreotypist, but particularly for the photographer taking a postmortem portrait, because the majority of postmortem

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[128] Charles E. Orr, "Post-Mortem Photography," 200–201.
[129] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 273.
[130] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 283. Photographers recognized the disingenuousness of this approach; one wrote that photographing the dead as though asleep "adds another to the chapter of lies; but who can blame the perpetrator? Ought he not rather to be blamed if he revealed the horrible truth, which with every fond look would tear open the wound of despair, which by other means has passed into the healing state of resignation?" (quoted in Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 22).

portraits took place inside the home where the rooms were not designed (as a studio would be) for optimal lighting.[131] Daguerreotypists were skilled in carefully assessing a room's lighting to determine how the lighting fell on the deceased subject. Audrey Linkman notes that "factors such as the number and positioning of windows in the room, the state of the weather, the season of the year and the time of day could all affect the outcome" of the postmortem daguerreotype, so achieving the best lighting of the subject in challenging conditions "was one area of post-mortem practice where advice was plentiful."[132] Many recommended using mirrors and reflectors or "white sheets of cardboard," for example, to optimize the room's natural light, or carefully positioning the subject in front of a window.

The narrator's account in "Governor Pyncheon" demonstrates this fastidious attentiveness to how light affects Judge Pyncheon's appearance, particularly his face—a concern daguerreotypists of the time shared. J. M. Houghton's 1869 account of creating a postmortem daguerreotype in challenging indoor conditions describes this concern, as well as anxiety about insufficient light in general:

> I selected a room where the sunlight could be admitted, and placed the subject near a window, and a white reflecting screen on the shade side of the face. As usual, the reflection from the screen was insufficient to equalize the light upon the subject, so I caused a pretty strong light to be

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[131] Studios often installed special windows and skylights just for this purpose. One daguerreotypist's 1850 advertisement for his studio illustrates how this was a necessary and competitive advantage, as it meant customers could solicit a daguerreotype even on a cloudy day: "[he] has recently fitted up one of the best arranged Skylights in the city, which in addition to other improvements, together with his long experience in the art, enables him to take likenesses an any kind of weather as faithful as one's own image can be reflected in a mirror" (Samuel N. Rice, "Somethin New!").
[132] Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 50.

> thrown against the screen with a mirror, which caused an equal play of light upon the face, and an excellent negative was obtained without flatness.[133]

Audrey Linkman notes that "the lighting of the face constituted the most important element" of the postmortem portrait since, as one daguerreotypist said, "the hardness and rigidity of the features after death must be obviated by judicious lighting."[134]

Though a faint light still filters through the window, the narrator's anxieties about the disappearing light are palpable, and he notes its effect on the face of the dead subject: "Has it [the light] yet vanished? No!—yes!—not quite! And there is still the swarthy whiteness [. . .] the swarthy whiteness of Judge Pyncheon's face. The features are all gone; there is only the paleness of them left. And how looks it now? There is no window! There is no face! An infinite, inscrutable blackness has annihilated sight!"[135] While a daguerreotypist could create a postmortem photograph in lower lighting by increasing the exposure time (a method made possible by the absolute stillness of the subject), an utter lack of light would "annihilate" the opportunity to create a photographic image, especially if the "swarthy whiteness" of the face could no longer be seen.[136] The odd, paradoxical phrase "swarthy whiteness" is difficult to visualize, unless it implies the inverse positive-negative images contained within the daguerreotype—a face would be both too "swarthy" (a dark, grey-black) at one angle, and too pale (a ghostly, unnatural white) in another.

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[133] J. M. Houghton, "Correspondence," 56–57.
[134] Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 51; Barnes, "Post-Mortem Photography," 26–27.
[135] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 276.
[136] In *The Philadelphia Photographer* in 1873, Charles E. Orr went so far as to say that the face was "the only part required" for a postmortem portrait (quoted in Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 23–24).

But the narrator recants, hopeful—there *is* some light in the room. This light, as the narrator describes it, seems to act of its own accord, seeking out the dead body. The moonbeams fall through the window to "play over the Judge's figure," and the starlight "illuminate[s] the Judge's face [. . .] oftener than any other object" in the room. Whether we are to believe the light of celestial bodies is capable of such direction (or is perhaps manipulated by Holgrave the daguerreotypist), the imagery evokes the manufactured illumination of the dead subject in a low-lit room. With mirror and white surfaces, as Linkman and daguerreotypists' written accounts suggest, the face could be artificially illuminated more than "any other object" in an ill-lit room.

The narrator's fixation on and description of light is suggestive not only of a daguerreotypist's necessary attention to and manipulation of light, but also to the vital role of light in the delicate chemical reactions of the photographic process. The process of creating a daguerreotype started with plates covered in a thin layer of silver, which were then polished, sensitized with iodine vapor, and then protected from light. When ready for use, it was placed in the camera and exposed to the light of the photographed scene/subject. Following exposure, the image was latent—in other words, no visible changes could be detected. The plate was then developed with mercury vapor so that "the specks of metallic silver constituting the latent image were amplified to visible size," revealing the latent image.[137] After exposure and development with mercury, the image was then fixed to ensure that the surface retained the present image and did not continue to react to light. In the fixing process, daguerreotypists poured a salt solution

[137] A. Swan, C. E. Fiori, and K. F. J. Heinrich, "Daguerreotypes," 413, 414. If we correlate the narration of the Judge's image to stages of the daguerreotype process, perhaps this moment, when the latent image of the plate has not yet been exposed or fixed by "the solvent," occurs when the narrator laments, "There is no window! There is no face!"

of sodium thiosulfate over the plate to dissolve the unexposed silver halide layer, then rinsed it with distilled water.[138] Finally, the image was gilded or toned in a solution of gold chloride and sodium thiosulfate, which deepened and warmed the shadows, and brightened the lights.

Light, of course, played an integral role in the chemical process that directly affected the quality of the image. If the light conditions were not calibrated to exposure time, for example, the image could become be underexposed, or overexposed so that the features lacked contrast, "only the paleness of them left." Despite the deepening shadow, the narrator notes that "the Judge's face, indeed, rigid, and singularly white, refuses to melt in this universal solvent."[139] The reference to a "solvent" here, especially in reference to light and darkness and the permanence of an image (the face), is suggestive of the stage in the process in which the image was fixed permanently by bathing in a solution that dissolved the unexposed silver halide layer. The solvent would not "melt" the image, but would rather fix the exposed image, ensuring that the photosensitive plate no longer reacted to light—just as the Judge's face here "refuses" to melt, remaining "singularly white." The chapter closes with the return to full sunlight—the dead Judge "receive[s] the early sunbeams on his brow," and his image, now fixed and no longer photosensitive, is complete. "Rise up, Judge Pyncheon!" the narrator exclaims. "The morning sunshine glimmers through the foliage, and, beautiful and holy as it is, shuns not to kindle up your face."[140]

In tracing the aesthetics and process of the postmortem daguerreotype in the

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[138] Swan, Fiori, and Heinrich, "Daguerreotypes," 415.
[139] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables,* 276.
[140] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 283.

chapter's imagery of the Judge, one interpretive distinction I would like to clarify here is the extent to which I correlate the chapter *itself* to the actual photographic image. Marcy J. Dinius goes so far as to say the chapter *is* "the romantic equivalent of a daguerreian portrait," an inspired reading that she admits is "rather aggressive" and, I would add, rather sidesteps the complex roles of the narrator and the reader.[141] I argue that "Governor Pyncheon" distinctly models the photographic process and aesthetics of a postmortem photograph, and the fact that the very scene described here later appears as an actual postmortem daguerreotype strengthens this reading. But even as I read the chapter as a "model" of these processes, I hope to avoid the prescriptive equivalence of text and image, in which each facet of the chapter must be pinned down to a photographic counterpart. It is more productive, I would suggest, to differentiate between "the chapter" proper and the *scene* the chapter describes. It is not the *chapter* that "is" the daguerreotype, as Dinius suggests, but the *scene* the chapter describes that is the daguerreotype. Put another way, the chapter describes a daguerreotype, but is not *itself* a textual daguerreotype. Such a distinction may seem merely semantic, but it is vital. This distinction means that the chapter is the *narration of the temporal experience of viewing a photograph,* not a textual inscription of the photograph itself.

In other words, the scene the chapter describes is modeled on a postmortem

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[141] Dinius, *The Camera and the Press*, 50. If the chapter *is* a photograph, as Dinius suggests, the gnarled nexus of narrator-reader-viewer must be addressed—if the character *is* a photograph, is the narrator the photographer, the viewer, or some kind of "voice" of the image (or the subject) itself? And what of the reader (viewer?), who can only access the image through the filtered subjectivity of the narrator? Is it the photograph "narrating," then? And to what extent is this "narration" subjective or objective, in Dinius's construction of the terms? Because her project is more interested in the way the chapter's blend of subjectivity and objectivity informs the Hawthornean "romance," Dinius's reading does not satisfy these questions.

daguerreotype, but through the narrator's telling the chapter creates the temporal experience of viewing such an image. The *scene* is the daguerreotype, but the chapter itself is the narrator's experience of that scene. This reading helps make sense of the intrusive way the narrator ironically plays with, responds to, and mediates time, as the next section will take up. But more importantly, it elucidates how the chapter encodes the process and aesthetics of a postmortem daguerreotype not only to evoke the image itself, but also to catalogue the experienced temporality of postmortem daguerreotypes. After all, when Phoebe finally views the daguerreotype of the dead Judge, she does not comment on the image itself, but inscribes her own existential temporal experience in her utterance: "this is Death!"[142]

This brings me to an analysis of the narrativized temporal experience. *Seven Gables* breaks through the *studium* of its narrative in the temporality of this chapter, which powerfully evokes and then scrutinizes the experience of viewing a postmortem photograph. Ultimately, I suggest that the chapter's temporal aberrations, which we encounter through the narrated experience of "viewing," expands to reframe the novel within Barthes' "anterior future," the anxiety of a death that *will be* and *has not yet happened*. This anterior future is echoed in this chapter, in the previously described cyclical, genealogical temporality of the novel, and, finally, in Holgrave's postmortem daguerreotype.

"A matter of no moment": Reading the *Punctum* in "Governor Pyncheon"

In *Camera Lucida* (1981), Roland Barthes famously theorizes two elements of

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[142] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 302.

the photographic image: the *studium* and the *punctum*. The *studium*, he suggests, is the "*average* affect" of the photograph, the understanding that arises in the viewer from the cultural or historical context of the photograph. Characterized by a conventional, "vague, slippery, irresponsible interest," the *studium* might allow the viewer to "receive [photographs] as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes," but, Barthes says, this arouses nothing more than a civil, "docile interest" in the photograph.[143] Yet some viewers will find in the photograph, coexisting along with the *studium* but ultimately disrupting it, something he calls the *punctum*: the piercing, lighting strike of recognition, pain, or joy inhabiting a detail of the photograph that pricks or punctures the viewer's consciousness. Where the *punctum* is a sharp flash of uncoded, immediate, intense, understanding, the *studium* is banal and vague.[144] Importantly, the *punctum* wields considerable power over the *studium*: the power to pierce, disrupt, and powerfully alter or rewrite the photographic image, superseding, reframing, or perhaps destroying the *studium* in the viewer's understanding. "However lightning-like it may be," the *punctum* alters the entire photograph through its "metonymic" powers of expansion. It may transport the viewer in time, so that a detail comes to signify an entire subjective past, or, in "another (less Proustian) expansion of the *punctum*," it expands to "fill the whole picture."[145]

Most theorists and scholars only refer to Barthes's *punctum* as a particular visual detail; here, I take up Barthes's concept of a *temporal punctum*, which is a different concept. *Punctum*-as-detail is the first conceptualization of *punctum* that Barthes offers

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[143] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26–28.
[144] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 48.
[145] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 42–45.

in *Camera Lucida*, and in scholarship this is often the only meaning attached to the term. But Barthes also adds a second "*punctum* besides the 'detail'" that addresses the temporal experience of view the photograph.[146] "This new *punctum*" that he recognizes "is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ("*that-has-been*"), its pure representation." "By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist)," writes Barthes, "the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence."[147] The *prick* arises from the temporal punctum.

In a photograph of a man about to be executed, for example, the temporal *punctum* is not one single detail (as in the previous form of "punctum") but the representational paradox of Time within the photographed moment, the "anterior future" of a death that simultaneously *will be* and *has not yet happened*. But, as Sandra Plummer argues, the temporal punctum as experienced in the anterior future of death is not unique to photographs of an immediately impending death, the moments before execution. "For Barthes *all* photographs present the future death of the sitter. It is the knowledge of the future of this photograph–of the imminent death of the young subject that introduces poignancy to the image: time here becomes a lacerating punctum."[148]

While Barthes theorized these elements within the photographic image, the temporal *punctum* can be productively applied as a means of isolating and dilating narrative moments that are somehow at odds with the progression of narrative, rupturing and disrupting the *studium* of the story. Addressing a narrative moment as *punctum* might shed light on its radical capability to create an ideological rupture in the

[146] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.
[147] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.
[148] Sandra Plummer, "Photography and Duration."

text; to pierce, transcend, reframe, or transform the narrative; or to metonymically signify the (impossible) simultaneous past (*this-has-been*), present (*this-is*), and future (*this-will-be*) of narrative time.

The start of the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter marks a concrete narrative aberration, an abrupt shift from the past tense of the novel into present tense: "Judge Pyncheon [. . .] still sits in the old parlor, keeping house."[149] The narrator, who so far has been retelling events from his past, now simulates re-witnessing the scene in the present. He relays the Judge's appearance as though he is somehow oblivious to its implication or import—in short, as though he is not aware he is dead (even though, as the beginning of the novel explains, the narrator has known the characters' fates from the beginning). The narrator openly attempts to reason out Judge Pyncheon's puzzling behavior, addressing the reader: "You must hold your own breath to satisfy yourself whether he breathes at all. It is quite inaudible. [. . .] A most refreshing slumber, doubtless!" Having just reassured himself the Judge is merely sleeping (so deeply we can't hear him breathe), in the next line, the narrator does a kind of double take: "And yet the Judge cannot be asleep. His eyes are open! [. . .] No, No! Judge Pyncheon cannot be asleep."[150]

If not asleep, the narrator asks himself, why does the Judge linger? Musing on this point, the narrator accentuates the chapter's central preoccupation with time: "It is odd, however, that a gentleman so burthened with engagements—and noted, too, for punctuality—should linger thus." While the watch in the Judge's grasp suggests the potential for the passage of time, we are told it is "clutched in such a manner that you

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[149] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 268.
[150] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 270.

cannot see the dial-plate," stressing the paradoxical coexistence of temporal stasis and flow:

> Is there no other sound? One other, and a fearful one. It is the ticking of the Judge's watch [. . .] this little, quiet, never-ceasing throb of Time's pulse, repeating its small strokes with such busy regularity, in Judge Pyncheon's motionless hand, has an effect of terror, which we do not find in any other accompaniment of the scene.[151]

Even though "this was to have been such a busy day," the narrator sighs, the Judge refuses to move, even to check his watch: the narrator taunts, "Why, Judge, it is already two hours, by your own undeviating chronometer. Glance your eye down at it and see! Ah; he will not give himself the trouble either to bend his head, or elevate his hand, so as to bring the faithful time-keeper within his range of vision!" As though preserved in a photograph, sliced out of the time of his daily life, "Time, all at once, appears to have become a matter of no moment with the Judge!"[152]

Even as the narrative creates this temporal stasis—in which time is frozen, the full reality of the moment suspended—it pushes and pulls the reader across the boundaries of time, borrowing, we might say, the coexistence of past, present, and future from the visual temporality of a daguerreotype portrait. The narrator knows that two hours have passed; and yet the Judge is frozen, his watch's "dial-plate" hidden from both the narrator and the Judge. Later in the chapter, the narrator exclaims in surprise, "Still lingering in his old chair! If the Judge has a little time to throw away, why does not he visit the insurance office, as is his frequent custom, and sit awhile in one of their

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[151] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 277.
[152] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 270–271.

leathern-cushioned arm-chairs?” As if unaware of what has happened, the narrator delays the moment of recognizing the Judge’s death while at the same time hinting obviously at his lifelessness, a tongue-in-cheek tone that heightens the morbid irony. He taunts the Judge, describing a delicious wine at the dinner the Judge is missing at that very moment: “It would all but revive a dead man! Would you like a sip of it now, Judge? Make haste, then! [...] Be present at this dinner!”[153] This push and pull, hinting at the Judge’s lifelessness (his stillness, his open, glassy, staring eyes, “it would revive a dead man!”), yet in the next moment denying this possibility and begging the Judge to “make haste,” dances suggestively around the reality of the narrative moment, rushing toward the present and then receding into the past before calling hysterically upon the future: “Up, therefore, Judge Pyncheon, up! You have lost a day. But tomorrow will be here anon. Will you rise, betimes, and make the most of it? Tomorrow! Tomorrow! Tomorrow!”[154]

The coexistence of stasis and movement is marked out in several visual details: a fly that inches slowly, inexorably, towards the Judge’s open eye; the ticking, “never-ceasing” watch clutched in a “motionless” hand. These eruptions in the narrative, which create an “effect of terror” in its witness, might be said to arise from the clash of temporalities Barthes describes.[155] In the narrator’s viewing experience, we might read the sensation of what Barthes calls the representational paradox of Time within the photographed moment; the “anterior future” of a death that is already in the past, but *has not yet happened*.

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[153] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 271–272.
[154] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 276.
[155] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 277.

One of the key features Barthes identifies in a *punctum* is its ability to alter the entire photograph through its "metonymic" "power of expansion."[156] And the temporality of this *punctum* indeed expands to reframe the entire novel as an "anterior future." The Judge's fate is, as the chapter "The Daguerreotype" makes clear, the reverberation of the Colonel's, a fate that has been preordained both in his life and in the narrative itself. As they have been throughout the entire novel, their fates are visually mirrored in this scene, to the point that the death of one melds imperceptibly with the death of the other. First, the Colonel's portrait (which also looks like the Judge) hangs directly above the dead body, visual evidence and reminder of their sameness. Second, the Judge's death scene echoes, down to the blood running from his mouth, the visual scene of the Colonel's death at the beginning of the narrative. The "Governor Pyncheon" chapter is, in this sense, an image from the past, preserved in the narrative present, and it recalls the cyclical, preordained nature of the curse. For Trachtenberg, this visual, symbolic repetition in the text—in which each image/person is copied and reproduced again and again—signals Hawthorne's understanding of the danger of photography's novel ideology, its ability to incite confusion between copy and original. While Hawthorne may very well have been anxiously cataloging the perils of a new medium, *Seven Gables* nonetheless seems to have lifted a photographic temporality that plays not only with the problem of copy and original, but maps that onto a temporal plane—in which the past original and the future copy exist in a single image, or in the postmortem daguerreotype, the Colonel/Judge/Past/Dead Man stacked metaphor in "The Daguerreotypist," and in the narrated experience captured in the "Governor

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[156] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 45.

Pyncheon" chapter.

In this sense, the Judge has always existed in this photographic temporality—he (as the copy of his ancestor) was always already dead, a ghost existing in the present, heading towards a future both preordained and already in the past. And the chapter itself is a narratological anterior future, a death that is already in the past but is narrated in present tense and relayed as though it has *not* yet happened. The narrator does not acknowledge the Judge's death until two chapters later, when Phoebe is presented with a postmortem daguerreotype Holgrave has made that captures the entire scene. It is from Phoebe that we hear the confirmation of what the narrator has hinted at, yet denied us, for so long: Holgrave shows her the image without telling her what it is, and she shudders, "This is death! [...] Judge Pyncheon dead!" Holgrave responds with an oddly phrased confirmation that emphasizes his role in the representation: "Such as there represented, he sits in the next room."

In Holgrave's reaction to the photograph that follows this exchange, he articulates the visual temporality of an anterior future that the narrator has evoked with his telling. When Holgrave creates the postmortem daguerreotype, it again triggers the "defeat of Time" Barthes describes: he "seemed to feel the whole awfulness of the Judge's death, yet had received the fact into his mind [. . .] as an event preordained, happening inevitably, and so fitting itself into past occurrences that it could almost have been prophesied."[157] Here Holgrave experiences the death in three tenses.[158] The present-tense of his death not only "fit[s] itself into past occurrences," but was already

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[157] Hawthorne, *Seven Gables*, 303.
[158] Holgrave would likely agree with Barthes' statement that "three tenses dizzy my consciousness" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 97).

"preordained" in a manner that suggests Barthes' anterior future. Barthes' reaction to a historical photograph of two young girls, taken while they were living but so long ago that they must now be dead, offers another way of putting it: "They have their whole lives before them; but also they are dead (today), they are then already dead (yesterday)."[159]

The narrative scene of the "Governor Pyncheon" chapter echoes the *punctum* in Barthes' photograph of a dead man yet to die. For this narrator, who has until this moment been narrating past events from the future, *the moment has already happened*—even as his viewing experience is performed in the present for the reader. The narrator describes the temporal experience of viewing the postmortem photograph: the Judge is caught, motionless, in the present tense of the narrative, but had already been dead at the start of the chapter, in fact had been dead long before the narrator sat down to relate his tale—and his death was, in fact, prophesied. The narrator codes this scene as one that evokes the *this-has-been* (past), *this-is* (his narrative present), and *this-will-be* (the realization of his death). The *punctum* that leaps from the narrative instance here—which leaps again, later, in Holgrave's daguerreotype of the Judge's corpse—is photographic temporality itself, Barthes' photographic *noeme,* "Time," marked out in narrative eruption.

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[159] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 97.

Chapter 2

"Dust, perishable as the flesh": Family Photography and Memory in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Old Mortality*

> Maria and Miranda found it impossible to sympathize with those young persons, sitting rather stiffly before the camera, [. . .] but they were drawn and held by the mysterious love of the living, who remembered and cherished these dead. The visible remains were nothing; they were dust, perishable as the flesh; the features stamped on paper and metal were nothing, but their living memory enchanted the little girls.
>
> —Katherine Anne Porter, *Old Mortality*

> Quentin seemed to see them, the four of them arranged [. . .] with formal and lifeless decorum, and seen now as the fading and ancient photograph itself would have been seen enlarged and hung on the wall behind [. . .]—a picture, a group which even to Quentin had a quality strange, contradictory and bizarre; not quite comprehensible, not (even to twenty) quite right—a group the last member of which had been dead twenty-five years and the first, fifty, evoked now out of the airless gloom of a dead house.
>
> —William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

Introduction

These passages narrate family photographs and memory in the language of

decomposition. In the first, the photographs are "remains," "perishable as the flesh," which crumble into "dust," into "nothing." In the second, the family photograph—technically imagined but materializing before Quentin Compson like a vision or a dream, but with "solidity and permanence"—is "lifeless," "fading," long dead and "evoked [. . .] out of the airless gloom of a dead house." That these photograph-corpses evoke the postmortem photograph is not surprising. These two enterprises are linked—much of postmortem photography was, in fact, family photography, and in viewing family photographs, one often encounters the images of now-dead relatives. Both offered viewers an opportunity to record generational bloodlines, enacting a type of familial temporality created in the "temporal continuum" of family photographs passed down through generations.[160] In these passages, whether or not the young characters encountering these family photographs (real and imagined) cherish or mourn the pictured family members is somewhat beside the point—they are nonetheless drawn to them, ensnared in the ritual of viewing, drawn by the "love of the living," the stories the living tell about the dead, and the memories that surround them. Building on the narrative possibilities of the postmortem photograph I explored in the previous chapter,[161] this chapter explores how the cultural practice of family photography influenced literary expressions of family memory, which necessarily include memories of the dead.

Reading Martha Langford's theories on orality and family photography alongside

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[160] Kris Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality,* 44, 60–61.
[161] Brent MacLaine argues that *The House of the Seven Gables*, which I discuss in my previous chapter, is a direct antecedent to "family album novels" (MacLaine, "Photofiction as Family Album," 131, 132). *The House of the Seven Gables* features several images and photographs of the Pyncheon family that, I argue, exemplify a specifically familial type of temporality.

Katherine Anne Porter's *Old Mortality* (1937)[162] and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), I examine how each of these texts investigate the dynamics of family memory and its literary representation through the family photograph and the viewing practices surrounding it. Both works illustrate how the family photograph may have inspired writers to consider the dynamics and forms of memory-making in new ways, specifically the creation of family memory through the viewing experience and its attendant narration, as well as the temporal experience of mnemonic recollection in the medium of the family photograph. From here, we might begin to understand how photography fundamentally altered literary representations of time and memory, and how the complexities of narrating death might be productively filtered through this dialectical system.

Both *Old Mortality* and *Absalom, Absalom!* engage with what Martha Langford calls the "oral-photographic framework" of family photographs. With this phrase, Langford refers not only to the performative oral tradition of telling stories while looking at family photographs but also to the way that "the fabric of memory in oral consciousness" is specifically "*met* in the photographic tradition": "our photographic memories," in other words, "are nested in a performative oral tradition," and oral tradition likewise evokes photographic memories.[163] Faulkner's and Porter's texts, which

[162] Porter's *Old Mortality* was first published in the *Southern Review* in 1937, then collected and published in 1939 in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider: Three Short Novels*, along with *Noon Wine* and the eponymous *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. It was reprinted and made available online in 2016 by *Narrative Magazine*; my citations throughout refer to this version. Porter referred to it as a "short novel," and scholars differ in their terms—some describe it as a novel, others use the term novella, and some (though fewer) refer to it as a long short story. I have chosen "novella," as it seems an appropriate term considering not only the length but also fits the compact, yet extended, narrative arc of the work.
[163] Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, viii.

both center the oral recitation of family legend as a major theme, each investigate the oral-photographic framework of the family photograph as a new way of writing and conceptualizing family memory—especially memories of the dead—as both oral and photographic in its creation and in its temporality.

I begin with a brief history of the advancements in photographic technologies that resulted in an explosion of family photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Advertisements for new snapshot cameras (such as the Kodak Brownie) during this time illustrate not only the ubiquity of the practice but also the way family photography was marketed as a memory keeper, cementing the link between photography and family memory in the public discourse.[164] I then turn to Katherine Anne Porter's *Old Mortality* (1937) and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), teasing out the texts' engagement with "photography as a technology of personal and familial memory," as Marianne Hirsch puts it.[165] In each text, photography mediates family memory of the dead as *Absalom, Absalom!*'s Rosa and Quentin and *Old Mortality*'s Miranda attempt to make sense of (and remember) their pasts, presents, and futures.

"You press the button, we do the rest": Technological Advancements in Family Photography in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

For as long as photography has been available to the general public, people have

[164] As the previous chapter demonstrates, this linkage was not new or unique and predated the invention of snapshot cameras, but advertisements (such as those for Kodak cameras) further contributed to the association.
[165] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 193.

commissioned and collected photographs of family members.[166] In 1849 in *Godey's Lady's Book*, a popular American women's magazine, T. S. Arthur wrote, "It is hard to find the man [. . .] who has not the shadowy faces of his wife and children [. . .] among his household treasures." "From little Bess, the baby, up to great great-grandpa'," Arthur says, "all must now have their likenesses."[167] Arthur's hypothetical family has five generations of family photographs, from the baby to great-great-grandfather—an unlikely scenario in 1849, and one that his readers would have recognized as a humorous hyperbole meant to underscore the ubiquity of the practice. By 1849, obtaining and displaying daguerreotypes of one's family members was not only fashionable, but a "must."

Five years after Arthur's article in *Godey's Lady's Book*, the Parisian daguerreotypist André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri applied the albumen print method (invented earlier in 1847) to patent the *carte de visite*, a technological innovation that spurred the practice of family photography. While the daguerreotype and other photographic technologies like the calotype and tintype had already offered opportunities to obtain photographic likenesses of family members, and certainly laid

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[166] From the start of the daguerreotype's invention and circulation, the family was a common subject. The methods, frequency, and experience of taking and collecting family likenesses underwent radical change after the invention of photography, but the practice of collecting family memorabilia and creating a visual family record preceded the invention of photography. In her 2010 history of the American photographic album, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, Elizabeth Siegel suggests that the family photo album is an extension of the practice of recording names, dates, and events in the family Bible to be passed on to future generations, who would continue the record (Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 122). Langford suggests that the concept of the album originally had nothing to do with images: "*the album* was known in the seventeenth century as the repository of autographs" (Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 23). The practice of recording familial likenesses through non-photographic portraiture also, of course, has a long, well-known history.

[167] T. S. Arthur, "American Characteristics," 352.

the foundation for the practice, Siegel points to the popularization and collection of *cartes de visites* in the early 1860s as the moment that the family album and family photography became popularized as a feature in the social and domestic lives of middle-class and upper-class Americans alike. An albumen print on paper mounted on cardboard, the *carte de visite* was, compared to previous print processes, relatively inexpensive, reproducible, and more durable.[168] This meant it could be more easily transported and handled, given to friends and family, or enclosed in a photographic album or box of mementos without fear of damaging the image's delicate surface.[169] As it became easier and cheaper to obtain photographs for personal use and exchange, family photographs became more numerous—so numerous that a family might amass images of multiple generations to display on a wall, or enough to collect in an album. Andrew Wynter wrote in the British magazine *Once a Week* in 1862 that the *carte de visite* "enables every one to possess a picture-gallery of those he cares about, as well as those he does not."[170]

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[168] Like most iterative technologies, each wave of innovation in photographic technology did not directly replace the one before it—they overlapped as the popularity and availability of each waxed and waned. (See the Library of Congress, "Popular Photographic Print Processes," which visualizes the chronological popularity of 13 common photographic processes as a colored spectrum, not a timeline.) Albumen prints eventually became the most common type of photographic print made during the nineteenth century, thanks in part to the *cartes de visites*, and other print processes became less common or less fashionable. In 1861, at least, the *American Journal of Photography* reported that "card photographs" were "now the height of fashion," and the demand was apparently "so great that a prominent New York gallery was at least a week behind in orders" (qtd. in Elizabeth Siegel, *Gallery of Friendship and Fame*, 25).
[169] As I review in chapter one, the daguerreotype required a protective case, since its surface could be scratched, and heavier, as it was developed on a metal plate. In contrast, the *carte de visite* did not require a frame and could be safely touched.
[170] Andrew Wynter, "Cartes de Visite," 136. Although it does not directly apply to the practice of private family photography, an important innovative feature of the *cartes de visites* was that it could be reproduced on a large scale. With the droll "and those he does not," Wynter refers to the widespread practice of collecting mass-produced *cartes*

Cartes de visites and cabinet cards,[171] which became popular in the 1870s, enabled families to obtain, collect, share, and pass down family photographs in large enough numbers to require an album. Langford explains that, in practical terms, the *carte de visite* album was an attempt to offer the consumer a handy place to store their collection, and "as the studios began to offer larger pictures—the cabinet cards that emerged in the 1860s—albums would be designed to hold the different sizes in pleasing and varied arrangements."[172] A family's photographic collection in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have likely included a mixture of these photographic technologies: as Martha Langford puts it, "Great-grandfather's portrait, the daguerreotype, was the tradesman's heirloom; Grandmother's album of cartes-de-visite was her proof of connection to the famous and the dead."[173]

Family photography, and the practice of keeping family photographs, underwent another major shift with the introduction of George Eastman's box-type Kodak camera in 1888. Loaded with a roll of film and featuring the enticing slogan, "You press the button, we do the rest," the first Kodak camera provided a simpler alternative to the more complex wet-plate or dry-plate development processes and was designed to enable amateur photographers to take pictures. The public interest and uptake of these early

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de visites of public figures, such as royalty, politicians, celebrities, and other well-known people or individuals deemed to be of interest to the public. For more on the practice of collecting *cartes de visites* as an early form of celebrity culture, see John Plunkett, "Celebrity and Community"; and Rachel Teukolsky, "Cartomania." For an important discussion of the commodification and fetishization of visual difference and race in the production and collection of *cartes*, see Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*.

[171] Cabinet cards were also usually albumen prints, but they were larger. *Cartes de visites* were 2.5 x 4.5 inches; the mounting card of the cabinet card measured about 4.25 x 6.5 inches (Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 82).

[172] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 23.

[173] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, vii.

Kodak cameras were slow, as they were cost-prohibitive ($25 in 1889)[174] and, apparently, more difficult to use than the advertisements let on. But when the Kodak Brownie arrived on the scene in 1900, it took off. The Brownie was cheaper,[175] featured a new and better type of film,[176] and the controls (especially the shutter) were less faulty and simpler to use. Ten million Brownie units sold in the five years following its release in 1900.[177]

By 1938, family photography was such a commonplace practice that Robert Taft, writing in his history of American photography, expressed surprise that no historian had yet "described the origin of the ubiquitous family album." By way of illustrating the prevalence of the family album, he describes the ritual of viewing the photographs. His tone suggests he is certain his readers have experienced similar situations:

> How many a bashful beau has had his pangs of embarrassment eased by the relieving words, "Let's look at the pictures in the album!" How many an unsuspecting swain has had his likeness examined by ardent eyes that to him were forever unknown! How many a tear-stained mother has leafed through an album until she reached a well-worn page and there gazed on

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[174] Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company, "The Kodak Camera" (print advertisement), 1889, George Eastman Museum.
[175] In 1900, the Brownie is advertised at $1.00, or $2.00 including the cartridges and "developing and printing outfit" (Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company, "The Kodak Camera" (print advertisement), 1889, George Eastman Museum).
[176] The first Kodak camera used spools of paper film coated with a silver bromide emulsion. To create photographic prints from the paper film, the "image-bearing layer" (the emulsion) had to be stripped from its paper support, then transferred to a clear sheet of gelatin and overcoated with collodion to create a negative, from which prints could be produced. With the Brownie, Eastman released a new type of flexible roll film created by "coating gelatin-stabilized silver halide on a flexible support" of thin celluloid—a process that is still used to produce rolls of film today (James Reynolds, "George Eastman, Kodak, and the Birth of Consumer Photography").
[177] Eaton Lothrop, "The Brownie Camera," 2.

> the one whose presence was still insured by the blessed bit of cardboard! How many a tottering warrior has renewed the spirit of his youth, and relived his vigorous past by still other bits of cardboard and paper! How many a grandchild of such a warrior has been seized with sudden and uncontrollable mirth when carelessly thumbing its thick pages![178]

Taft's colorful vignette underscores the ritual of viewing the photographs: the physical materials—the "well-worn page," "bits of cardboard and paper," "thick page"—are transformed and made meaningful by the viewer's look and touch. While not all family photographs were collected in an album—many were displayed in drawing rooms, on walls, or collected in boxes along with mementos—Taft's description of the "ubiquitous" family album indicates that by 1939, most American families would have had multigenerational collections of family photos, and would likely have viewed them often, whether they were displayed within an album or throughout the home.[179]

Kodak Culture: Family Photography as a Site of Memory

As technological innovations reduced financial and regional barriers to

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[178] Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 138.

[179] Some projects that consider family photography (Martha Langford's *Suspended Conversations*, Elizabeth Siegel's *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, and the essays of Patricia Holland's and Jo Spence's *Family Snaps*) choose to study family albums specifically, as a distinctive, bound, physical object. My work draws often from such studies, as the family album was undeniably integral to the general practice of family photography, but I am also interested in family "albums" that extend beyond the traditional bound object (boxes of mementos, displays in the home, and so on). Langford traces the more general sense of "the album" through the collection of mementos—which may include photographs, but also other artifacts, such as clothing or locks of hair—that were not necessarily collected in an album. Following Langford, this chapter considers family photographs more generally, and therefore includes photographs that were shared and viewed outside the pages of an album.

photography, the development and marketization of photography as a means of creating and documenting one's own life narrative cemented the practice as a widespread and customary cultural phenomenon. Marketing campaigns of cameras at the time, such as the Kodak camera, often linked photography with concepts like family, memory, and biography.[180]

Advertisements of the Kodak Brownie did not immediately associate the camera with memory; an early print advertisement for the Brownie in 1900 assures the reader that it can be "Operated by any School Boy or Girl," with an accompanying illustration that shows two children atop a larger-than-life Brownie, preparing it for a photograph. The ad also touts the camera's sturdy construction and accompanying "forty-four page booklet giving full directions for operating the camera, together with chapters on 'Snap-Shots,' 'Time Exposures,' 'Flash Lights,' 'Developing,' and 'Printing.'"[181] (The "school boys and girls," it would seem, are in for a forty-four-page treat.) But this more practical advertising approach eventually gave way to more emotional appeals. In his assessment of Eastman Kodak's mass-marketing efforts in the nineteenth century, James Paster argues that while the company initially attempted to entice users with the camera's specifications, emphasizing its simplicity and speed (as the 1900 ad demonstrates), Kodak's advertisements soon shifted away from the technological aspects and instead began highlighting familiar associations between photography and family memory.

Kodak advertisements in the George Eastman Museum's digital collections often

[180] This was certainly not the first time that photography and photographic technologies had ever been marketed this way; the marketing strategy for postmortem photography, for example, revolved entirely around family and memory.
[181] Eastman Kodak Company, "Kodak advertisement for the Brownie Camera," 1900, George Eastman Museum.

depict images of families with children, demonstrating what Gil Pasternak called “a public discourse” in Kodak advertisements that “portrayed the occasion of picture taking as a routine activity in the photographable spectrum of lived experience.”[182] One advertisement (figure 2) for Kodak and Brownie cameras from around 1920 features a photograph of a young girl in casual attire, the side of a building directly behind her, presumably the siding of her house. The staging is intimate, taken at a short distance—"this is the type of photograph you could take of your own children,” it seems to say. “After all,” it begins, as though in the middle of a longer conversation about photography, “pictures of the children, just every day pictures in and about the home are the ones we care for most.”[183]

[182] Gil Pasternak, “Taking Snapshots, Living the Picture,” 431.
[183] Eastman Kodak Company, “Advertisement for Kodak and Brownie Cameras,” c. 1920, George Eastman Museum, https://collections.eastman.org/objects/335269/advertisement-for-kodak-and-brownie-cameras.

Figure 2. Eastman Kodak Company, “Advertisement for Kodak and Brownie Cameras” (ca. 1920). George Eastman Museum, https://collections.eastman.org/objects/335269/advertisement-for-kodak-and-brownie-cameras.

In such advertisements, Kodak posits its cameras as everyday instruments of domestic life, as in figure 2, and/or as memory makers, as in a 1922 Christmas advertisement (figure 3), which models the act of taking the photograph itself. These ads suggest the snapshot is a memory, or the camera is a storyteller: a recurring line in these ads is “Let Kodak tell the story,” “Let Kodak keep the story,” or as in figure 3, “Keep Christmas with

a Kodak," casting the camera as an "autonomous, one-eyed witness."[184] Ultimately, Paster argues, these ads attempt to emphasize "photography's ability to 'capture' time and extend the experience of the moment," such as Christmas memories with the family—"little Jane," "mother," "father," and "Uncle Stan."[185] The photograph is both routine ("every day") and a precious tool for recording a moment of time, two concepts that, Kodak argues, make it ideal for recording and creating the family image.

[184] Pasternak, "Taking Snapshots, Living the Picture," 431.
[185] James Paster, "Advertising Immortality by Kodak," 138.

Figure 3. Eastman Kodak Company, "Advertisement for Autographic Kodak Camera" (December 1922). Print advertisement. George Eastman Museum, https://collections.eastman.org/objects/312658/advertisement-for-autographic-kodak-camera.

A 1920 print ad (figure 4)—not from Kodak, but Ansco, a competing camera manufacturer—emphasizes the camera's multigenerational appeal while also directly

tying the family album, and the practice of regularly viewing it, to the access and preservation of family memory. In the illustration that precedes a short textual description of the camera, a young woman and an older relative, presumably a mother or grandmother, gaze at a family album in a domestic setting. The illustration features the caption, “Keep the Doors of Memory Open with an Ansco”; below the caption, this sentiment continues in a smaller type: “The love of pictures lives in every heart—the desire to perpetuate in memory the dear days that are gone.”

Figure 4. “Keep the Doors of Memory Open with an Ansco” (1920). Print advertisement. Published in vol. 34 of *The American Annual of Photography* (New York: Federal Printing Co.), edited by Percy Y. Howe, p. 1.

This advertisement implies the two women are not simply viewing photographs, but, through the viewing experience, they are also remembering. In the act of remembrance, they are accessing, and thereby safeguarding, family memory itself. That the older

woman touches the album page suggests her position as storyteller or narrator, a traditional elder-youth generational relationship we'll see borne out in both *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Old Mortality*. Family photographs are the "open doors" through which "memory" can be found—and retold.

Advertisements like these created a "Kodak culture," the term anthropologist Richard Chalfen coined to describe the period following the release of cameras like the Kodak Brownie that allowed amateur photography, especially family photography outside the photographer's studio, to blossom.[186] I draw on Chalfen here to underscore that these photographic technologies attended a real cultural shift: because "Kodak culture," Chalfen contends, "provides a structured and patterned way of looking at the world in terms of reality construction and interpretation,"[187] it was changing the nature of oral and written traditions so that "memory [was] being aided and reorganized in new ways."[188] Photography's relationship to memory, to time, and to family narratives are, of course, much more layered and complex than these Kodak and Ansco advertisements allow. But ads like these demonstrate the explicit links between photography and family memory that abounded in the general cultural discourse, and they highlight the way photography was overtly promoted as a vital mechanism in creating, maintaining, and accessing family memory. In this milieu, authors of the era turned to narrative to explore, and complicate, these circulating ideas about memory and the family photograph.

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[186] This "culture" was not limited to the Kodak brand and, of course, extends today.
[187] Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 10.
[188] Chalfen, *Turning Leaves*, 4.

Narrating the Family Photograph: The Oral-Photographic Framework

How might we conceptualize the relationship between memory and family photography, then? There are multiple, overlapping relationships between the two, and the answer, of course, is that it depends. It depends on the photograph and the conditions of its reception—the image's original context, the subject, the viewer, the viewer's context, and so on. Family photographs are defined as such by their position within the collective framework of the family, after all; a photograph of a single person, for example, is not usually legible as a *family* photograph unless it is presented within the context of the album or viewed by another family member.[189] It also depends on how we define *memory*, and photography's relation to it.

Marita Sturken notes in her consideration of memorial photographs that "while [a] photograph may be perceived as a container for memory, it is not inhabited by memory so much as it produces it; it is a mechanism through which the past can be constructed and situated in the present."[190] Sturken's use of the word "produces" suggests an active creation of memory, a process beyond simple recall. Patricia Holland agrees with Sturken when she notes that the *family* photograph in particular "challenges any simple concept of memory," because it

> can operate at this junction between personal memory and social history, between public myth and personal unconscious. Our memory is never fully

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[189] Though the texts I consider here center biologically related families, and the family photographs therein are defined as such by the biological relationship of the viewers to the members depicted, family photography can include non-biologically related individuals. The concept of "family" in the family photograph, Hirsch argues, is defined simply as "what we think of as our families," which often extends beyond biology (Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 11).
[190] Marita Sturken, "The Image as Memorial," 178.

> "ours," nor are the pictures ever unmediated representations of our past. Looking at them we both construct a fantastic past and set out on a detective trail to find other versions of a "real" one.[191]

In this conceptualization, the photograph is not just a mnemonic device that spurs an interior experience of recollection. An image of a family event, for example, doesn't just function as a reminder of that event; it "produces" memory in a generative way, not only as it is received by the individual viewer but also as it is mediated by the social history and public myth of the family.

For the purposes of this chapter, I choose to focus on two mechanisms of memory production through the family photograph: the first mechanism is that of remembering as an act of recollection; the second is remembering as an act of articulation. Recollection involves retrieval, connection, a response to a mnemonic stimulus; it is the moment a memory bursts into the individual mind. Articulation involves narrating, sharing, or relating a memory. Recollection and articulation are not mutually exclusive acts, and because memory is not *fact*, both involve imagination and creation. Family photographs can both spur a recollection and also contribute to the collective family memory through the articulation it inspires; and even recollection alone is never just the simple recall of reality; it is always transformative, and therefore creative. In *Old Mortality* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, memory can be both internal recollection and external articulation; the act of recollection can occur at the same moment of articulation.

In addition to its generative qualities, family memory as an act of articulation also

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[191] Patricia Holland, *History, Memory, and the Family Album*, 14.

encompasses an intrinsic element of the family photograph: orality. Family photographs are intertwined with the "performative oral tradition" surrounding them—the repetitive telling and retelling of family stories that accompanies the family photograph viewing experience.[192] This oral tradition accompanies the viewing of family photographs, in practice—we tell stories about family photographs as we view them—which creates the opportunity for word and image to interact. But the link between orality and family photography goes beyond the fact that the two often go together in the living room. Langford argues that orality and photography are linked in their temporality, in the way that both create a "living memory" that continues in the present:

> recitation revives the original utterance, bringing it into a continuous present, just as the making and viewing of a photograph create a continuum with the past. Orality invests power in naming, which photography also does by the modern authority of mechanism. These resemblances are striking, but they take on real substance when the photograph is inserted with others in an album. There the roots of orality run deep, and intertwining with photography's, they shape experience into memories whose formations in the album are the permanent, visible trace.[193]

The links between orality, photography, and memory draw on cultural memory studies that suggest remembering is always an "act of communication."[194] Maurice Halbwachs' prevalent theoretical social model of memory established that memory can

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[192] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, viii.
[193] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 122.
[194] Hirst and Manier, "Remembering as Communication," 271.

be divided into "individual" and "collective memory, both of which are "dependent on social structure."[195] Individual memory is the cognitive apparatus of an individual, whereas collective memory refers to "the creation of shared versions of the past which comes into being through interaction, communication, and mediation" in social groups, such as families. Both are mutually dependent on each other. Collective memory is performed through individual acts of remembering, and "each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory."[196]

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Porter's *Old Mortality* are preoccupied with both family photographs and the performative oral tradition of reciting family legend. Each investigates how memory works within the oral-photographic framework of the family photograph—both the repetition of stories (or remembrances) themselves and the act of remembering as articulation (or narration), which creates a distinctive temporal state similar to the temporality of the photograph. This depends on the tension between the photograph's fragmentary frame and its attendant open-endedness, on the one hand, and the familial gaze that searches for a narrative—a history, identity, or understanding, sometimes made inaccessible by the death of previous generations—on the other. Family memory fills the gap between the two.

It is important here to consider the narrative capabilities of the photograph. As I argued in the introduction, I suggest that we might productively broaden an understanding of photography as a semi-narrative medium by considering the ways a photograph might produce fragmented narratives, whose temporality and meaning are therefore both fragmented. If we accept that the photograph's innate fragmentary,

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[195] Astri Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 304.
[196] Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 305.

atemporal, incomplete meaning is not a preclusion to attributing photographic narrative, this allows for a formulation of photographic narrative as a dialectical system in which narrative is created—and memory is articulated—through the viewing and performative oral experience. Although Langford does not delve deeply into the photograph's own intrinsic capabilities of narration, her oral-photographic framework of the family photograph depends on this understanding of a dialectical system of narrative creation. If we assume that photographs encompass no intrinsic, inevitable meaning, and in fact are fragmentary in their temporality and incomplete in their meaning, we might also consider the ways the photograph therefore calls upon or engage new narratives. In fact, it could be argued that it is in part *because* of this fragmentary frame and its attendant open-endedness that the photograph calls upon other discourses—other narratives, other memories, other photographs—to combine with the photograph's own incomplete narrative, *enmeshing it within new narratives*.

I would also add that, in this sense, if memory is produced by the photograph dialectically in combination with the act of articulation, remembering need not always be a secondary act, a *re*-construction; it can be a construction—a generative process that articulates something new.[197] Both Faulkner and Porter recognized this potential.

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[197] Here I am drawing on cultural memory studies that suggest that remembering is always an "act of communication" (William Hirst and David Manier, "Remembering as Communication," 271). Maurice Halbwachs' prevalent theoretical social model of memory established that memory can be divided into "individual" and "collective memory, both of which are "dependent on social structure" (Astri Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 304). Individual memory is the cognitive apparatus of an individual, whereas collective memory refers to "the creation of shared versions of the past which comes into being through interaction, communication, and mediation" in social groups, such as families. Both are mutually dependent of each other. Collective memory is performed through individual acts of remembering, and "each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory" (Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," 305).

Postmemory, the Familial Gaze, and Narrative Temporality in *Old Mortality*

Katherine Anne Porter's *Old Mortality* opens with a photograph:

> She was a spirited-looking young woman, with dark curly hair cropped and parted on the side, a short oval face with straight eyebrows, and a large curved mouth. A round white collar rose from the neck of her tightly buttoned black basque, and round white cuffs set off lazy hands with dimples in them, lying at ease in the folds of her flounced skirt which gathered around to a bustle.[198]

This is itself a kind of narrative trick: the first two sentences, which do not reference an image or picture but begin by describing the photographed subject directly, could describe a character in the ensuing story. But there is a moment of realization when, in the next sentence, it becomes clear that the narrator describes not a woman, but a photograph of one: "She sat thus, forever in the pose of being photographed, a motionless image in her dark walnut frame with silver oak leaves in the corners, her smiling gray eyes following one about the room [. . .] every older person who looked at the picture said, 'How lovely.'"[199] The mental image the reader has conjured is thus reframed, and we are left with an understanding of the semiotic gap between the two—the woman herself and her photograph. The woman in the photograph is Amy, Miranda's deceased aunt and the main character of the family's collective memory. Opening the novella with the image of Amy, which briefly places the reader in the

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[198] Katherine Anne Porter, *Old Mortality*.
[199] Porter, *Old Mortality*.

position of the viewer just before referencing the viewership of older family members, foregrounds the act of viewing the family photograph, a ritual act the family members perform over and over as they narrate their stories, rituals that culminate in the creation of the family memory.

Old Mortality follows Miranda's attempts to understand her past and present through the collective memories of her family, in which Amy's image looms large well past her death: literally, presiding over the family from her frame on the drawing room wall, and figuratively, in family legend.[200] In three chronologically divided parts, the novella traces the family's processes of memory-making through narration, in which Amy's photograph plays a key role. The first section, "Part 1: 1885–1902," follows Miranda and her sister Maria as they listen and watch their older family members, gathering bits and pieces of stories and photographs to create their sense of family memory. At the center of these family legends is Miranda and Maria's "beautiful, much loved" Aunt Amy who was sick with tuberculosis, suffered a "grave scandal," and finally died very young after a brief marriage to her long-time suitor, Gabriel. The grave scandal, as family legend has it, was that Amy had flirted with a previous suitor at a ball, prompting Gabriel to declare a duel; Amy's brother Harry (Maria and Miranda's father) intervened, shooting at the suitor. To avoid prosecution, their father rode to the border of Mexico—Amy, flush-faced and ill, rode after him, then Gabriel rides after her, and the two return after three days of riding, with Amy very ill. She abruptly agrees to marry Gabriel, then dies six weeks later. In Part 1, these and other family legends are related

[200] As Miranda notes, Amy's eyes are even said to follow the viewer about the room; Sara Edelstein reads in this "the panoptic power of her image and the capacity for her to regulate the family from her post on the wall" (Edelstein, "Pretty as Pictures," 156).

through scenes of performative storytelling over photographs and memorabilia. If Part 1 details the family's obsession with narrativizing the past, in "Part 2: 1904," Miranda faces the present when she meets Uncle Gabriel, Amy's husband, and finds that he is a destitute gambling addict, a far cry from the dashing, romantic figure of family memory. In "Part 3: 1912," Miranda, now eighteen, happens to meet Cousin Eva on a train to Gabriel's funeral. Miranda's discussion with Eva, and her reunion with her father at the end of her journey, cement her decision to renounce her family and their legends altogether.

Sara Edelstein suggests that beginning the novella with the photograph of Amy "illustrates [Porter's] concern with the way the family uses photography and memorabilia to instill itself into the minds of future generations and to unite its members around a common ideal."[201] Edelstein reads *Old Mortality* as part of the larger white Southern reaction to the memories of the Civil War to "deconstruct these nostalgic accounts" of the Old South and "question the formation of a collective memory of moonlight and magnolias."[202] Edelstein's project is similar to mine in that it examines how photographs can influence narratives of the past, but her focus is not on the family photograph or family memory. Rather, she explores white southern modernist attempts

[201] Sara Edelstein, "Pretty as Pictures," 155–156. Edelstein reads *Old Mortality* as part of the larger white Southern reaction to the memories of the Civil War to "deconstruct these nostalgic accounts" of the Old South and "question the formation of a collective memory of moonlight and magnolias" (153). Edelstein's project is like mine in that it examines how photographs can be instruments in controlling narratives of the past, but her focus is not on the family photograph or family memory. Rather, she explores the white southern modernist attempts to complicate and reject certain collective memories of the past, such as the myth of the old plantation. "By narrating their young protagonists' entanglement in manifold family histories," Edelstein concludes, "these writers reveal the extent to which postmemory shapes the South's relationship to history more generally" (154).

[202] Edelstein, "Pretty as Pictures," 153.

to complicate and reject certain collective memories of the past, such as the myth of the old plantation. "By narrating their young protagonists' entanglement in manifold family histories," Edelstein concludes, "these writers [including Porter] reveal the extent to which postmemory shapes the South's relationship to history more generally."[203] In Edelstein's reading, the family photograph in *Old Mortality* is a hegemonic attempt to "unite its members" around the common ideal of the old south through the image of the traditional white family; Edelstein suggests that ultimately, in Miranda's arc from believing the family legends to repudiating them, Porter critiques the heavily narrativized past of the Old South. Edelstein's reading does well to situate *Old Mortality* within the larger context of Reconstruction and its aftermath, but it does the textual photographs a disservice in construing them only as symbols of familial unity and tradition that serve the older generation's ends. I would suggest that Porter's interest in the family photograph runs a bit deeper, ultimately investigating the oral-photographic framework of the family photograph as a way of mediating death and also as a productive system through which to write and conceptualize the temporality of family memory. I will unpack the temporality of family memory in *Old Mortality*, which arises in moments of viewing and articulating family photographs, through Hirsch's concepts of postmemory and the familial gaze.

Postmemory

Hirsch defines postmemory as the "communicative memory of a family when it concerns familial events that happened before one's birth" or before one's living

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[203] Edelstein, "Pretty as Pictures," 154.

memory. Postmemory is "the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth," the condition of "the person born 'after' a familial or cultural past marked by trauma."[204] Crucial to Hirsch's configuration of postmemory is the role photographs play in creating and perpetuating it: "Photographs can be primary documents of postmemory, structuring its shape and its content," but more at a more elemental level, postmemory is "*photographically* founded" in the act of recollection.[205] Postmemory is also "communicative memory," passed down through communicative acts such as storytelling and narrating family photographs.

Miranda's own memory *is* postmemory in *Old Mortality*: "Aged twelve and eight years," the narrator says, Miranda and Maria "knew they were young, though they felt they had lived a long time. They had lived not only their own years; but their memories, it seemed to them, began years before they were born, in the lives of the grown-ups around them, old people above forty, most of them."[206] Miranda's understanding of her memory, in this sense, begins years before she was born, through the legacy of the family photographs and the stories their families tell about them. The two young girls are steeped in the family's story about itself; they wander through their grandmother's house, looking up at Aunt Amy's photograph while older family members tell family stories over photographs. Miranda witnesses her grandmother's twice-yearly ritual of

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[204] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 22, 127. Hirsch formulates her theories of postmemory based on the experience of the second-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors; in other words, succeeding generations experience the great generational trauma of the Holocaust in postmemory. But Hirsch explains that her understanding of postmemory is more expansive than public, collective, generational traumas like the Holocaust. *Family Frames*, for example, analyzes postmemory following private family events, such as in Hirsch's reading of the family postmemory in Sue Miller's 1990 novel *Family Pictures*.
[205] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 127; emphasis added.
[206] Porter, *Old Mortality*.

viewing photographs and mementos of deceased family members:

> Photographs [. . .] were disappointing when the little girls tried to fit them to the living beings created in their minds by the breathing words of their elders. Grandmother, twice a year compelled in her blood by the change of seasons, would sit nearly all of one day beside old trunks and boxes in the lumber room, unfolding layers of garments and small keepsakes; she spread them out on sheets on the floor around her, crying over certain things, nearly always the same things, looking again at pictures in velvet cases, unwrapping locks of hair and dried flowers, crying gently and easily as if tears were the only pleasure she had left. If Maria and Miranda were very quiet, and touched nothing until it was offered, they might sit by her at these times, or come and go. [. . .] The visible remains were nothing; they were dust, perishable as the flesh; the features stamped on paper and metal were nothing, but their living memory enchanted the little girls.

At first, this scene may seem to suggest that for Miranda, photographs are altogether separate from the act of remembering. But in the way the scene is relayed by the narrator—and the way Miranda's grandmother tells her stories—the photographs take center stage. Even if the photographs do not match the memory created in Miranda's mind, this passage explores the temporal experience of creating memory while viewing family photographs. They are images of now-dead relatives, transposed into the present of the viewer (the future of the photographic subject). The photographs themselves are coded as dead or decaying—these photographs are relics, "visible remains" that, "perishable as the flesh," nevertheless persist in the present, evoking a postmortem photograph.

In describing the photographs as corpses, the narrator evokes the temporality of the family photograph: the family members indexed in the photograph are *then*-alive, but *now*-dead, viewed in Miranda's present which is the *then-future* of the photographed subjects. This temporality is linked to the process of constructing memory: in addition to epitomizing the Barthesian view that every photograph foreshadows death, these photographed subjects are also "living beings" in the present, transposed through the transformative oral-photographic framework of postmemory in the "breathing words of their elders": the "living memory."

This mechanism of memory is directly tied to their grandmother's storytelling: the young girls "listened, all ears and eager minds, picking here and there among the floating ends of narrative, patching together as well as they could fragments of tales that were like bits of poetry or music," creating "living beings" from the "breathing words of their elders." They piece together the disparate fragments in a generative process of articulation and viewing, fitting the images and fragmentary tales to the "living beings created in their minds." The act of viewing photographs and listening to the articulated memories of "elders" are vital components of the postmemory that Miranda spends the novella grappling with. Miranda and Maria's experience of viewing family photographs (and witnessing their grandmother's performance of viewing) not only exemplifies this temporal relationship between photography and postmemory, but also emphasizes how the two are connected through the oral tradition. This passage demonstrates what Langford calls the "fabric of memory in oral consciousness," or the "structure and content of oral tradition" which are "met in the photographic condition."[207]

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[207] Langford, *Suspended Conversations,* viii.

Through the performance of viewing and the curvilinear or spiraling structure of family stories around the kernel of the photograph, the family album "shift[s] from the absolute solidity of material culture to a state of in-between," encoded in family memory through oral narrativization.[208] Whatever fragmented memory the photographs contained has shifted out of the material visual artifact and is instead articulated in family memory through narration, through the "breathing words of their elders." Postmemory is created through the oral-photographic framework of the family album; importantly, these images are mediated by the familial gaze. In *Old Mortality*, this meeting also occurs through the mechanism of the kernel story, a key feature of oral tradition. Langford makes the connection between photography and kernel stories in her book *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, suggesting that "any photograph can be at cause, for any photograph is a potential *kernel story*, a discrete, catalytic reference to a longer story that is teased out and expanded in conversation."[209] Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson explain that the kernel story "develops slowly and gradually shifts in a curvilinear or spiraling direction." The photograph's story becomes a metonymic signifier for "everyone's story."[210] As a kernel story, the photographs eventually take on a metonymic quality in representing the family narrative: the image is not only the story of itself—of its own photographic subject, with its own temporality—but through the viewing and storytelling process it is also made to stand for the story of the family. The "story" here also implies temporality: the family photograph contains both its own temporality but, through the oral

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[208] Langford, 152.
[209] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 150.
[210] Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson, "Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women," 167.

storytelling that accompanies the photograph, comes to metonymically signify the temporal embeddedness of each member in the familial line. The photographed subject is temporally embedded in the viewer/family member's *now-past* (the photograph's *then-present*, and aliveness) and *now-present* (the photograph's *then-future*, and future death), and *now-future* (which is influenced and shaped by the photograph's *then-present* in the mechanism of postmemory). The family photograph, in other words, offers a framework through which to highlight and explore the overlapping, sometimes contradictory temporalities of family memory. The photograph of Amy, dead in the story-present, is a "ghost in a frame" but also directly described through metonymy as "living memory." The family memory is the image; the image is the family memory. Key to this metonymic mechanism is the familial gaze that situates the photograph in the family narrative and family temporality.

Familial Gaze

Hirsch defines the familial gaze as "situat[ing] human subjects in the ideology, the mythology, of the family as institution and projects a screen of familial myths between camera and subject. Through this screen the subject both recognizes and can attempt to contest her or his embeddedness in familiality."[211] Miranda's family, and Miranda herself, view Amy's photograph through a familial gaze; a "screen of familial myths" intervenes between the camera and Amy as subject, so that the photograph depicts not Amy, exactly, but more a "ghost in a frame," or "a sad, pretty story from old times." The familial gaze both reveals the tensions between personal recollection and

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[211] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 11.

family or collective memory and highlights the photographic temporality of postmemory, between Amy as she lived and died in the world, on the one hand, and Amy as she is embalmed as a "ghost," as "dust," or as "living remains" in romantic family memory and in photographs, on the other.

In the final section of the novella, Miranda happens to meet Cousin Eva on the train to Uncle Gabriel's funeral. During their conversation, Eva attempts to set the record straight on some things, among them the family memory of Amy's marriage and death. Eva insinuates that Amy married Gabriel only to cover up an illegitimate pregnancy with another suitor and then killed herself once "exposure" was threatened, rather than tragically dying of tuberculosis at the height of marital bliss, as the family remembers. Eva says, "The way she rose up suddenly from death's door to marry Gabriel Breaux, after refusing him and treating him like a dog for years, looked odd, to say the least. To say the very least [. . .] odd is a mild word for it. And there was something very mysterious about her death, only six weeks after marriage.'"

Miranda at first stubbornly refuses this possibility, parroting the same lines she heard her elders say when they told the story: "She died of a hemorrhage from the lungs [. . .]. She had been ill for five years, don't you remember?" But "Cousin Eva was ready for that. 'Ha, that was the story, indeed. The official account, you might say. Oh, yes, I heard that often enough.'" Eva continues to present an alternate version of events, with Miranda protesting, offering the events as she has been taught to remember them: "Cousin Eva, my father shot *at* him, don't you remember? He didn't hit him [. . .] and they had only gone out for a breath of air between dances. It was Uncle Gabriel's jealousy. And my father shot at the man because he thought that was better than letting Uncle Gabriel fight a duel about Aunt Amy. There was *nothing* in the whole affair except

Uncle Gabriel's jealousy." Miranda repeats the well-worn lines of her family's stories: a breath of air, Uncle Gabriel's jealousy. But Eva persists:

> "What I ask myself, what I ask myself over and over again," she whispered, "is, what connection did this man Raymond from Calcasieu have with Amy's sudden marriage to Gabriel, and what did Amy do to make away with herself so soon afterward? [. . .] She got into trouble somehow, and she couldn't get out again, and I have every reason to believe she killed herself with the drug they gave her to keep her quiet after a hemorrhage. If she didn't, what happened, what happened?"

Miranda replies to this outburst: "I don't know. [. . .] How should I know?" But then returns to the postmemory, repeating what "every older person" said when they looked at Amy's photograph: "'She was very beautiful,' she said, as if this explained everything. 'Everybody said she was very beautiful.'" Miranda's line evokes the photograph of Amy that began the novella, and the image is again reframed.

At first, it seems as though *Old Mortality* positions Eva as the truth-teller that illuminates the fictions in Miranda's family memory. But she has her own interpretative lens that shapes her memory. Eva describes Amy and the young girls of the time as "sex-ridden," preoccupied with sex even though they had no sexual experience. Eva says, "None of them had, and they didn't want to have, anything else to think about, and they didn't really know anything about that, so they simply festered inside—they festered—" At this, a vision arrives before Miranda, and Eva's photographic version of events plays before her:

> Miranda found herself deliberately watching a long procession of living corpses, festering women stepping gaily towards the charnel house, their

> corruption concealed under laces and flowers, their dead faces lifted smiling, and thought quite coldly, "Of course it was not like that. This is no more true than what I was told before, it's every bit as romantic."

If we read this moment as a family photograph, Miranda's understanding of her own "embeddedness in familiality" occurs through the familial gaze she enacts on the photographic vision Eva has articulated. "Dead faces lifted smiling" hearkens back to the description of the family photographs Miranda's grandmother would "spread out on sheets on the floor around her" twice a year. Miranda had described the subjects of those photographs as "vanished girls," and the photographs themselves as "living remains," "dust," "perishable as the flesh." Here Miranda watches a "long procession of living corpses," suggesting the scene in which she watched her grandmother spread out the photographic "living remains" on the floor, their "dead faces lifted smiling" up to the viewer from their position on the ground. The juxtaposition of death and liveliness—"*living* corpses," "smiling" yet "dead" faces, "stepping gaily" to the "charnel house"—again conjure the photographic temporality of family memory. The procession of corpses, the memory-photograph's subject, is temporally embedded in Miranda's *now-past* (the photograph's *then-present*, when the women were alive) and *now-present* (the photograph's *then-future*, which includes "festering" and death). This suggests the "provisional implications" of temporality in the family photograph, which Langford emphasizes over the fixity of the medium. Even if a temporal moment is fixed and *embalmed* in the photograph, to borrow Bazin's term, it nonetheless holds "provisional implications," because like Bazin's flies in amber, the "corporeal existence," though

dead, continues forth "in an unknown world."[212] This means that the family photograph is not fixed in its perpetuity; emphasizing the "motility" of the photographic experience, Langford notes that the family photograph is "constantly revised through performative re-presentation."[213] This involves, in part, the way the temporalities of the photograph interact in the viewer's present. Crucially, it is not clear whether the memory-photograph is a creation of Eva's narration or a creation of Miranda's own mind, but the dead/living women of the past intrude in Miranda's present. The careful ambiguity of the phrasing "found herself [. . .] watching" leaves open the possibility that it could be either, or both. In this moment, memory, photograph, and narrative are layered and linked in a generative process of creation in which new family memories are created. Here again, the memory is created in an oral-photographic framework.

This vision marks the end of Miranda's conversation with Eva, suggesting its significance as the culmination of Miranda's awakening. Although she began their conversation denying Eva's narrative and repeating the postmemory passed down to her by her older relatives, after viewing the memory-photograph, she now admits that neither Eva nor her family's memories are "true." She closes herself to the memory-photograph with the abrupt declaration, "Of course it was not like that," and her words retroactively recast not only the memory-photograph but also the family photographs she viewed over her grandmother's shoulder, and therefore also the postmemory that she had claimed as her own. Her contestation of her own familial embeddedness occurs at the moment she views the memory-photograph through her familial gaze.

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[212] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 153.
[213] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 61.

On arriving home, Miranda and Cousin Eva meet Miranda's father at the train station. Miranda, who has eloped form boarding school and married, receives a cold welcome from her father, which angers her. Emboldened by her awakening from the night before, she thinks, "I will make my own mistakes, not yours," declaring her wish to diverge from her postmemory and forge her own path.[214] Seeing Eva with her father, and thinking of all that Eva has relayed during their ride, Miranda sees the screen of the familial gaze and reckons with family memory, generations, stories, and truth:

> There was something more beyond, but this was a first step to take, and she took it, walking in silence beside her elders who were no longer Cousin Eva and Father, since they had forgotten her presence, but had become Eva and Harry, who knew each other well, who were comfortable with each other, being contemporaries on equal terms, who occupied by right their place in this world, at the time of life to which they had arrived by paths familiar to them both. They need not play their roles of daughter, of son, to aged persons who did not understand them; nor of father and elderly female cousin to young persons whom they did not understand.[215]

Here Miranda articulates the way family narratives and photographs impose an identity on family members through the familial gaze, particularly younger generations, and how that identity gets reinforced over and over in stories until it becomes the official family memory—so much so that Miranda felt that her own memories extended years before her birth.

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[214] Porter, *Old Mortality*.
[215] Porter, *Old Mortality*.

> "Where are my own people and my own time?" She resented, slowly and deeply and in profound silence, the presence of these aliens who lectured and admonished her, who loved her with bitterness and denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes, who demanded that she accept their version of life and yet could not tell her the truth, not in the smallest thing. "I hate them both," her most inner and secret mind said plainly, *"I will be free of them, I shall not even remember them."*[216]

Miranda's moment of clarity is linked with the refusal to live in the past. In her declaration that she "shall not even remember them," she experiences a "sudden collapse of an old painful structure of distorted images and misconceptions."[217] *That her refusal to remember is directly linked to both images and misconceptions underscores that, for Miranda, memory is composed of both. In refusing to "remember," she refuses to participate in the familial gaze and rebukes the postmemory. Like her sudden turning away from the memory-photograph of the procession of corpses with "but it was not like that," now, watching her father and Eva, Miranda's "mind close[s] stubbornly against remembering, not the past but the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past, at which she had spent her life peering in wonder like a child at a magic-lantern show."*[218]

Miranda discovers in the climax and close of the novella that the family's postmemory (which are, the text has already established, her *own* memories, memories that extend before her birth) is not "the past" but "other people's memory of the past,"

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[216] Porter, *Old Mortality*.
[217] Porter, *Old Mortality*.
[218] Porter, *Old Mortality*.

which is also a "legend of the past." Miranda still clings to the hope that there *is* a "past" that can be accessed through something other than the "distorted image" of photographs or the "misconception" of "memory" or "legend." But the close of the story suggests that Miranda is wrong, and that her own memory cannot be free of the oral-photographic framework the novella has explored so far.

In *Old Mortality*, neither humans nor cameras can record and recall events with the perfect, objective, uninterpreted precision that Miranda craves. Like the story of Aunt Amy's death, memory is neither record nor imagination but some combination of both; it is open to mediation, and in *Old Mortality*, this site of mediation is both oral and photographic. The family narrative of death, in this sense, is both created and challenged by family photographs, and vice versa. Through Miranda's realization and repudiation of her own place in the family memory, her embeddedness in familiality, *Old Mortality* explores the creation of family memory as *articulated* memory as it is generated and preserved in the oral-photographic framework of family photographs—the "screen of family myths" interposed between camera and subject. If the family photograph illustrates the tension between the fragmentary frame and its attendant open-endedness, on the one hand, and the familial gaze that searches for a history, identity, or understanding, on the other, articulated family memory exemplifies the desire to satisfy the photograph's tension, to fill that gap with stories.

But Miranda's triumphant attempt to break free of the mechanisms of family memory is undermined in the last sentence of the novella: "At least I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself, in

her hopefulness, her ignorance."[219] That the novella ends on the narrator's interjection *her ignorance*, suggesting Miranda's enterprise to "know the truth" is doomed to fail. Perhaps her ignorance is in failing to realize that she cannot escape the familial gaze, even when turned upon herself, or the mechanisms of postmemory.[220] Or perhaps it suggests she is already embedded in the genealogical temporality of prior generations—she is Aunt Amy's future, Aunt Amy is her past. As Suzanne W. Jones points out, "Miranda has unconsciously used the romance narrative to script her elopement,"[221] echoing Amy's similar elopement and the romantic family memory that surrounded it. In the end, despite her new resolve to turn her back on "other people's memory of the past," Miranda has already fulfilled the aspiration she held as a girl to "one day be like Aunt Amy." Cheryl D. Coleman is hopeful that Miranda can "write her own version of memory,"[222] but I would argue that Miranda's capacity to "know the truth" is limited by the fact that her identity, or her understanding of herself within the social collective framework of her family's memory, is already comprised largely of "other people's memory of the past." Or, in Halbwachs' conceptualization of memory, her individual memory—the act of interior recollection that she mistakenly thinks can reflect what is "true"—cannot exist independently of the collective memory in which she was raised.

As long as she *remembers*, Miranda engages in a creative process that will always be contextualized—even if in contradistinction—by her family postmemory, which

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[219] Porter, *Old Mortality*.
[220] See Suzanne W. Jones, "Reading the Endings"; Sara Edelstein, "'Pretty as Pictures'"; and Cheryl D. Coleman, "'No Memory Is Really Faithful.'" All three point out that Miranda's spontaneous choice to elope mimics Amy's story.
[221] Suzanne W. Jones, "Reading the Endings in Katherine Anne Porter's 'Old Mortality,'" 29.
[222] Cheryl D. Coleman, "'No Memory Is Really Faithful': Memory and Myth in Katherine Anne Porter's 'Old Mortality,'" 244.

spirals around the ever-present, looming image of Amy, the "living remains" and smiling dead faces of vanished girls.

"Dreamy and victorious dust": Mnemonic Recollection, Articulation, and Photographic Family Memory in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Like *Old Mortality*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) centers the act of oral storytelling as its narrators (mainly Rosa Coldfield, Quentin Compson, and Quentin's father, Mr. Compson) tell and retell the story of Charles Bon's murder. In the novel, family photographs—most notably, Quentin's memory-photographs (much like the one Eva and/or Miranda conjure on the train) and the photograph of Charles Bon that Rosa describes to Quentin—mediate the temporal narrative possibilities of death and memory.

It may be helpful to first briefly review the complex Sutpen family plot in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. Thomas Sutpen, the patriarch, is obsessed with creating a family dynasty and securing a white male heir, and his concern regarding his progeny drives much of his action. Sutpen marries a woman in 1827 and has a son, Charles Bon, but renounces them both once he learns she may have undisclosed Black ancestry. Years later, in 1838, he establishes "Sutpen's Hundred" (a large plantation and mansion), marries Ellen Coldfield, and has two children, Henry and Judith. Through Henry, Bon and Judith meet, and the two plan to marry, unaware of their relation. Once Sutpen learns of Judith's engagement to Bon, he reveals that Bon and Judith are half-siblings. Henry repudiates his birthright, and the three men leave to fight in the Civil War. In 1865, Bon returns from the war to marry Judith, but as he crosses the gate to Sutpen's Hundred, Henry shoots him. Bon dies; Judith discovers his body; Henry flees. Rosa

begins living at Sutpen's Hundred. Sutpen, who has lost his only white male heir, returns to Sutpen's Hundred and eventually proposes to Rosa (the sister of his previous, now deceased wife Ellen), but she leaves once he demands that she deliver him a son before marriage. Sutpen never has another son, and he is killed four years later. Henry eventually returns to Sutpen's Hundred, long after Sutpen's death, but he is ill, and he finally dies in 1869 in a fire that also destroys the Sutpen house.

Rosa Coldfield ("Aunt Rosa" to Judith and Henry Sutpen; the sister-in-law and, briefly, the fiancé of Sutpen) is one of the novel's main narrators. As she regales Quentin with the story of the Sutpens, she muses on the faulty nature of memory.[223] In a passage that suggests the light-sensitive, attritive chemical reaction of a photograph, she codes memory in photographic terms, comparing it to the mechanical function of light and shadow exposed by the dust motes floating in the air.

> Once there was—Do you mark how the wistaria, sun-impacted on this wall here, distills and penetrates this room as though (light-unimpeded) by secret and attritive progress from mote to mote of obscurity's myriad components? That is the substance of remembering—sense, sight, smell: there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less: and its resultant sum is usually incorrect and

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[223] Rosa may view Quentin as the closest thing to a young relative that she has. Mr. Compson suspects that Rosa chose Quentin as the receiver for her story because, he explains to Quentin, "your grandfather was the nearest thing to a friend which Sutpen ever had in this county, [. . .] and that your grandfather may have told me and I might have told you. And so, in a sense, the affair [. . .] will still be in the family; the skeleton (if it be a skeleton) still in the closet. [. . .] So maybe she considers you partly responsible through heredity for what happened to her and her family through him" (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 7).

> false and worthy only of the name of dream.[224]

First, I want to call attention to the photographic register of this passage, specifically the dust motes, a motif to which I will return later. Second, I want to consider what, exactly, Rosa is saying here about memory and remembering. Wesley Morris reads this passage as a declaration that memory is "neither story nor event," but a "sensation" dependent on the body.[225] Morris uses this passage as an entry into his discussion of the "division of feeling and thoughts" that modernism "agonized over." Since he is not as interested in pinpointing Rosa's definition of memory/remembering here, his reading does not quite satisfy the concreteness of the word "substance," which suggests something external to bodily sensation. Morris's reading nevertheless does well to connect Rosa's aside to the novel's interest in separating mind from memory, a line of inquiry Carolyn Norman Slaughter also takes up in her essay on time in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Slaughter argues that "memory" is extended or substituted throughout the novel by "more-than-material presences" like blood and air, which "not only holds, carries, and mixes 'story,' [. . .] but extends beyond or outside 'story,'" in a "different kind of 'saying.'"[226] Neither Morris nor Slaughter consider the photographic elements of the narrative, and it is this "saying" that I want to investigate, specifically the "saying" that attends the family photograph. While "mind" and "memory" may seem to be divided, remembering is the mind's articulation of the "substance" in the act of remembering, the articulation of the wistaria's photographic "attritive progress from mote to mote." This articulative act of recall creates something new—a kind of "dream."

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[224] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 115.
[225] Morris, "Of Wisdom and Competence," 151.
[226] Carolyn Slaughter, "'Fluid Cradle of Events (Time),'" 79, 78.

This dust-scene, which occurs about halfway through the novel, hearkens back to the novel's very first paragraph, in which dust motes, suspended in the air, are first bound to the act of narration and recollection. Quentin and Rosa sit in her house as she prepares to tell him her family's story in a "dim hot airless room" with "a wistaria vine "on a wooden trellis before one window." "As the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house," the room "became latticed with yellow slashes of dust motes," and Rosa sits opposite of Quentin,

> talking in that grim haggard amazed voice until at last listening would renege and hearing-sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the biding and dreamy and victorious dust.[227]

Here, the dust motes as "palpitant sunlight" evokes the photographic process's phytomechanical transformation of light-reactive silver halide crystals. The dust motes illuminated by the hot sun shining through the wistaria vines, suggest a light-reactive photographic plate that is developed through her narration so that "the long-dead object" of her frustration, Thomas Sutpen, "appears": an image made "out of [. . .] the dust." Sutpen's long-dead image is photographic—this Sutpen is made of the dust, which had been made "palpitant" by sunlight through an "attritive process" that proceeds "mote to mote" to create a "dreamy" image, a memory "worthy only of the name dream." But this imagined photograph of the dead does not appear of its own accord—it requires Rosa's articulation, her "voice."

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[227] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 3–4.

In these dreamy, dusty scenes, Quentin experiences photographic visions. These visions are like the memory-photograph Eva's narration evokes in Miranda's mind—they are not photographs, but Quentin experiences them as such, and they take on a provisional temporality in which Quentin's temporal present, the dream photograph's atemporal present, and the sudden collapse and expansion of dream-time coalesce. As he listens to Rosa tell her story, the image of Sutpen fading, he notes,

> It should have been later than it was; it should have been late, yet the yellow slashes of mote-palpitant sunlight were latticed no higher up the impalpable wall of gloom which separated them; the sun seemed hardly to have moved. It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale.[228]

"It should have been later than it was" suggests Quentin's inability to mark the passage of time in his temporal present, a concept he elaborates on—"the talking, the telling" has the temporal logic of a dream which, although it must have occurred "in a second," requires the dreamer to formally recognize and accept "elapsed and yet-elapsing time." His description suggests the visual-temporal expansion of the moment through the mote-palpitant sunlight's refusal to move. Quentin's temporal present bursts into the

[228] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 15.

narrative through the parenthetical interpositions "(the talking, the telling)," "(to him, to Quentin)," as he qualifies and anchors his temporal present in the atemporal present of Rosa's narrative that refuses to move forward in time.

A few pages later, dust—and, if we read into the photographic register that describes it, the family photograph—mixes with Rosa's articulated memory to create a new image of the long-dead Sutpen. Clifford Wulfman, in his assessment of mnemonic triggers in *Absalom, Absalom!*, describes this dust-infused scene as "a matrix of recollection from which ghosts are evoked."[229] The "matrix of recollection" includes not just the visual photographic medium (the dust) but also the narrative itself.[230] The "ghost" evoked from the dust eventually becomes a dreamed family photograph of the Sutpens, which materializes before Quentin:

> [Sutpen's ghost] began to assume a quality almost of solidity, permanence. [. . .] The ogre-shape, which [. . .] resolved out of itself before Quentin's eyes the two half-ogre children, the three of them forming a shadowy background for the fourth one. This was the mother, the dead sister Ellen [. . .]. Quentin seemed to see them, the four of them arranged into the conventional family group of the period, with formal and lifeless decorum, and seen now as the fading and ancient photograph itself would have been seen enlarged and hung on the wall behind and above the voice and of

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[229] Clifford E. Wulfman, "The Poetics of Ruptured Mnemosis," 112.

[230] Wulfman reads *Absalom, Absalom!* as an allegory for (and critique of) the practice of recollection through reading and receiving narrative: "Along with the quality of recollection," Wulfman writes, "the form of its expression has changed, in ways that reflect a new research into the nature of memory and its representation in literature" (Wulfman, "The Poetics of Ruptured Mnemosis," 114). I extend the changed "form" of recollection's expression to include photographs.

> whose presence there the voice's owner was not even aware, as if she (Miss Coldfield) had never seen this room before—a picture, a group which even to Quentin had a quality strange, contradictory and bizarre; not quite comprehensible, not (even to twenty) quite right—a group the last member of which had been dead twenty-five years and the first, fifty, evoked now out of the airless gloom of a dead house.[231]

Here Quentin recollects an imagined photograph of the dead from a past that never existed, a memory-photograph, or dream-photograph (or memory-worthy-only-of-the-name-dream-photograph, as Rosa would floridly put it), enacted by Rosa's narration. The memory-dream-photograph is Quentin's illusion, but also Sutpen's. Rosa refers to Sutpen's goal to establish both Sutpen's Hundred and a male heir to inherit it as a "mad dream," a "vain illusion"—after Sutpen proposed to her, she tells Quentin, she "sat and listened" to him talk not about love or marriage but "the very dark forces of fate which he had evoked and dared, out of that wild braggart dream where an intact Sutpen's Hundred which no more had actual being now (and would never have again) than it had when Ellen [Rosa's sister and Sutpen's second wife] first heard it."[232] Like Sutpen's own wild dream, the photograph "had no more actual being now (and would never had again," both in the *then-present* represented in the imagined photograph and in the *now-present* in which Quentin views it and Sutpen is already dead.

Quentin's experience of listening to Rosa's articulated memory of the Sutpen family legends evokes Miranda's hours listening to her family tell stories while gazing at

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[231] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 8–9. Death imagery pervades this passage and the entire novel. For more on death and embalmment in *Absalom, Absalom!*, see Tim Bielawski, "(Dis)figuring the Dead: Embalming and Autopsy in '*Absalom, Absalom!*'"
[232] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 133.

"features stamped on paper and metal," in which the "living remains" of the photographs evoke their "living memory." What is happening in this passage is the reverse—Rosa evokes the living remains of the family photograph through her oration, like the memory-photograph that Eva's narration evoked before Miranda. Murphet agrees that this is a photographic vision: this passage, he argues, is "a multimedia demonstration where a voice is transposed into a photographic image": "The voice here is Real (a radio ghost), and the 'world' it allows Quentin to see is visible, but not in that sense [of a Romantic hallucination brought on by Rosa's Romantic poetry]. Quentin's vision of the conjured ghosts is always and already photographic."[233] This is close to Wulfman's understanding of the scene: "Rosa's telling," he claims, "creates the flash of abruptive vision for Quentin in which telling is transmuted into seeing: Rosa's telling transmits her own memory to Quentin like a developing photograph."[234] Here, *Absalom, Absalom!* demonstrates what Langford identifies in the family photograph: that the "fabric of memory in oral consciousness" is "met in the photographic condition."[235]

In these dust-ladened, dreamy sections, Rosa narrates and Quentin listens, piecing together the fragments of narrative. Together—through Rosa's narration and Quentin's visions—they engage in the production of memory, but here it is Rosa's production of memory through narration that evokes Quentin's visions. His photographic vision of Sutpen, and the dream-image he imagines of the Sutpen family photograph, arrive in his mind as though called upon by the process of recollection. A

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[233] Murphet, *Faulkner's Media Romance*, 235. Murphet reads this as evidence of the novel's interest in affirming a "material contact" between voice and image in the "dimension of cinematography," one of the technologies Murphet considers alongside Faulkner's works.
[234] Wulfman, "The Poetics of Ruptured Mnemosis," 123.
[235] Langford, *Suspended Conversations,* viii.

photographic narrative may be the articulation and creation of memory through the viewing experience of the photograph; or, as in Quentin's visions as Rosa speaks, it can go the other direction—in which the articulation of memory produces a new interior photographic image of the familial dead through a mnemonic process of recollection.

It is as though Quentin is engaging in mnemonic recollection—the image materializes before him as though it is his own memory, an interior cognitive process that only he (and not Rosa) is aware of. It may seem illogical to ascribe recollection and memory to an imagined image, because we would think of recollection and memory as tied to a concrete event in one's own past. "But is it always the case," Wulfman points out, "that remembering is a secondary act?" He continues, "Can it not be that remembering sometimes articulates something for the first time?" Wulfman names this "act of primary remembering" "mnemosis,"[236] and although he does not consider it in terms of the family photograph, it aligns with Langford's assessment of family memory as something that is created anew through an oral-photographic framework: in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Rosa's articulated memory spurs the creation of a memory-photograph in Quentin. The photograph that arrives in Quentin's "memory" is filled with the dead, and in this vision they are transported to the present. After all, the function of mnemonics, Wulfman notes, is to "bring [the long dead object] back to life, to insert it into the present time," and so there is always "a gap in mnemonics between the memory and what it represents"; what it represents is "the event of perception" of an object, or image.[237] Even though the image does not exist in the corporeal present Quentin inhabits, he still engages in a recollection through the event of perception of the

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[236] Wulfman, "The Poetics of Ruptured Mnemosis," 116.
[237] Wulfman, "The Poetics of Ruptured Mnemosis," 116.

"long dead object" of the Sutpen family photograph that appears before him.

I now turn to this "gap in mnemosis between the memory and what it represents," a gap that the novel explores through the framework of the photograph.

"A shot heard only by its echo": Bon as Photographic Abstraction

Throughout her storytelling, Rosa returns again and again to the image of Bon.[238] As Rosa repeats throughout the novel, she saw only a photograph of the man, but never the man himself. She describes viewing the photograph ("that shadow") to Quentin:

> I don't know even now if I was ever aware that I had seen nothing of his face but that photograph, that shadow, that picture in a young girl's bedroom: a picture casual and framed [. . .] because even before I saw the photograph I could have recognized, nay, described, the very face. But I never saw it. I do not even know of my own knowledge that Ellen ever saw it, that Judith ever loved it, that Henry slew it: so who will dispute me when I say, Why did I not invent, create it?—And I know this: if I were God I would invent out of this seething turmoil we call progress something (a machine perhaps) which would adorn the barren mirror altars of every plain girl [. . .] [with] this pictured face. It would not even need a skull behind it; almost anonymous, it would only need vague inference of some

238 For Rosa, the photograph of Bon is also a family photograph; he is her nephew-in-law, the fiancé of her niece, and the son of the man she was briefly engaged. She is invested in the family narrative, and her mission, ostensibly, is to tell the family memory to Quentin, whom she chooses because this way she will "keep it in the family," as Mr. Compson explains. She experienced Bon's arrival, and his murder, as a family affair—as Quentin puts it, her nephew shot his half-brother, who was the man engaged to (and also the half-brother of) her niece.

> walking flesh and blood desired by someone else even if only in some shadow-realm of make-believe.—A picture seen by stealth.[239]

The triple-invocation of Bon's image (*that photograph, that shadow, that picture*) suggests Rosa's attention to the medium of the photograph. But Rosa's mental image of Bon supersedes the image of his picture so that, as Katherine Henninger notes, the photograph is "less an authentic snapshot than one suspended in Rosa's fancy."[240] "Why did I not invent, create it," she asks. *It* here seems to refer to "this pictured face," joined to "a picture seen by stealth" by long dash that separates the intervening clause. But whether Rosa means her pictured mental image of Bon, or the photograph itself, is (perhaps purposefully) ambiguous. Is the act of narrating to Quentin, in which Rosa performs the viewing experience, an act of creation in "some shadow-realm of make-believe," in which she conjures this "almost anonymous" "shadow," a photograph of a man she "never saw" yet somehow already recognized?

Here Rosa makes the careful, almost fretful distinction that she "had seen nothing of that face but the photograph"; "I never saw it." The gap between the photograph and the man himself preoccupies her. Indeed, according to Judith Sensibar, it is the only thing that concerns her: "We never know," Sensibar points out, "what Bon looks like—his features, hair color, his eyes. These are facts and they don't interest Rosa. All she cares about are how and why photographs work as they do upon the spectator's imagination."[241] Bon is, as Julian Murphet points out, "only ever a photograph in this prose," and Rosa's narrative suggests the role her articulated memory has played in

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[239] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!,* 118.
[240] Katherine R. Henninger, "Faulkner, Photography, and a Regional Ethics of Form," 66.
[241] Judith L. Sensibar, "Faulkner's Real and Imaginary Photos of Desire," 129.

developing the image of the body she never sees.[242] Her narration is shot through with repetitions that code Bon in this temporality of the photograph that exceeds (echoes) the *then-present* of the photographed moment: "I had never seen him (I never saw him. I never even saw him dead. I heard a name, I saw a photograph, I helped to make a grave: and that was all)"; "You see, I never saw him. I never even saw him dead. I heard an echo, but not the shot"; "Because I never saw him. You see?"; "I never saw him"; even Mr. Compson knows this part of the story—he says to Quentin, "Miss Rosa never saw him; this was a picture, an image."[243] Rosa compares seeing a photograph and not the man to the experience of hearing only the echo of the shot (but not the shot itself) that killed Bon; this is also repeated (echoed) throughout her narrative. Like viewing a photograph is like hearing an echo of a shot, Rosa's narrative suggests, the viewer can never witness the moment the photograph recorded, only the photograph. The subject as they were embodied in the photographed moment of time is inaccessible; the murder and the man do not "happen," in this sense—they are removed from time by the photograph, only accessible as oral-photographic memory.

The narrative's device of repetition, of an echo, here achieves a photographic sense of tying threads across linear time—by hearkening back, echoing through the novel-time's past, present, and future, through the telling-time Quentin experiences as

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[242] Julian Murphet, *Faulkner's Media Romance*, 47. Murphet's chapter on *Absalom, Absalom!* in his 2017 *Faulkner's Media Romance* reads Bon as a photographic symbol, ultimately arguing that he is the "negative/positive-undeveloped/developed" counterpart to Sutpen's white racial identity. While I build on Murphet's interpretation of Faulkner's photographic language, the racial aspects of Bon's photographic embodiment are beyond the scope of my project, and my project is less interested in the symbolic register Murphet investigates and more interested in the way Bon's photographic (dis)embodiment evokes the photographic quality of family memory (a line of inquiry Murphet does not explore).
[243] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 117, 121, 122, 123, 58.

he listens to Rosa, and also in the reader's own time as they proceed from start to finish. Repeated phrases like these mimic the oral tradition[244] as well as the experience of viewing family photographs, in which the same photographs are viewed again and again. Each time Rosa repeatedly invokes the family photograph of Bon, it implies a doubled act of remembrance in both Rosa and Quentin. In the family collection of photographs, Langford explains the significance of the repeated image:

> the reappearance of the image confirms its importance, literally by giving place to it again and experientially by translation to the beholder, who recognizes the photograph because she has seen it before. The compiler's doubled act of remembrance will be revisited (in thought and probably in action) in an emulative act of remembrance sparked by the second site of the image. A place of memory is thus imaged; but more significantly, the condition of memory, or something that reminds us of memory, is figured and absorbed through repetition.[245]

Langford describes here the family album compiler, but a reader of *Absalom, Absalom!* will recognize in this description the "emulative acts of remembrance" with which the novel is preoccupied. The "place of memory" is imaged in these repetitive invocations, which are not exactly invocations of the image itself, but what it lacks.

For Rosa, the photograph is of a lack, an abstraction. It is, in other words, a powerful narrative articulation of death, the ultimate lack, the ultimate abstraction. The

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[244] In the oral tradition, "mnemonic needs determine even syntax," which relies on "heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions" to make the story easier to pass on from orator to listener (Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 32).
[245] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 140–141.

photograph is linked with the echo (not the shot), the coffin (not the body), and all three (the photograph, echo, and coffin) are layered through metaphor: Bon's corpse, she says, is only "the abstraction which we had nailed into a box—a shot heard only by its echo."[246] Describing what it was like to carry the coffin, but not knowing if there was a body in it, Rosa says, "I tried to take the full weight of the coffin to prove to myself that he was really in it. And I could not tell. I was one of his pallbearers, yet I could not, would not believe something which I knew could not but be so. Because I never saw him. You see?" She goes on to frame this death-gap in terms of temporality and memory:

> One day he was not. Then he was. Then he was not. It was too short, too fast, too quick; six hours of a summer afternoon saw it all—a space too short to leave even the imprint of a body on a mattress, and blood can come from anywhere—if there was blood, since I never saw him. For all I was allowed to know, we had no corpse.

She has the coffin, but not the corpse, just as she has seen the photograph of the face, but not the face. This recalls her earlier description of the photograph: "I do not even know of my own knowledge that Ellen ever saw it [the face], that Judith ever loved it, that Henry slew it: so who will dispute me when I say, Why did I not invent, create it?" The "it" she creates here is not the face, the real man, but the memory of him that she recognizes even before she sees the image. The cavernous gap left by death's abstraction, mediated here through the fragmentary nature of the image—the incomplete narration of the photograph/echo/coffin—calls upon Rosa's narrative, inviting the invention, the creation of memory through articulation.

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[246] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 122.

This experience of seeing the photograph, hearing the echo, knowing only the "abstraction" in the coffin is accompanied by a temporal breakdown: "Yes, more than that: he [Bon] was absent, and he was; he returned, and he was not; three women put something into the earth and covered it, and he had never been."[247] The gap between the body itself and the photographed body creates a temporality that is "absent" but "is," "returned" but "is not." Following this, Rosa says, she and Judith and Clytie proceeded to live in denial for the next seven months, living in that time before the event. In their denial, they resolved that "there had been no shot. That sound was merely the sharp and final clap-to of a door between us and all that was, all that might have been—a retroactive severance of the stream of event: a forever crystallized instant in imponderable time."[248] The "clap-to" evokes the closing of the camera shutter that slices time from "the stream of event" and "crystallizes" it. For seven months, Rosa and Judith and Clytie attempt to live in the "forever crystallized instant in imponderable time." When Sutpen finally returns, and Judith must tell what has happened to Bon and Henry, the "crystallized moment" is broken. The echo—the echo of the shot, which is also the photograph of Bon—prevails, resurfacing again and again throughout her narrative, opening the door to memory, to the moment in time encoded in photographic terms around which Rosa tells her story (and, in this sense, creates her oral-

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[247] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 123. This temporality is both literally described by Rosa as her sensation of time but is also embodied in the narrative structure—the way she and others tell and retell scenes that no one (not even they) saw firsthand. Rosa's long, italicized monologue, during which all these revelations have occurred, is directly followed by "But Quentin was not listening," enclosing the whole telling in imaginary parentheses that suggest it is absent from the narrative proper—like Bon, it is "absent" from Quentin's experience, and yet it "is," is present (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 135).

[248] Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 127.

photographic memory). Quentin's imagined memory-photograph and Rosa's obsessive articulation of the photograph-echo-coffin of Bon both suggest that the space between telling and truth, photograph and the event as it occurred in its original moment in time, the photograph and the physical embodiment of its referent—between each of these is a gap, an "airy space" for family memory. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, this memory is both photographic in its register and articulated in its creation.

Conclusion

Both *Old Mortality* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are texts that investigate photography as a "technology of personal and familial memory" to consider how death might be narrated and mediated through this dialectical system.[249] Just as the construction of the Sutpen family memory depends on the oral-photographic framework of Rosa's articulated memory and photographs of the Sutpen family, both real and imagined, *Old Mortality* explores the creation of family memory as it is generated and preserved in the oral-photographic framework of family photographs—the "screen of family myths" between camera and subject. For both Faulkner and Porter, if the family photograph illustrates the tension between the fragmentary frame and its attendant open-endedness, on the one hand, and the familial gaze that searches for a history, identity, or understanding, on the other, articulated family memory exemplifies the desire to satisfy the photograph's tension, to fill that gap with stories. As Langford puts it, as "invitations" to articulation, or "to re-enactment, photographs cover themselves again and again in fresh recollection" through a "dynamic process of memory."[250] In

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[249] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 193.
[250] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 200.

Absalom, Absalom!, as in *Old Mortality*, the family photograph, fragmentary in its temporality and incomplete in its meaning without an anchoring familial context, produces family memory and mediates death through its articulation.

Chapter 3

"The miraculous hint": Photographic Time, Death, and Duration in Cynthia Ozick's "Shots"

> Photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption.
>
> —André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image" (1960)

> All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.
>
> —Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977)

Introduction

In these statements on photography's relationship to time, André Bazin and Susan Sontag both suggest "photography's ability to dissolve the distancing effects of space and time by preserving the past look of things and people into the present," as Alan Trachtenberg puts it, but they each highlight different aspects of this past-into-present effect. Bazin emphasizes the photograph's ability to preserve images of the past; viewed in the present, the subject is uncorrupted by time, unaged. He likens it to a mummified body or fly frozen in amber; the photograph, in this sense, can seem to stand against death. He reads stasis in the photograph's temporality: time in the image may be embalmed, implying stillness—it defies time's onward motion by "rescuing" it

from "corruption"—but this also allows its perseveration into the present. Sontag also yokes death and time to the photograph, highlighting another paradox: that even as the photograph isolates and freezes a discrete moment time, it also evokes the flowing motion of "time's relentless melt," a motion we may experience as the awareness of mortality. The two actions of the photograph Sontag names are "slicing" and "freezing" a moment—the first, "slicing out this moment," suggests the photograph's ability to isolate a discrete fragment of time, a conception that was especially common in the twentieth century following the proliferation of high-speed cameras[251] and fraction-of-a-second photographs; the second, "freezing it," emphasizes stillness in the context of immobilized motion ("freezing" or halting a moment that was in the process of "melting" or moving). Paradoxically, in this stillness we see transitoriness, mortality, and, ultimately, our own death—the ultimate, final consequence of moving time.

In the literary texts I have considered in the previous chapters, the apparent paradox of seeing a moment from the past in the present and thereby experiencing an awareness of death is a recurring theme. What I want to emphasize here is that for both Bazin and Sontag, the situational temporality of the viewer is the main framing element through which this paradox operates. Whether or not (or to what extent) a snapshot or news photograph can actually, of its own accord, "freeze time" into an infinitesimal instant or halt time's ineluctable flow is up for debate—but it is clear that the photograph's apparent representation of a frozen instant collides powerfully with the viewer's own durational, lived experience of time. It is this collision that made

[251] Here and throughout, I use "high-speed photography" to refer generally to photographs that capture moments of motion that happen to quickly for the human eye and brain to perceive in isolation.

photography such a powerful intervention in literary representations of time, memory, and death. It is this collision that blurs the linear temporal boundaries between death and life through the durational, nonlinear temporality of lived experience. For Cynthia Ozick—whose 1977 short story, "Shots," is the focus of this chapter—it is this collision that fascinates.

The unnamed narrator of "Shots" is a photojournalist who came to her profession through a love of corpses, a fascination with photographs of then-living, now-dead faces. She is caught in a static, going-nowhere relationship with Sam, a married man; even though Sam hates his wife, Verity, she is "too terrific to betray."[252] In the pictures the narrator views and shoots with her camera, photographs enact a complex web of temporalities that engender multitemporal, sometimes contradictory readings in the narrator that arrive to her through her awareness of her own mortality. This chapter explores how the textually mediated photographs in "Shots" affect and inspire the narrative's expressions of temporality and death.

In "Shots," I trace two key temporal concepts of the photograph, both of which hinge on the underlying idea that the photograph can "stop time." The first is the concept of the photograph as an immortalizing *memento mori*: the photograph "stops" time by stopping death, thereby immortalizing the photographic subject. The paradox here is that this very immortalization creates in the viewer the awareness of death, transience, and mortality. The second is the concept of the photograph as an infinitesimal slice of time, what Kris Belden-Adams has described as the "normative expectation," following advancements in high-speed photography, that the photograph

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[252] Cynthia Ozick, "Shots," 54.

represents "a brief instant, or 'atomized,' view of time."[253] In this sense of atomized time, each new instant replaces the one before it in a linear procession. But this concept, too, presents its own paradoxes—as Sontag and others have noted, the immobilization of a tiny slice of time in fact makes the onward flow of time—which can be experienced as motion but also transience, change, mortality—all the more acute. In presenting a fragment of time in the present, the photograph denies the linear associations of the "'atomized' view of time" because the photographed moment is situated within the durational temporality of the viewer.[254]

The narrator of "Shots" embraces the idea that the camera can stop time; her belief in the two concepts I outlined above are fundamental to her attraction to and interest in the photographic image. But Ozick doesn't allow her narrator to sit comfortably with these concepts—she gives the photograph's temporal paradoxes full expression, ensnaring the narrator in a net of apparently contradictory ideas about photographic time. I offer one way we might untangle this net, arguing that "Shots"

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[253] Kris Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*, 17.

[254] To be clear, I focus on this idea of photographic temporality because it is a prevailing, conventional notion that contributes to and was often used to support the "snapshot theory" of time as a linear procession of instants. I do not mean to flatten or speak to the temporal possibilities of the photographic medium writ large. As is evident to any casual viewer of photographs, different photographs can represent time differently—a long-exposure photograph, for example, or *mise en abyme* (a picture of a picture), both suggest a different relationship to temporality than the fraction-of-a-second news photograph—and an individual photograph's temporality depends on its context and contingencies, its relationship to other images, other narratives, the subject, the viewer, etc. And as several critics have pointed out, even the briefest instant comprises numerous, uncountable intervals. For John Szarkowski, for example, "there is in fact no such thing as an instantaneous photograph. All photographs are time exposures, of shorter or longer duration" (Szarkowski, "Introduction," 5). For Charles Sanders Peirce the so-called *instantaneous* photograph is really "a composite of the effects of intervals of exposure more numerous by far than the sands of the sea" (Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 267).

exemplifies these two variations of stopped time (the photograph as immortalization; the photograph as sliced time) but also complicates them in the viewer's temporal experience (photograph as *memento mori*; photographic time as durational) to reflect on the ways an awareness of our own inevitable death precludes an experience of time as a linear, static vector comprised of a succession of discrete instants.

This chapter builds on theories of temporal consciousness that distinguish between objective/mechanical/scientific time (as it is measured by a clock, for example) and experienced time (which is subjective and interacts with but is not always predicated on objectively measured time). Of the three main categories of describing temporal consciousness outlined by Barry Dainton in his overview of temporal consciousness in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, two are relevant to my discussion here. The first theory is the *snapshot theory*, also known as the *cinematic model*, which suggests that "our experiences lack any (or any significant) temporal extension—they are akin to static, motion-free 'snapshots' or 'stills.' Our streams of consciousness are composed of continuous successions of these static conscious states."[255] As is perhaps obvious from the term "snapshot theory," proponents of this model often compare temporal experience to photography or cinema—a series of instants that proceed linearly. And, importantly, the reverse is true—writers, thinkers, and casual viewers considering the photograph often conceptualize time according to the snapshot theory, precisely because of the stilled instant of time the photograph seems to present. This is the view of atomized time that Belden-Adams references.

The second theory of temporal consciousness important to my discussion is the

[255] Barry Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness."

extensional model, which argues that "our episodes of experiencing are themselves temporally extended, and are thus able to incorporate change and persistence in a quite straightforward way. Our streams of consciousness are composed of successions of these extended phases of experience" in the past, present, and future.[256] This chapter draws from one particular proponent of the extensional model, Henri Bergson, and his concept of *la durée*, or "duration." Bergson distinguished between (1) scientific or mechanistic time (objective, measurable time), which he compared to the time represented in the still photograph, and (2) the lived experience of time, which he called the duration. While we may experience atomized time in the photograph, Bergson was adamant that this is not how we experience our temporal consciousness; for Bergson, the snapshot theory of lived time was fundamentally wrong.

In this chapter, I argue that "Shots" considers how the linear, static time that some photographs seem to present, on the one hand, interacts with and contradicts the duration of lived temporality as we experience it, on the other. In my reading of "Shots," I note three key characteristics of Bergson's sense of duration: (1) the past is knotted up with the present and "gnaws into the future"; (2) the human experience of time is not that of one instant replacing another, as photographs of stilled motion may suggest; rather, past, present, and future (and so, death and life) are states that pass into and through each other; and (3) the necessary and transformative labor of waiting confers on the photograph the trace of transitoriness, the trace left by the passage of time.[257] The narrator's experience as viewer and photographer, and the self-reflexivity of the

[256] Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness." Dainton's article offers a thorough overview of theories of temporal experience, including contemporary proponents of the extensional model.
[257] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 4.

narrative itself, exemplifies this fluid, nonlinear time. In "Shots," while the photograph may seem to represent the illusion of static time, it engenders a nonlinear time of duration as it is translated by the viewer's lived experience, which is marked by her awareness of her own mortality.

In Ozick's story, the temporality of the textually mediated photograph is always dependent on and nested within the viewer's own experience of lived, durational, nonlinear temporality.[258] For the narrator, photographs do "stop" time via immortalization and yet they signify death; they slice out an instant from the flow of moving time (an action codified as violence) and yet even the smallest increment of an instant contains and requires its own internal and external duration. Both sets of contradictions suggest that even though the photograph seems to "stop time" and preserve immortality, photographic temporality is contextualized by the interpretive flow of lived time—the lived time of the viewer, of the photographer, and/or of the subject. When the narrator sees a photograph that apparently stops time, or when she freezes a moment with her camera, the narrator experiences a heightened awareness of her own death (sometimes via an awareness of the subject's mortality), of time's passage (transitoriness), and of her own past, present, and future. In viewing and taking photographs, which the narrator experiences as stopping time and isolating it into fragments, the narrator also experiences time and history as durational, in which the past, present, and future (as death) constantly are bound up together.

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[258] See the introduction of this dissertation for details on my distinction between "the photograph" and the "textually mediated photograph." I am concerned with the photograph as it has been interpreted, included, narrated in the medium of language; the extent to which an *actual* photographic image represents (or does not, or cannot, represent) a particular temporality or reality is a related but, ultimately, different topic from what I investigate in this project.

Cynthia Ozick and Photography

Ozick, an avid critic and essayist, often brought photography to her interpretations of literature, and would likely have been attuned to photography as a productive framework through which to interpret literary temporality and death. In a 1995 essay on Trollope, Ozick likens his prose to a camera mounted on a helicopter, characterizing his writerly attentiveness as photographic:

> What is a photograph if not a stimulus to the most deliberate attentiveness: time held motionless in a vise of profound concentration, so that every inch of the seized moment can be examined? [. . .] The notion of the photograph as one likely key to (or recognizer of) human essence is useful enough; though we know the camera can be made to lie, we also know it as reality's aperture. We say we are in earnest about the importance of being earnest, but we frequently choose (it is the way we live now) social superstition over social truth; or the partisan simulacrum over historical reality; or furry pointillism over the unrelenting snapshot; or sentimental distortion over exact measure. All of this is just what Trollope will not do; it takes a peculiar literary nerve to admit to the way we live now. [. . .] All the same, there is the impress of grandeur in Trollope's account—or call it, with James, his photography. [. . .] His lens is wide, extraordinarily so; wide enough to let in, finally, a slim ghost of the prophetic.[259]

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[259] Ozick, "Rediscoveries."

Ozick saw a link between photography and writing—Trollope's *account* is, she says, his *photography*—and was drawn to the photograph's ability seize moments and hold time motionless. Her reading of Trollope also suggests that she saw the photograph as a fruitful analog for narrative—it is not a stretch to suggest that she considered it fertile ground for her conceptualizing temporality in her own writing.

Photography's relationship to time and death has engendered much discussion and debate among theorists, photographers, and scholars, and as an avid participant in the intellectual milieu of the 1960s and 1970s, Ozick was likely attuned to some of these discussions.[260] She almost assuredly encountered Sontag's *On Photography* (1977), which included essays published between 1973 and 1977. While Ozick's views on Sontag are ambivalent, she notes in her 2006 essay "On Discord and Desire" that she avidly read and followed Sontag's work and was even, perhaps, "too easily swayed" by her ideas, especially when Sontag was "in the period of her greatest influence" in the '60s and '70s.[261]

In *On Photography*, Sontag notes that "our oppressive sense of the transience of everything is more acute since cameras gave us the means to 'fix' the moment."[262] Thirty

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[260] The time in which Ozick was writing "Shots" was a particularly formative time in critical discourses surrounding photography. J.J. Long and Edward Welch suggest that "the late 1970s and the early 1980s can be seen, in retrospect, to mark a turning point in the fortunes of photography as an academic discipline" (Long and Welch, *Photography*, 18). Welch and Long point to several anthologies and publications that contributed to the shift: Sontag's *On Photography*; Alan Trachtenberg's anthology *Classic Essays on Photography* (1980), which collected important writing on photography from the nineteenth century to the present; Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980); and *Thinking Photography* (1982), edited by Victor Burgin. In his introduction, writing in the year 1980, Burgin explains that the collection includes "contributions towards photography theory [. . .]. I say 'towards' rather than 'to' as the theory does not yet exist" (Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, 1).
[261] Ozick, *The Din in the Head*, 6.
[262] Sontag, *On Photography*.

years later, in her short essay on Sontag, “On Discord and Desire,” Ozick agrees with Sontag’s perception that cameras do not defeat transience or mortality but make it more palpable:

> Much of her [Sontag’s] life will endure in photographs—but cameras, she argued, do not so much defeat transience as render it “more acute.” Still, here she is on the back cover of my browning paperback copy of *The Benefactor*, a first novel published in 1963, when she was thirty: dark-haired, dark-browed, sublimely perfected in her youth.[263]

This quotation encapsulates the apparent contradiction in photography that Ozick was drawn to explore in “Shots”—that even as the photograph “holds time motionless,” in Ozick’s words, in so doing, it testifies to time’s relentless melt. It is through her position as a viewer that even as it renders transience more acute, the photograph of a young Sontag seems to defeat transience: “still, here she is.” Through the photograph, the images of the now-dead can be “here,” in the present of the viewer, “sublimely perfected” in their “youth.” This brief reading of Sontag’s author photograph reveals her attention to the photograph’s apparently contradictory temporal conditions.

Ozick’s interviews demonstrate an abiding interest in photography generally, and especially in the “eerie” temporal experience of viewing a photograph. In a 1985 interview, when asked about her interest in photography, Ozick said,

> I’m drawn to the eeriness of photography, the way it represents both mortality and immortality. It both stands for death and stands against death because it's statuary. It doesn't move. It's immobile like the dead,

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[263] Ozick, *The Din in the Head*, 5.

> and it also saves. It's such a mystery. It's a mystery of a verisimilitude surrounded by, if I can use that word again, a penumbra of all kinds of unknown things. The past can stay, but it's only one split second, just a fragment which may completely misrepresent everything else, all the other moments around it, or it may stand for those other moments. There are so many questions to ask about any single snapshot. There's something so moving about finding an old snapshot of people one knows, one's own family. When I read biographies, I simply fall into those pictures. I think I spend more time drowning in old photographs in biographies than in the text.[264]

In answering what it is about photography that is "significant," in the interviewer's words, Ozick presents a series of apparent eerie temporal contradictions, all of which have to do with death. While Ozick herself cautioned that "one has to trust the text, [. . .] the tale and not the teller," her answer reads as though she has just finished writing "Shots," even though this interview was published seven years later.[265] One can hear in her answer echoes of Sontag, and echoes of the unnamed narrator of "Shots" explaining that what brought her to photography was her fascination with the faces of the dead. While an author's stated intentions and interests are just one piece of the puzzle, and the text may generate or invite productive readings an author didn't intend (as Ozick suggests), we may say a few things for sure. Ozick was attentive to photography's relationship to time; she framed that relationship in the context of death; and she not only acknowledged the apparent temporal contradictions of the photograph but was

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[264] Cynthia Ozick and Elaine M. Kauvar, "An Interview with Cynthia Ozick," 396–397.
[265] Ozick and Kauvar, "An Interview with Cynthia Ozick," 398.

specifically drawn to them. She did not, it seems, have answer to the “mystery”—if “Shots” is any indication, that is what excited her most.

Most of the scholarship on “Shots” does not consider the temporal concerns of the photograph. Rather, most scholars interpret photography in the story as an extended metaphor, symbol, or allegory; in this treatment, they engage with photography not as a specific medium but as a general, vague analogue for the production of art. Writing in 1983, for example, Victor Strandberg (whose article is on “the art of Cynthia Ozick” more broadly and so only briefly touches on “Shots”) grants that Ozick has written on photography with “great sensitivity” elsewhere, such as in her essays. But Strandberg argues that photography does not get such sensitive treatment in “Shots” and “shortly becomes an analogue” for Ozick’s own work as a writer and literary artist, entirely ignoring the narrative’s carefully layered, attentive interpretation of photographic temporality.[266] Elaine Kauvar’s 1987 article “Courier for the Past: Cynthia Ozick and Photography” touches on a wide range of Ozick’s writings—especially her essays and interviews—but similarly argues that “Shots” presents photography as a metaphor for *all* art: “Ozick uses the medium of photography to explore the problematic nature of art [the “problematic nature of art” is its potential for idol-making and

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[266] Victor Strandberg, “The Art of Cynthia Ozick,” 308.

idolatry[267]] and to stress the indispensable interaction between art and history."[268] Kauvar's reading is potent in the way it connects photography back to Ozick's own concerns regarding history, truth, and idolatry, but in reading the photograph purely as metaphor for the wrong kind of relationship between art and history and therefore casting the photographer's work as a cautionary tale, Kauvar does not engage with photography on its own terms; rather, she presents a stereotypical view of photography as a low art, a medium significant only for its ability to reproduce images and thereby traffic in the sin of idolatry. For Kauvar, photography in "Shots" is not much more than a serviceable extended metaphor.

Joseph Cohen's 1987 article "'Shots': A Case History of the Conflict Between Relativity Theory and the Newtonian Absolutes" takes up the temporal element of "Shots," but does not consider photography as a major element. Cohen argues that Ozick's "Shots" promotes relativity and "challenges the comfort and security we take in the Newtonian absolutes, in three-dimensional space and a separate dimension of time." For Cohen, "Shots" is a kind of parable—Verity symbolizes Newtonian absolutes, the

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[267] An ethical and moral quandary Ozick carefully and actively considered in the context of her Jewish faith was the idea of the artist as idol-maker, on the one hand, and imagination (the work of the artist and writer) as "that which sets up idols," on the other (Ozick, "The Art of Fiction," 166). Eventually, she came to "regard imagination as ineluctably linked with monotheism," though she remained unsure (in 1987, at least) of the "connection between the work of monotheism-imagining and the work of story-imagining" (Ozick, "The Art of Fiction," 167). Idolatry as the "proliferation of images" has potentially interesting links with photography, though in her essays and fiction she seems to regard photography in itself as innocent because, for her, it presents the real, not the imagined. For more on idolatry and idols in Ozick's work, see Janet Burstein, "Cynthia Ozick and the Transgressions of Art"; Adam Katz, "Iconoclastic Commitments"; and Zhange Ni, "Strange Paradise." Miriam Sivan, one of the scholars I discuss briefly here, reads the photographer as artist in "Shots" as presenting an alternative to idolatrous image-making.

[268] Elaine Kauvar, "Courier for the Past," 143.

narrator symbolizes relativity theory, and Sam symbolizes humanity. (Cohen suggests, in a somewhat reductive reading, that Verity "wins" the story because she stays married to Sam, meaning that Newtonian absolutes (Verity) triumph over relativity (the narrator) because humanity (Sam) cannot simply resist it, even though it makes humanity/him miserable.) While Cohen picks up on the narrator's nonlinear experience of time and convincingly argues that the narrator experiences time as relative, he misses the main vehicle through which this temporal condition is achieved: photography. In leaving out photography, Cohen inadvertently circumvents the story's engine, the connective tissue that nets its most compelling articulation of temporality.

Miriam Sivan's 2002 article "Framing Questions: Cynthia Ozick's 'Shots'" is unique among these in the way Sivan foregrounds the photograph. However, like Kauvar, she ultimately reads Ozick's story as a portrait of an artist, broadly considered. Sivan suggests that "Shots" offers a portrait of a moral, ethical artist seeking connection through her creation of images: "For this protagonist, a photographer, sees herself as a creator who is not only not a mere maker of idols, a trafficker in vanity, but is rather a seeker, a critical eye, a woman attempting to understand the world both ethically and aesthetically through the interpretation of what she finds in her viewfinder."[269] Sivan's study is particularly convincing in its emphasis on the narrator's work of interpretation as integral to "history" (this work of interpretation, she says, is memory). Her reading of the narrator/photographer (and the artist generally) as translator is particularly inspired: as a translator, the narrator must necessarily inhabit multiple territories, or contradictions, without choosing between them.

[269] Miriam Sivan, "Framing Questions," 51.

While Sivan does not include the temporal paradoxes of the photograph among these contradictions, she does touch on the way the narrator inhabits multiple temporal planes: “drawn to the past, looking to carry time forward into the future, she cannot rest easy in the present.”[270] Sivan does consider the medium-specific features of photography, but she accesses it from the angle of the moral/ethical quandary of the artist, and so her interest lies in the truth-telling possibilities of the photograph, i.e., the photograph as “ethical” record of reality with the power to serve as an accurate record of the past and, ultimately, of history. Her project is simply less interested in the temporal possibilities of the photograph. Photography’s truth-telling capacity and its temporal possibilities are both important to Ozick’s work. The former is Sivan’s; the latter is my focus in this project. In this sense, this chapter can be considered alongside Sivan’s as another way Ozick investigated the photograph, and its relationship to time, in her writing.

If we return to Ozick’s answer about her interest in photography, it would seem that the photograph’s peculiar “mystery” is its temporality—and its apparent contradictions are what interest her most. In her answer we can trace the two key temporal conditions of the photograph at issue in “Shots” I mentioned earlier: (1) the photograph’s ability to “stop” time by stopping death, immortalizing the photographic subject, and (2) the photograph’s ability to “freeze” an instant from the flow of moving time, making it “statuary,” “immobile like the dead.” And yet the photograph does not simply stop death or immobilize time—it also “stands *for* death,” evoking mortality as much as it suggests immortality. Here, as in “Shots,” photographs present a complex,

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[270] Sivan, “Framing Questions,” 56.

contradictory web of temporalities that arrive to the viewer through an awareness of death, as a condition of duration.

In this interview, as in the story she published seven years before it, Ozick is drawn to the photograph as a productive site for interpreting the human experience of temporality, especially the temporality of death. Rather than come down on one side or the other, "Shots" engages with the photograph's capacity to represent *both* mortality and immortality, to stand for death *and* against death, a contradiction that plays out in the narrator's experience. And as Sontag pointed out, it is a photograph's apparent fixity—the mechanistic illusion that Bergson associated with static time—that can make transience visible, more acute, more *felt* in the viewer, in the lived experience of time's duration. The story traces these contradictions in two main photographic encounters: first, in the *memento mori* of old photographs (the Brown Girl), and second, in the frozen fragment of a violent historical event—which evokes the "atomized time" of high-speed news photographs—caught by the narrator's camera. In exploring this penumbra—the shadowy space where the photograph's productive contradictions meet, compete, and are transformed by the narrator's awareness of the inevitability of death—Ozick troubles the illusion of linear time and static history.

The Brown Girl: "Time as Stasis" in a "Time Machine"

The story opens with a contradiction: "I came to photography as I came to infatuation—with no special talent for it, and *with no point of view*."[271] To photograph without a point of view while holding a camera is, of course, impossible in the physical

[271] Ozick, "Shots," 39; emphasis added.

sense—and sure enough, the narrator often describes looking through the viewfinder, "aiming" quickly and correctly, "stalking" the subjects to be photographed, all acts which require the photographer to claim a point of view by pointing the camera in a specific direction. Even in the sense of "viewpoint" as a belief, or approach, the narrator still contradicts herself almost immediately. She denies interest in photography as a means of creating art or depicting reality ("Taking pictures—when *I* take them, I mean—has nothing to do with art and less to do with reality"); she claims to be ignorant of "composition" and "any drag through a gallery makes [her] want to die."[272] She is also, she claims, decidedly not enthralled with "the camera as *machine*": "I know the hole I have to look through, and I know how to press down with my finger. The rest is thingamajig," she quips, in another dubious and self-contradictory statement; she betrays her own mechanical savvy multiple times throughout the narrative. She continues her list of denials: "What brought me to my ingenious profession was no idea of the Photograph as successor to the Painting," (with tongue-in-cheek capital *P*'s), "no pleasure in darkrooms, or in any accumulation of clanking detritus."[273] What, then, brought her to photography?

"Call it necrophilia. I have fallen in love with corpses. Dead faces draw me."[274] With these clipped sentences bringing the reader up short, the narrator has, of course, directly contradicted her opening statement: necrophilia, and an infatuation with dead faces, is quite the distinctive point of view from which to approach photography. In the span of a page, the narrator has already indicated that her statements about herself and

[272] Ozick, "Shots," 39.
[273] Ozick, "Shots," 39.
[274] Ozick, "Shots," 39.

about photography are open to contradiction, and perhaps we should take them with a grain of salt. This points to another crucial action accomplished by the first sentence: the claim "I came to photography [. . .] with no point of view" self-reflexively calls attention to the first-person point of view of the narrative itself, underscoring, as these contradictions have already shown, that whatever the narrator might say, we are accessing the action of the story—and the photographs she describes, as well their temporality—decidedly from her point of view.

She continues, "I have been ravished by the last century's faces, now motes in their graves. [. . .] I can never leave off looking at anything brown and brittle and old and decaying at the edges." This fascination with the dead arose from her discovery of "a pile of albums dumped into the leaves" near the trash barrels in a corner of the yard behind the "Home for the Elderly Female Ill" one autumn when she was eleven.[275] The photographs all depict a woman she calls the "Brown Girl." The narrator's reading of the Brown Girl photographs demonstrates the complex web of temporalities that engender multitemporal, sometimes contradictory readings. Two ideas coexist in these readings: (1) that the Brown Girl photographs appear to stop time by stopping death, immortalizing the photographic subject; and (2) that the Brown Girl photographs demonstrate the durational flow of time and the way the past, present, and future bleed into one another.

"The Brown Girl lived," the narrator says, opening the potential for two meanings: *The Brown Girl once lived but does not now* or *The Brown Girl lived on*. The location of the albums is important—the narrator is fascinated by the elderly women she

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[275] Ozick, "Shots," 40.

sees there, and she assumes that the Brown Girl might have been one of them. As a child, she would imagine that if the elderly women could only cross the property line of the Home, they would reverse age:

> I used to imagine that if one of these fearful witches could just somehow get beyond the gate, she would spill off garters and fake teeth and rheumy eye-whites and bad smells and stupid matted old flesh and begin to bloom all plump and glowing and ripe again: Shangri-La in reverse. What gave me this imagining was the Brown Girl. Any one of these pitiful decaying sacks might have once been the Brown Girl.[276]

These women have not been spared from the moving flow of time, especially the way time ages the human body. In this context, it strikes the narrator that in her photographs, "the Brown Girl lived"; saved from "matted old flesh" and "rheumy eye whites," the Brown Girl had been "shot" by the camera and thus "had been halted, arrested, stayed in her ripeness and savor."[277] Here, the photograph presents stilled time. As an immobilized subject, the Brown Girl has been sliced out of time, preserved forever.

And yet, the narrator continually contradicts the immortalized, immobilized quality of the photographs. The girl, who is "stayed in her ripeness and savor," who "lived," "lay in a pile of albums dumped into the leaves." She is a "grave girl; a sepia girl; a girl as brown as the ground." "Grave girl" refers to her "mysteriously shut," unsmiling face but also to her entombment—one of the last century's faces that ravish the narrator, the girl is a corpse, buried under the leaves. Hardly "stayed" or fixed, the implied

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[276] Ozick, "Shots," 40.
[277] Ozick, "Shots," 40.

entombment inherently points to decay. These contradictions mingle in a paragraph that is worth quoting at length for the way it flows in a push-and-pull temporal effect, styling the time of the photographs as both stasis and motion:

> Gradually (and to my eyes suddenly) I saw her age. It wasn't that the plain sad big-nosed face altered: no crinkles at the lids, no grooves digging out a distinct little parallelogram from nostril-sides to mouth-ends—or, if these were in sight, they weren't what I noticed. The face faded out—became not there. The woman turned to ghost. [. . .] The eyes whitened off. Somehow for this melancholy spinster's sake the first rule of the box camera was always being violated: not to put the sun behind your subject. A vast blurred drowning orb of sun flooded massively, habitually down from the upper right corner of her picture. Whoever photographed her, over years and years and years, meant to obliterate her. But I knew it was no sun-bleach that conspired to efface her. What I was seeing—what I *had* seen—was time. And not time on the move, either, the illusion of stories and movies. What I had seen was time as stasis, time at the standstill, time at the fix; the time (though I hadn't yet reached it in school) of Keats's Grecian urn. The face faded out because death was coming: death the changer, the collapser, the witherer; death the bleacher, blancher, whitener.

The narrator states plainly that what she had seen "was time as stasis, time at the standstill, time at the fix," not "time on the move." "Stasis," "standstill," and "fix" recall the earlier description of the Brown Girl as "halted, arrested, stayed in her ripeness and savor" by the photographs, suggesting that the immobilization of time has, in the

photograph, saved her—not just her image but the girl herself—from death. And yet, as much as time is at a standstill and not "on the move" in the images of the Brown Girl, the narrator nevertheless experiences the sensation of passing time: "gradually (and to my eyes suddenly) I saw her age" shines an imprecise light—a penumbra, perhaps, to use one of Ozick's favorite words—on the narrator's temporal sense of the photograph.

In one sense, if *age* is a verb, the narrator may be describing the experience of flipping through the album, viewing discrete instants of frozen time in succession, one after another. Taken together, the narrator's statement suggests, these instants combine to show the temporal process of aging. This would seem to present a view of atomized time, or time as a linear procession of distinctive fragment (with each photograph presenting a distinctive fragment of immobilized time). Yet this occurs "suddenly" to the narrator's eyes, suggesting the realization arrived to her both gradually but also in a single moment. Here again the narrator oscillates away from her own sense of the photograph's atomized time: it wasn't that she saw her *age* through the succession of instants that combine to show the visual transformation from young to old. She does not see "crinkles at the lids," she explains, suggesting that whether or not the photograph literally showed visible signs of an aging body is beside the point. Rather, what makes her realize her age is that "the woman turned to ghost." And here the stasis of the photograph is yoked to a temporal duration through death, the implied death—the Brown Girl's death that the narrator knows must have happened by now—that turns the woman to ghost. It is not the sun that bleaches her into a ghostly white, but "death the bleacher, blancher, whitener." The photograph stands against death; and in so doing, it stands *for* death.

It is the very fixity of the photographs—time as stasis, time at the standstill—in

the face of "death the changer," the fundamental state of alteration, that triggers the narrator's experience of time as duration. In other words, even as the photograph presents a fixed subject immobilized in time (a fly in amber, a ghost of the past transported to the present), it cannot be separated from the viewer's contextualizing, interpretive flow of lived time—the lived time of the viewer, of the photographer, and/or of the subject: "Death was coming," the narrator foretells—both the Brown Girl's, and her own. As Barthes would say, "Each photograph always contains this imperious sign of my future death."[278]

As much as the photograph allows her to see "time as stasis," the narrator notes it is also a "time machine," suggesting multidirectional movement across time, from the present to future death, from the present to past. In this, the Brown Girl gives her "the miraculous hint" that defines her approach to photography:

> What I am about [as a photographer] is the Brown Girl. I kept her. I kept her, I mean, in a pocket of my mind (and one of her pictures in the pocket of my blouse); I kept her because she was dead. What I expect you to take from this is that I *could* keep her *even though* she was dead. [. . .] What she made me see was that if she wasn't a girl any more, if she wasn't a woman any more, if she was very likely not even a member of the elderly female ill any more (by the time her photos fell among the leaves, how long had she been lying under them?), still I *had* her, actually and physically and with the certainty of simple truth. I could keep her, just as she used to be, because someone had once looked through the bunghole of a box and

[278] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 97.

> clicked off a lever. Whoever had desultorily drowned her in too much sun had anyhow given her a monument two inches wide and three inches long. What happened then was here now. I had it in the pocket of my blouse.[279]

In the Brown Girl, the narrator learns that "now will become then" but also the temporal paradox that, through the action of the camera, "what happened then" can be "here now." The Brown Girl's "miraculous hint" is a commentary on photographic temporality, but the narrator's epiphanic reaction seems to suggest it extends beyond the photograph and reframes the narrator's experience of lived time. The overlaying of *now* and *then* and *what will be* ("death was coming") epitomizes Bergson's thesis on time which, as Sandra Plummer summarizes in her work on photographic duration, "does not propose a straightforward continuity but an assemblage of simultaneous times."[280] In the human experience of time as duration, Bergson explains, we experience "the prolongation of the past into the present."[281]

The Brown Girl exposes Bazin's illusion of embalmed time in the photograph. But

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[279] Ozick, "Shots," 42. The narrator, like Ozick, sometimes views the photograph as fully representing reality, though the nature of this photographic reality is unclear, and she began the story stating that taking pictures has "nothing to do with art and less to do with reality." Ozick herself says photography is "not illusion" to her—it is "so damn literal" (Ozick, "Interview with Cynthia Ozick," 397). The narrator's statement, "I *had* her, actually and physically and with the certainty of simple truth," recalls Bazin's statement that "in spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually represented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. [. . .] No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking, in documentary value the [photographic] image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model" (Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," 8). Whatever Ozick's impressions of the photographic real, "Shots" suggests that what this reality *is* isn't always self-evident or static, and is filtered through, created by, and/or transformed by its context (which includes the viewer).

[280] Sandra Plummer, "Photography and Duration."

[281] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*," 17.

Bergson argues that the "time as stasis" that the photograph promises—the idea time can be separated into instants and frozen—is not how humans experience lived time. But the photograph's apparent presentation of stasis, immobilization, and immortalization are what evokes the transitoriness that defines the mortal condition. As Sontag points out, the photograph's ability to remind us of death *depends* on the photographic paradox of depicting of time as stasis: "Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt."[282] What the narrator's encounter with the Brown Girl illustrates is that this temporal paradox, which for both Sontag and Ozick is crucial to their understanding of photography, depends on the collision of the photograph's frozen, embalmed time with the viewer's own lived experience of time as duration. After all, Sontag's chosen term—*testifying* to time's relentless melt—implies an audience. The temporal paradoxes of the photograph—it is both immortalizing and death-signing; it shows both "time as stasis" and "time's relentless melt"; it testifies that "now will become then" but allows "what happened then" to be "here now"—are all held, simultaneously, in the narrator.

The narrator's experience of viewing the Brown Girl photographs therefore highlights the role of the viewer in the framework of photographic temporality as duration. The photograph collides with the narrator's own interpretive flow of lived time—the lived time of the viewer, of the photographer, and/or of the subject. If the photograph is an intervention in time—a breaking into, or out of, or from, time (or all three)—that "rescues" time from corruption and embalms it, even so the photograph cannot escape the inevitability of time. The reverse implication of temporariness, and

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[282] Sontag, *On Photography*.

meta-awareness of situatedness in time, arises within the viewer.

Although the photograph of the Brown Girl may seem to capture her, preserve her (and in a sense, it does), the time that passes between the exposure and the viewing renders her image always already dead, not rescued, but made into a ghost. The photograph, then, is not simply a depiction of an intervention in the ongoing event, a slice of the ongoing stream of time; the depicted moment is itself looped into the viewer's continuum of lived experience that ends, ultimately, in death. For this reason, the narrator cannot divide the photograph from death, and Ozick highlights this illusion—of stasis-in-temporariness—as a narrative device. The *memento mori* that serves as monument of the girl by "halt[ing], arrest[ing], stay[ing] her in her ripeness and savor," also evokes the transitoriness of each moment, allows for the past to well up into the viewer's present, and suggests the viewer's own mortality. In other words, the narrator's death-awareness achieves the nonlinear time of duration as it is translated by the viewer's lived experience: the past is knotted up with the present and "gnaws into the future"; past, present, and future are states that pass into and through each other "amid continuous change."[283]

In casting the narrator as caught in that paradox, oscillating between this set of temporal contradictions, "Shots" suggests that however the photograph may relate to time, it cannot be separated from the duration, the interpretive flow of lived time as experienced by the viewer. For the narrator, the Brown Girl photographs blur the boundaries between death and life through the durational temporality of lived experience. But even as the photographs of the Brown Girl stop time via

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[283] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 4.

immortalization, they signify death and caducity; even as the narrator marvels that she can keep the Brown Girl in her pocket, *just* as she was, “the face faded out because death was coming: death the changer, the collapser.” The Brown Girl’s miraculous hint comprises the short story’s first section, and it comes full circle in the third and final section of the story, when the narrator becomes the Brown Girl incarnate and the narrator’s own mortality is mirrored back. But a middle section intervenes, beginning with a warning, or an admittance: “Knowing this—that now will become then, that huge will turn little—doesn’t cure.” Perhaps this is because, as Bergson says, “We do not *think* real time, we *live* it.”[284] We must still live through the now that will become then, what the narrator calls “these middle parts,” as the narrator’s entry into her middle section suggests.

“The Exact Instant”: The Atomized Temporality of High-Speed Photography

While the photograph has long been associated with preservation, immortalization, and immobilization from the time of its invention, discourses surrounding photographic temporality following advancements in high-speed photography highlighted the concept of the instant, the “thin slice,”[285] the infinitesimal unit of time that the photograph could capture and preserve. This coincided with the common mid-twentieth-century experience of encountering photographic images of death and violence in news outlets: “In the urban and industrialized areas of the Western world,” Audrey Linkman notes in her history of *Photography and Death*, “most of us had relatively little first-hand experience of death yet we grew to become avid consumers of vicarious and violent

[284] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 46.
[285] Szarkowski, “Introduction,” 5.

death—both actual and fictional—through print, broadcast and Internet-based media."[286] "Shots" explores both the temporality and the violence of these fraction-of-a-second news photographs. In the middle section of "Shots," the narrator describes several key photographic moments, the first of which is the photograph she takes of a simultaneous translator at the exact instant he is shot in the neck.

First, I read the narrator's photograph of the simultaneous translator alongside fraction-of-a-second photography—ultra-high-speed photographs (which epitomized the photographic representation of atomized time) and well-known news photographs that captured the moments surrounding a gunshot—to argue that "Shots" raises the photographic temporal concept of atomized time. Photographs that depicted atomized time—time in infinitesimal slices, increments too quick for human eyes to detect—seemed to represent time as a linear procession of instants. I suggest that "Shots" complicates this view of photographic temporality, suggesting instead that the photograph's relationship to time is durational, interpreted through the temporality (and death-awareness) of the viewer.

The narrator met Sam, she explains, through her work as a photographer: she was assigned to photograph a series of symposia he was chairing. Sam is a professor of South American history, and his college

> was setting up a glossy little booklet for the State Department to win South American friends with: I had to shoot Sam on the podium, with Uruguayans, Sam on the podium with Brazilians [. . .]. It was a lackluster job—I had just come, not so long ago, from photographing an intergalactic

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[286] Audrey Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 154.

> physicist whose bravest hope was the invention of an alphabet to shoot into [. . .] the cosmos—so it was no trouble at all not to listen to the speeches.[287]

Her description suggests that she works primarily as a photojournalist. Later she mentions that an "editor" had assigned her the intergalactic physicist shoot, indicating that, perhaps, she is employed by a specific news outlet, magazine, or other publication; or her comment that during the symposia assignment she and Sam "had—temporarily—the same employer" may indicate freelance status. Either way, the fact that the narrator is a photojournalist assigned to cover public and/or newsworthy events for publication locates her in the tradition of photojournalism, the practice of capturing action as it unfolds. As a photojournalist, she must do the "lackluster" work of "shoot[ing] Sam on the podium with Uruguayans, Sam on the podium with Brazilians," and so on, but she also photographs unposed subjects, "pop[s] flashbulbs," arrests instants, immobilizes movement.[288] It is this capability that allows her to accidentally expose death on film: during one of the symposia, a simultaneous translator is shot in the neck just before the narrator "shoots" him with her camera. The narrator photographs the translator at exactly the instant that "blood springs from a hole in his neck."[289]

This photograph highlights the concept of the photograph as an infinitesimal slice of time, what Belden-Adams described as the "normative expectation" that "photography operates by the logic of the temporal fragment" by representing "a brief instant, or 'atomized,' view of time."[290] Following advancements in (and the

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[287] Ozick, "Shots," 43.
[288] Ozick, "Shots," 46.
[289] Ozick, "Shots," 43.
[290] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Modernity, Temporality*, 17.

proliferation of) high-speed photography, the camera's ability to capture fraction-of-a-section exposures became central to "conceptions of the medium" of photography[291] and contributed to the common idea that the camera interrupted "the stream of time" by stilling objects, people, and phenomena in motion.[292] If we read the narrator's photograph of the simultaneous translator in the context of high-speed photography, which would have been a staple of the photojournalist narrator's trade, it becomes clear that the narrator's killing "shot" allows the narrative to consider (and later, complicate) the illusion of atomized time that high-speed photography perpetuated.

Atomized time was epitomized in ultra-high-speed photography experiments that, Belden-Adams argues, were vital in creating the expectation of the photograph as depicting a temporal fragment, or brief instant. André Bazin demonstrates the view of atomized time when he writes that "photography is a feeble technique" compared to cinema "in the sense that its instantaneity compels it to capture time only piecemeal."[293] In his contribution to *The Photography Reader*, Peter Wollen points to the temporal fragment as a common theme in discussions of photography, in which "photographs appear as devices for stopping time and preserving fragments of the past, like flies in amber."[294] This echoes Bazin, who again refers to the "instant" inscribed by the photograph, in which the past is "enshrouded as it were in an instant, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber."[295] It is this conceptualization of photographic time to which Bergson refers, and he defines his

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[291] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Temporality, Modernity*, 18.
[292] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940*, 100.
[293] André Bazin, "Theater and Cinema (Part Two)," 96–97.
[294] Peter Wollen, "Fire and Ice," 76.
[295] Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," 14.

theory of duration against it.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, developments like faster shutters, increased sensitivity of photochemical materials, improved lenses, the introduction of the glass flash bulb (developed by Paul Vierkötter in 1925),[296] and other innovations eventually made it possible for the camera to capture moments of time that happened too quickly for the human eye and brain to perceive.[297] Motion studies like the galloping horses of Eadweard Muybridge in the 1870s and 1880s, for example, achieved exposures depicting frozen moments of motion that made it seem as though time had "stood still."[298] By the end of the nineteenth century, "accurate exposures of 1/5000th of a second could be made."[299] Photographs like these cemented the impression that the

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[296] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Temporality, and Modernity*, 18; Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography,* 131.

[297] This trajectory toward shorter photographic durations was not entirely linear or totalizing. Mauricio Lissovsky notes, "It is known that the technical conditions for the emergence of modern photography had already been in existence since the last quarter of the 19th century," but between about 1880 and 1920, photographers exhibited an interest in incorporating longer durations back into the medium, e.g., in panoramas, stereoscopic images, spirit photographs, and the like. This interest in "expanding time" in the photograph waned, however, and within a generation "photography and instantaneity thus became synonymous" (Lissovsky, "Photographic Device as Waiting Machine"). As is true of any technology, general advancements in photographic technology did not preclude alternative or diversified practices. Nevertheless, the photograph as an instant was (and is) the most common (perhaps the stereotypical) way of framing photography's relationship to time, especially news photography. See Baetens, Streitberger, and Van Gelder, *Time and Photography*, for a balanced treatment.

[298] The captions of Eadweard Muybridge's famous series *The Horse in Motion* (1878) claim he achieved shutter speeds of less than 1/2000th of a second, though Newhall notes that this may have been an exaggeration (Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 119–120). For other studies on Muybridge's images and other early practitioners of chronophotography and especially its relationship to film, see Louise Hornby, *Still Modernism*; Phillip Prodger, *Time Stands Still*; Rebecca Solnit, *River of* Shadows; Marta Braun, *Picturing Time* (on the work of Étienne-Jules Marey); David Green and Joanna Lowry, *Stillness and Time*.

[299] Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 128.

camera could "manipulate time" by freezing individual instants from the temporal past, instants that were inaccessible to human perception even as they occurred.[300] In reliably depicting objects and people in motion with clarity (in the right conditions), these advancements in cameras of the twentieth century "marked a measured degree of human conquest over time itself."[301] And "once 'conquered,' the representation of a brief instant, or 'atomized,' view of time, in a full field, was institutionalized around the fin de siècle as '*the*' way a photograph relates to time."[302]

The stroboscopic flash work of Harold Edgerton in 1931, for example, achieved exposures of one-millionth of a second.[303] Ultra-high speeds like these were (and are) not generally possible or necessary for the average amateur photographer,[304] but the

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[300] Harold Edgerton and James R. Killian, Jr., *Moments of Vision: The Stroboscopic Revolution in Photography*, 6.
[301] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Temporality, Modernity*, 18.
[302] Belden-Adams, *Photography, Temporality, Modernity*, 17. It is important to note that the idea that photography presented "atomized" time also likely developed alongside the novel temporal experience of viewing motion pictures. Louise Hornby argues, for example, that "photographic stillness gained a critical new visibility in the context of film's invention at the end of the nineteenth century, pressing a medium-specific tautology (still photography is still) into the service of a formal aesthetic (photographic stillness). [. . .] Against the backdrop of modernity's kinetic drive, photography formalizes stillness as a kind of difference" in contradistinction to the motion of film (Hornby, *Still Modernism*, 2). Hornby's concept of "stillness" encompasses the "atomized time" Belden-Adams describes. Although my project does not consider film, it is nevertheless important to note that conventional ideas about photography's relationship to time were necessarily related to, and perhaps defined in contradistinction with, the temporality of motion pictures. Also see David Green and Joanna Lowry*, Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*.
[303] Edgerton's stroboscopic flash device released rapid bursts of light which, when deployed in a completely dark room before a camera with an open shutter. In these experiments, the exposure time was not constrained by the speed of the shutter, but rather the speed of the light bursts. William Henry Fox Talbot had already explored a very similar approach using sparks as his source of illumination in 1851.
[304] An article in the *New York Times* reviewing new, more sensitive high-speed films in 1955 suggests that high-speed photographs were still relatively new to the casual or amateur photographer: "The hue-and-cry for speed and more speed, for ratings as high as 1,000 A. S. A. [. . .] comes primarily from the professional magazine photographers

images they created extended the atomized conceptualization of photographic temporality to its farthest possible degree and cemented this conceptualization in the public imagination. Edgerton's stroboscopic photographs of ordinary, everyday things in motion circulated widely and revealed that there is often a drama of motion within the microseconds that are imperceptible to the human eye.[305] His famous milk drop photographs, which capture the 1/1000th of a second in which a drop of milk hits a surface and sends up a spectacular diadem, exemplify the curious, entrancing imagery of the temporal fragment. What we experience as a single instant—the small *splat* of a droplet hitting a surface—is sliced into a multitude of instants. In Edgerton's favorite of these instants, tentacles bloom upward and outward in an almost perfect circlet, a "diadem, decorated with pearls above the rim" (figure 5).[306] Looking the spectacular display of this frozen instant, it is easy to see why photographs like these contributed to the snapshot theory, or atomized view of time. The photograph's capacity to freeze or stop time by isolating an instant, or fragment of time, was, in fact, an explicitly articulated theme in the circulation of Edgerton's photographs.[307]

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and their numerous amateur or would-be-professional imitators," but the author advises that for most photographers, "medium-speed film" (rated up to 100 ASA) would suffice (Jacob Deschin, "Using the High-Speed Films").

[305] Edgerton's photographs of everyday objects in motion (hovering hummingbirds with wings miraculously unblurred, a leaping dancer, a tennis ball colliding with the net of a racket, a breaking glass) were popular and received wide-ranging coverage, appearing in newspapers, *Times* magazine, and in the *Life* magazine feature "Speaking of Pictures" (1936–1941).

[306] Harold Edgerton and James R. Killian, Jr., *Flash!*, iii. The popularity of these photographs continues today. Edgerton's most famous iteration of the milk drop coronet, *Milk Drop, 1957* (this time bursting on the surface of a brilliant red table, the milky pearls made pink in the reflected light), was recently included in *Time* magazine's compendium of the "100 most influential photographs of all time." See Tim Goldberger, "Most Influential Photos"; and "Milk Drop," a video by *Time* magazine.

[307] Waldemar Kaempffert's "Everyday Marvels Revealed by a Speed Camera," a 1934 *New York Times* article that enthusiastically details Edgerton's stroboscopic

Figure 5. Harold Edgerton, *Milk Drop Coronet* (1936; printed later). Gelatin silver print, 45.6 x 36.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of The Harold and Esther Edgerton Family Foundation, 1997. © MIT, Harold Edgerton, 2014, courtesy of Palm Press, Inc.

Edgerton's ultra-high-speed photographic experiments are the epitome of atomized time. Geoffrey Batchen points to Edgerton's photographs as a typification of

photographs, marvels at the images as demonstrating the "infinitesimal problem of time" (Kaempffert, "Everyday Marvels Revealed by a Speed Camera). A *New York Times* review of Edgerton's book, *Flash! Seeing the Unseen by Ultra High-Speed Photography* (1940), remarks that "it is something to goggle at, but never quite grasp, this infinitesimal fragment of time which [Edgerton] has frozen into immobility" (*New York Times,* "On Freezing Speed with a Camera").

the "quintessential cliché of the photographic" slice of time;[308] Belden-Adams likewise suggests that at the time of their reception, they were seen as "archetypes for our conceptions of the medium's conventional, fraction-of-a-second relationship to time."[309] These conceptions of the photograph's temporal fragment applied not just to *ultra*-high-speed pictures but to high-speed photographs or action photography, exemplified in many news photographs. Many of the advancements that enabled Edgerton's experiments also made possible the photographic expression of news and public events that previously "had otherwise largely eluded [photographic] historical accounting,"[310] and high-speed photographs became a permanent fixture in magazines and newspapers in the twentieth century.[311] The title Edward Steichen chose for his 1949 MoMA exhibit on news photography, "The Exact Instant," points to the high-speed photograph's ability to depict a precise fraction of a second as one of the major narratives of progress in the

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[308] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*, 125.
[309] Belden-Adams, "Harold Edgerton and Complications of the 'Photographic Instant,'" 99.
[310] Jason Hill, "An Exact Instant in the History of the Modern," 110.
[311] Particularly in the earlier part of the twentieth century, this was not without its challenges. The ability to take a clear photograph of an object in motion was then (as it still is now, especially for the amateur photographer) contingent on light conditions, the angle of the subject's motion relative to the film, the camera's shutter speed capabilities, the film speed, and so on. A 1938 *New York Times* article offering advice on the photography of moving objects points out that photographers seeking to obtain clear photographs of sporting events may be best served by taking photographs during "dead action" to avoid blurring caused by the rapid movement of the subject's hands or head, or by favoring head-on motion over broadside views, since rapid movement from left to right across the frame, the author notes, requires "so short of an exposure as to be beyond the capacity of the shutter" (Robert W. Brown, "For Filming Fast Action"). There are other considerations as well, including the constraints of the print medium (image resolution, for example). But despite these challenges, objects in motion could still be stilled and printed clearly: the same *New York Times* article is accompanied by a photograph of a baseball player suspended in midair with perfect clarity, hovering over third base.

history of news photography.[312]

This was a common view in the decade in which Ozick was writing. A 1979 article, offering advice to instructors on teaching the photograph to college students, reflects this view, connecting split-second photographs to a view of history as something that could be frozen, firmly rooted in the past and separated from the present:

> In Edward [*sic*] Muybridge's studies, for example, *time is stopped* as the viewer analyzes the bodily postures of human beings and animals, the transfer of weight, the position of limbs in motion and balance, and the tension-relaxation of muscles during split second intervals. Photography also *stops psychological time* for our contemplation. [. . .] In another sense, the camera *freezes social time as symbolized by the* [. . .] *documentation of historical events*.[313]

In rendering moments of motion that the human eye and brain could not isolate, high-speed photographs suggested that these discrete slices of the temporal past could be frozen and snapped off, isolated from the unidirectional flow of time, a fragment of the past that is otherwise inaccessible to the viewer in the present. The connection between this atomized photographic temporality and the title of the "snapshot theory" of time is self-evident. This is the temporality Ozick explored in the photograph of the simultaneous translator.

Shooting the Simultaneous Translator

As Sontag writes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "To catch a death actually

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[312] See Deschin, "The Exact Instant."
[313] Roy H. Quan, "Photography and the Creation of Meaning," 6; emphasis added.

happening and embalm it for all time is something only cameras can do, and pictures taken by photographers out in the field of the moment of (or just before) death are among the most celebrated and often reproduced of war photographs."[314] Sontag's example is Eddie Adams's pivotal photograph of the execution of Vietcong fighter Nguyen Van Lem. The photograph famously depicts the exact moment of the gunshot; though no blood is visible, the temporal tension between the gun and the side of the prisoner's head is intense, separated only by a few palpable microseconds.[315] Often credited for causing a shift in American public opinion on the Vietnam War, what made this image so impactful is arguably its fraction-of-a-second temporality. As Maggie Astor's recent article on the lasting impact of the images puts it, "this last *instant* of his life would be *immortalized* on the front pages of newspapers nationwide."[316] Writing in 2018, Astor still points to the photograph's immortalization of the instant—its ability to freeze a fraction of a second from the rapid flow of time—as the locus of its power.

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[314] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. This quote sadly presages the photographs of Sontag that her partner Annie Leibovitz took during her illness and death in 1998. Leibovitz's photographs—published in 2006 in *A Photographer's Life*—document a "death actually happening"; not instantly, but over the course of a few months following her second cancer diagnosis. Leibovitz photographed Sontag's dead body—laid out in the funeral home, barely recognizable as Sontag but clothed in a dress she loved. Aesthetically, Leibovitz's images of Sontag's dead body are loving but unflinching, very unlike the stylized, romanticized nineteenth-century postmortem photographs that were often arranged to suggest sleep or peacefulness. Although aesthetically different, Leibovitz's impulse seems to have arisen from a similar place: the urge to document a beloved life, to visually preserve a loved one's embodied form. For more on Leibovitz's photographs of Sontag, see Linkman, *Photography and Death*, 182–186.

[315] Unlike the photograph of the simultaneous translator and the image of Mayor William Gaynor, Sontag notes that the photograph of Nguyen Van Lem was staged; the executioner, Brigadier General and police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan, told the photographers where to stand, and the photographers knew the execution was imminent. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

[316] Maggie Astor, "A Photo That Changed the Course of the Vietnam War"; emphasis added.

News photographs like the one of Nguyen Van Lem may very well have inspired Ozick in a general sense; the photograph was circulated widely in the weeks following its release, generated much discussion, and would probably have been difficult to miss. But there is another news photograph that Ozick may have been directly referencing: William Warnecke's photograph of the attempted assassination of William Gaynor, the Mayor of New York.[317] In the summer of 1910, Gaynor was standing on the deck of an ocean liner, about to embark on a trip to Europe. Photographers and reporters were already on the scene, covering the mayor's departure, when Gaynor was shot in the neck by a would-be assassin.[318] Warnecke, a photographer for *New York World*, caught the moment on camera. Most reports and captions of the image, such as the inscription on a mounted copy of the photograph (figure 6), indicate that the photograph was taken "seconds after" the shot. Anthologies and surveys that cover Warnecke's image emphasize the novelty of a photograph taken instants after a major event; the speed with which the photographer took the photograph; and the way the image seems to freeze the moment of violence, suspending it.

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[317] As far as I have been able to determine, no other studies have yet connected the narrator's photograph of the simultaneous translator to Warnecke's photograph of Mayor William Gaynor.

[318] Gaynor survived and continued his work as mayor, but the wound (and the bullet, which remained lodged in his throat until his death) caused significant damage and made speaking and eating difficult. He died three years after the assassination attempt of a heart attack. Some historians have concluded that his decline in health is attributable to his injury. See William R. Hochman, "The Shooting of William Gaynor."

Figure 6. William Warnecke, "World photographer Wm. Werneke [*sic*] snapped this 'shot' seconds after James J. Gallagher pumped bullets into Mayor Wm. J. Gaynor (of New York) [. . .]" (1910). Photograph, 20.1 x 25.1 cm. New York Public Library, Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History.

Ozick's simultaneous translator scene and Warnecke's photograph have both situational facts and imagery in common (figure 6). Neither photographer expected violence—the shot through the neck is wildly out of context—but both photographers captured it. Both Gaynor and the fictional translator are shot through the neck, and in

each, the photographer captures the instant *after* the bullet has exited the neck and blood springs from the wound. There is another, smaller parallel that may suggest a direct reference. In "Shots," the bullet that killed the simultaneous translator was actually meant for the Chilean vice-consul ("the celebrity of the day," in the narrator's words) who was also present on the stage.[319] The liner on which Gaynor was shot had another distinguished passenger that day: the Chilean president. Gaynor talked with him moments before his attempted assassination, and according to Gaynor's son, who was also present, witnesses at first thought it was the Chilean President who had been shot.[320]

That Ozick would have encountered Warnecke's photograph, either through her general interest in photography or through research for this story,[321] is not difficult to imagine; it was (and still is) often included in compendiums of photography history, especially histories of news photography.[322] Even if the similarities between the real photograph and the fictional one are entirely coincidental, and Ozick arrived at the idea

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[319] Ozick, "Shots," 43.
[320] Hochman, "The Shooting of William Gaynor," 61.
[321] In interviews she describes conducting extensive research for her fiction projects. When writing *The Cannibal Galaxy*, for example, she was reading "street maps of Paris. Guide books about Paris. Anything I could find on the Marais, on the rue des Rosiers, for instance: the Jewish quarter" (Ozick, "Art of Fiction," 159). That she would read "anything she could find" on photography for a story that features many specifics about taking and viewing photographs is not difficult to imagine.
[322] In Ozick's own time, the 1974 photobook "*Click": A Pictorial History of the Photograph* includes the photograph, with the following caption: "In the midst of this confusion the photographer remained calm and his picture of the blood-spattered Mayor lurching into the arms of an aide has become part of photographic history" (quoted in Sontag, *On Photography*). Earlier examples include Edward Steichen's 1949 MoMA exhibit on news photography, "The Exact Instant"; and Walker Evans's collage album of picture press clippings, "Pictures of the Time: 1925–1935. For a more recent example, see the 2015 anthology *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*, which features a chapter on the photograph of Gaynor.

for the simultaneous translator's photograph without any awareness of Warnecke's, the image and the way it was discussed in the media nevertheless present a useful a case study for some of the temporal conditions the simultaneous translator photograph will explore. Like the photograph of the execution of Nguyen Van Lem, Warnecke's photograph also attracted attention precisely because it was taken so close to the moment Gaynor was struck. The fact that the photograph occurred at nearly the instant Gaynor was shot was a common narrative in its circulation. The reason it was hailed as "one of the finest news pictures ever made"[323] would seem to be the atomicity of the moment it represents, and its temporal closeness to the instant of the injury.[324]

Warnecke's photograph represents a news photograph of a brief, significant instant of frenzied action "held motionless," "to that every inch of the seized moment can be examined," to borrow Ozick's phrasing. The two men on either side of Gaynor are rushing to Gaynor's aid, and yet their hands, faces, and heads are not blurred. Like the

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[323] The copy in the New York Public Library's holdings has this inscription printed on the mount: "World photographer Wm. Werneke [*sic*] snapped this 'shot' seconds after James J. Gallagher pumped bullets into Mayor Wm. J. Gaynor (of New York) neck on deck of S.S. Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse, (North German Lloyd Line) Pier 2, Hoboken, N.J. Aug. 9, 1910. One of the finest news pictures ever made." Here, and elsewhere the image was circulated, the photograph's value is its temporal closeness to the actual moment.

[324] Because photographers were already there to cover Gaynor's departure, there were other photographs of Gaynor taken in the minutes after he was shot, but Warnecke's received the distinction of being taken at nearly the same moment the bullet struck Gaynor. The photographs that were perceived as less instantaneous received significantly less attention in the media, presumably because they were at a greater temporal distance from the moment the bullet struck Gaynor's neck. See, for example, the photograph by Leslie Jones, "Mayor Gaynor of New York after being shot" (1910), glass negative, 4 x 5 in., Leslie Jones Collection, Boston Public Library. In Jones's photograph, a long stream of blood is suspended in midair as it drips from Gaynor's nose as two men grasp his arms, looking around wildly for help. At the time of writing, this image is available to view digitally at https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/5805032561.

narrator's photograph of the translator's blood suspended in midair, Warnecke's photograph shows blood splattering from Gaynor's nose, mouth, and neck, darkening his suit and hand. Higher resolutions of this image reveal droplets of blood suspended in midair beneath his lower lip. Together, instantaneity and immobilization suggest the "sliced out," "frozen" moment that Sontag described, a temporal action that here also functions as *memento mori*, a reminder of mortality of the viewer and of the subject. The photograph also hints at the passive violence of the photographer who engages with the subject's mortality by snapping the shot—the man on Gaynor's left meets the camera's eye with a puzzled, accusing look.

Each of these temporal elements are also evident in the narrator's photograph of the simultaneous translator, who sits on the stage with Sam and the others, translating the speeches in real time into his microphone.

> He kept [his microphone] oddly close to his lips, like a kiss, sweat sliding and gleaming along his neck—it seemed he was tormented by that bifurcated concentration. His suffering attracted me. He didn't count as one of the principals—the celebrity of the day (now it was night, the last of the dark raining afternoon) was the vice-consul of Chile—but I shot him anyhow, for my own reasons: I liked the look of that shining sweat on his bulging Adam's apple. I calculated my aim (I'm very fast at this), shot once, shot again, and was amazed to see blood spring out of a hole in his neck. The audience fell apart—it was like watching an anthill after you've kicked into it; there was a spaghetti of wires and police; the simultaneous

translator was dead.[325]

Immediately evident here is the corollary between photography and violence, a connection between camera and weapon bound in the double meaning of the word "shot." The way she narrates this scene, the killing shot *is* the photograph—there is no bullet, only the attraction of her target, the quickly calculated aim, and the shots of the camera.[326] Sontag pointed out the passive violence of the photojournalist who captures suffering or violence rather than intervening or aiding the subject, a violence that transfers to the viewer (who views from a distance).[327] Like Warnecke's impulse to take a photograph of the bleeding mayor (a morally questionable impulse, as the man looking into the lens seems to say), it is the translator's "suffering" that draws the narrator and makes her want to "shoot" him. It recalls Sontag's statement that "just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder—a soft murder."[328] The narrator protests that "it's film in there, not bullets," and that she doesn't "shoot to kill," but her unintended (or intended) puns—"stalking," "aiming," "shooting"—seem to suggest a subliminal awareness of the camera's interrelatedness to mortality, a participation "in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability."

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[325] Ozick, "Shots," 43.

[326] In this sense, Ozick's narrator-photographer is an example of a larger literary tradition of depicting the photographer as "the acting agent of death," as Joanna Madloch puts it in her a brief overview of literary portraits of the photographer. In the literary works Madloch considers, the photographer may be cast as a murderer and/or, recalling Bazin's characterization of photography as mummification, "an embalmer, who on the one hand deals with the dead body, but on the other secures the immortality of the image" ("Remarks on the Literary Portrait of the Photographer and Death," 381).

[327] As is well-known, this is a critique Sontag leveled against war photography and photojournalists' coverage of suffering and violence in *On Photography* and *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

[328] Sontag, *On Photography*.

Wielding her camera, the narrator is less a murderer, more an undertaker, embalming the instant of time against corruption; as she explains in the first pages of the story, as a photographer "I have a grasp on what I am about, and it isn't any of that. What it is, is the Brown Girl. I kept her [. . .] because she was dead." Applying her self-described photographic ideology to her image of the translator, her interest in capturing the vital "shining sweat" on his "bulging Adam's apple" suggests that she wishes to memorialize him. That he will someday be dead seems to be part of her internal (if unconscious) motivation. If her camera is a weapon, it is only subliminally violent insofar as it allows her to participate in the subject's mortality. It is fitting that, like the Brown Girl, the narrator's photographs of the translator will, by the time they are developed, depict a face that is dead.

In narrating her killing shot, the narrator styles time in a *flow*-stop-*flow* sequence as she zeroes in on his neck through her viewfinder: the sweat slides down his neck, then is halted as it shines on his Adam's apple. There she stops, calculates her aim and shoots. The repetition of "shot once, shot again" requires the reader to stay in the viewfinder for another beat, even as it suggests the instantaneity of her shots, the staccato "popping" of flash bulbs. Then blood springs from his neck, and the frenzied motion of a kicked anthill explodes on the scene. Even as the photographic moment suggests slowed time, it also evokes the lauded instantaneity of Warnecke's famous news photograph. "I calculated my aim (I'm very fast at this), shot once, shot again" not only literally describes swiftness but syntactically mirrors it: the span of a single moment is fittingly relayed in an asyndetic, brisk sequence. That the photographer can take one shot directly after another without much time intervening, that she can capture the brief instant in which blood "springs" out of his neck, evokes the frozen, atomized time of the

high-speed photograph: the photojournalist's unblurred, immobilized photograph of a historical event in action.

If the photograph isolates and suspends an infinitesimal, singular moment—as many assumed—then it would follow that time is a procession of these singular instants; past instants are followed by present instants, and there is no duration or transitional action—experiences of the past and future are inaccessible to our current moment. There is only the current instant we are living in—the present. This is why Bergson sees photographic time as an example of mechanistic time, and the opposite of the durational experience in which "our present states" are not separated from "our former states."[329]

The narrator continually compares herself to the translator—their work is similar, she suggests, and she constantly feels a "sting" in her neck. The fact that her "shot" coincides with the translator's death underscores an intervention in his mortality, but as his double she sees her own death in his photograph. In photographing the translator, the narrator has captured a fragment of time, immobilizing it from the flow of motion; but she has also captured transitoriness in "death the changer," the moment of ultimate transition: from life to death. The translator's death expands well beyond the instantaneous duration of the photographed moment. The narrator's photograph thus vividly epitomizes the idea she discovered in the Brown Girl: that even as they seem to "stop death" or present an instantaneous fragment of time, blood frozen in midair, photographs blur the boundaries between death and life and in the expansive duration of the viewer's temporal consciousness.

Following the narrator's photograph of the simultaneous translator, which tacitly

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[329] Bergson, *Time and Free Will.*

evokes the atomized time of the high-speed photograph and explores its interaction with the narrator's durational time, "Shots" offers a more explicit discussion of the snapshot theory of time that Bergson railed against. To review, the snapshot theory of time, what I have called "atomized time" following Belden-Adams, suggested that our experience of time is "akin to static, motion-free 'snapshots' or 'stills.' Our streams of consciousness are composed of continuous successions of these static conscious states." In this view, time is unidirectional and linear; past moments are "snapshots" relegated to the past. Both scholarly and public viewers saw the photograph's instantaneous, atomized time as suggesting the snapshot theory of time. Synthesizing Siegfried Kracauer's and Walter Benjamin's remarks[330] on photography and history, Elena Gualtieri argues that photography was seen to present time as a linear, static vector, noting that photography was the "technological realization of a certain conception history" that "rests on a linear model of temporality which marks the past off as a separate dimension, as the object of historical knowledge rather than as an integrated part of lived experience." The photograph, in this sense, was seen as "materializ[ing] this particular kind of past."[331] Sam articulates this view of photographic atomized time a few pages later.

Shortly after the narrator "shoots" the simultaneous translator, she attends a party, bringing along her Polaroid and photographing attendees: rather than her usual camera, "I'd carried along a tacky Polaroid instead—instant development, a detective story without a detective, ah I disliked that idea, but the evening needed its jester. I aimed and shot, aimed and shot, handing out portraits deciduously," evoking the dead-

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[330] Siegfried Kracauer, *Threshold*; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

[331] Elena Gualtieri, "The Grammar of Time," 155–156.

leaf imagery of the Brown Girl.[332] Introducing another type of camera with another type of temporality (in which the picture is ready for viewing closer to the temporal moment it was taken) allows the narrative to further explore the camera's illusion of instantaneity.

The instantaneity of the Polaroid development chafes her. Later, Sam asks the narrator about her Polaroid camera: "Verity saw at the party that you had the kind of camera that gets you the picture right away." The narrator is quick to correct him that even the quick turnaround of the Polaroid is not instant: "Not exactly right away. You have to wait a minute." Sam asks, "Why don't you use a camera like that all the time? It's magic. It's like a miracle." She replies, "Practical reasons of the trade. [. . .] It's just that you have to wait. You really have to *wait*. What's important is the waiting." (Waiting, I Would suggest, is another way of expressing situatedness in a viewer's anticipatory temporality.)

Sam doesn't understand, and here he articulates the view that the photograph slices and freezes a particular instant of time: "But it's *chemistry*. The image is already on the film. It's the same image one minute later or two months later." His emphasis that it is *chemistry* recalls Bergson's description of atomized time as scientific or mechanistic—the instant is recorded. As the photographic process suggests, the past is set, and it cannot change because it has already happened. The present cannot influence the past (the frozen instant the photograph captures) because the past *is forever the past*; each instant, as it occurs, is already separated from the present.

The narrator replies, suggesting an alternative conceptualization of photographic

[332] Ozick, "Shots," 50.

temporality: "It's not like that at all. If you have a change of heart between shooting your picture and taking it out of the developer, the picture changes too." It is not simply that the picture "changes" in an unspecified way—it is the "history" that changes: "I wanted to explain to him how, between the exposure and the solution, history comes into being, but telling him that would make me bleed, like a bullet in the neck, so I said instead, 'Photography is *literal*. It gets what's *there*.'"[333] "Like a bullet in the neck" suggests the frozen instant in which she captured the image of the bullet in the neck and also links the narrator to the simultaneous translator. Like the translator, the narrator suffers the "bifurcated concentration" of viewing multiple temporalities as the past, present, and future influence one another. In this way, history (which alludes not only to past events but also to our translation of the past) is not static—it changes. While Sam may seem to be talking only about photographic time, for the narrator, photographic time is the frame through which she understands "history." If we understand history is "time interpreted," or "time translated," or the translation of the past into the present, we can understand "history" to mean Bergson's durational time.

In 1985, eight years after publishing "Shots," Ozick repeats the narrator's phrase in an interview: "What interests me about photography is the hidden reality, the gnosis of photography rather than the falsity of it, just because it's so damn literal. It's absolutely total reality. It's the capturing of what is, and in the is-ness there is God knows what."[334] Ozick suggests that the ability to "capture what is" does not necessarily mean we know what is "in" "the is-ness." The "literalness" the narrator references may be literal but the "is-ness" of what is there may be "hidden." Perhaps the literal reality,

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[333] Ozick, "Shots," 52.
[334] Ozick, "Interview with Cynthia Ozick," 397.

we might say, is open to interpretation, to translation. In the context of the narrator's conversation with Sam, the line is almost posed as a *justification* for what the narrator calls "waiting," which is another way of describing the anticipatory experience of the passage of time. Waiting is important precisely because the camera is too "literal"; it is too "blatant" for "history," as the narrator says at the beginning of the story. Simply "knowing," doesn't cure; one must "wait" to translate the lived duration of time: between the exposure and the solution, history comes into being.

What is interesting here is that both Sam and the narrator are right; the image on the film is, on a chemical level, comprised of the same set of exposed particles whether it is developed immediately or three months later. But for the viewer, her temporal relationship to the image changes with every passing moment of her lived temporality; her *present*, her own awareness of time and mortality in the *now*, can actually act on the past moment depicted in the photographic image. Herein lies the paradox, the temporal vertigo of viewing a moment from the past transported into the present. The fraction-of-a-second photograph that suggests atomized time in fact enhances the experience of the *flow* of time, the duration. The fixity of that moment enhances all that has changed between then and now. It creates the awareness of mortality, the past-into-present. In this sense, the durational flow of past, present, and future intervene and act on one another in the paradoxical temporal experience of viewing a "thin slice of time" immobilized in a photograph. "Waiting" is another way of conceptualizing this vertigo. As Mauricio Lissovsky, writing on the concept of duration in photography, explains, "What modern photography presents us isn't merely an instant ripped apart from the general movement of things in the world." It *is* that—but "it is also the trace left by the

going away of time, which the labor of waiting accomplishes."[335] The translation of each past instant is arrived at through waiting, in which the past is situated and understood in the present, in the future, and vice versa.

"But the end's always at the end": Resurrection of the Brown Girl

The third and final section of the story catches us up to the here-now from which the narrator writes. The narrator and Sam's non-relationship has continued for about a year, during which they have simply walked through the streets, where it always seems to be raining. So that she can "keep him forever in case it doesn't last," like her photograph of the Brown Girl, she asks Sam if she can take his picture "under a dripping linden tree."[336] He consents, on the condition that she will go home with him afterward, where Verity is, so that she can experience his life ("where I am and how I live"), wife and all. When he asks her why she wants to photograph him, she keeps her answer to herself: she wants to "shoot" him because "the orphaned moment we're living in [. . .] will leave us. [. . .] The tree's green shoots are fleeting; all green corrupts to brown."[337] Her impulse to photograph him is driven by her desire to preserve, to capture the "orphaned moment" so it will not "leave." But even as she preserves, immobilizes, atomizes time by photographing the orphaned moment, she feels the sting of

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[335] Mauricio Lissovsky, "The Photographic Device as a Waiting Machine." In this article, Lissovsky offers a compelling reading of the waiting that occurs in the moments before the photograph is taken, when the photographer anticipates and selects a specific temporal instant in which to take the picture. In this sense, the photograph is the trace of the photographer's temporal experience of anticipatory delay. Lissovsky calls this temporal choice the "aspect"; what the photographer's *viewpoint* is to space, the *aspect* is to time.

[336] Ozick, "Shots," 53.

[337] Ozick, "Shots," 54.

transitoriness in her neck:

> I shoot Sam, the man of virtue, under the dripping linden tree. Although I am using my regular equipment, it seems to me the picture's finished on the spot. It's as if I roll it out and fix it then and there. Sam has got his back against the bark, and all the little wet leaves lick down over his bumpy hair. He resembles a Greek runner resting. His face is dappled by all those heart-shaped leaves, and I know that all the rest of my life I'll regret not having shot him in the open, in a field. But my wish for now is to speckle him and see him darkle under the rainy shade of a tree. It comes to me that my desire—oh, my desire! it stings me in the neck—is just now not even for Sam's face: it's for the transitoriness of these thin vulnerable leaves, with their piteous veins turned upward toward a faintness of liverish light.

The narrator describes the photograph in temporal terms. In her mind, the picture is finished on the spot—with Polaroid-like instantaneity, even though she is using her regular equipment—and she looks ahead to the rest of her life, her future of looking back at the orphaned moment she is living in, the "now" that "will become then." Comparing Sam to a Greek runner recalls her declaration that the photograph of the Brown Girl depicts "time as stasis, [. . .] the time of Keats's Grecian urn." But as much as she freezes the moment into "time as stasis," as she "shoots" Sam (recalling the fraction-of-a-second and halted motion of bullet exiting the translator's neck), she is also shot by the transitoriness of the moment. Stung in the neck, she links herself to the simultaneous translator again. What is it that the narrator translates here? As a photographer and a viewer of photographs "in love with corpses," stung in the neck by transitoriness,

entranced by the temporal contradictions inherent in the photograph, perhaps we could say she sees herself as a simultaneous translator of time—past, present, and future-as-death, each influencing and changing the other.

As the narrator says, "the end's always at the end"; but in the end of this story (in which the Brown Girl is resurrected and the narrator sees herself rushing toward death) the beginning is also at the end, and the end is also at the beginning. In the story's close, the narrator and Sam walk from the linden tree to his apartment, where they find Verity over her sewing machine, making something new from brown fabric—"dead nuns' habits" she salvaged from a dissolved convent. "Let's dress you up!" Verity says, swaddling the narrator in the brown clothes. The narrator sees herself in the mirror, and she is the Brown Girl incarnate: "I'm all in brown, as brown as leaves. The huge high harp, not gold as I imagined it but ivory, is along the wall behind me."[338] The white harp behind her evokes the sun-bleached background of the Brown Girl's photographs, underscoring her awareness of "death the bleacher, blancher, whitener." She looks again in the mirror, and just as she saw the Brown Girl age in her photographs ("gradually (to my eyes suddenly) I saw her age"), she gradually-suddenly sees herself grow old:

> I am grave; I have no smile. My face is mysteriously shut. I'm suffering. [. . .] I am already thirty-six years old, tomorrow I will be forty-eight years old, and a crafty parallelogram begins to frame the space between my nose and mouth. My features are very distinct—I will live for years and years before they slide out of the mirror. I'm the Brown Girl in the pocket of my blouse. I reek of history. If, this minute, I could glide into a chemical solution, as if

[338] Ozick, "Shots," 54–55.

> in a gondola, splashed all over and streaming with wet silver, would the mirror seize and fix me, like a photographic plate? [339]

With the Brown Girl photograph in her pocket, her mirrored image is a *mise en abyme*; the narrator sees herself in the Brown Girl and the Brown Girl in herself. She is the history coming into being between the exposure and the solution. She is not the Brown Girl as she lived, but the Brown Girl as a photograph—brown and grave. In resurrecting the Brown Girl ("Verity resurrects," she says), the past is caught up in the narrator's here-now present and "gnaws into the future" with the narrator's anticipatory death, her vision of aging.

The story ends with a parting shot. The narrator photographs Sam and Verity, her camera pointed into a mirror: "Their two heads, hers light, his black, negatives of each other, are caught side by side in their daughter's mirror. I shoot into their two heads, the white harp behind. Now they are exposed. Now they will stick forever."[340] The last three sentences underscore their state of transience and the durational flow of past, present, and future. The "white harp behind" evokes the obliterating whiteness of death she saw in the Brown Girl's photographs; her repetition of "now" emphasizes her awareness of her existence in the instantaneous present, the thin slice of time she captures with her camera, but also recalls her warning that "now will become then." She ends on "forever," suggesting the future into which her now-present and then-past gnaw.

"The end's always at the end": A Conclusion

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[339] Ozick, "Shots," 56.
[340] Ozick, "Shots," 57.

In the middle section, the narrator calls attention to the temporality of her own narrative, signaling an awareness of the reader's temporal experience: "But the end's always at the end; in the meantime there's the meantime. How to give over these middle parts?" The miraculous hint the Brown Girl has provided offers the narrator a system of time that will allow for the possibility of an existence in the past (the woman as a young girl, fixed in her youth), present (in her ownership of the photograph), and future (the future of the young girl in the photograph, heading inexorably toward death) all at once. She does not have to "give over" the middle; this textual/photographic temporality of duration allows her to simultaneously translate past-present-future through her position as viewer, a capability powerfully epitomized in both the photographic and the textual mode.

In the narrative itself, "the end's always at the end" would refer to the story's actual end, the final scene in which the narrator becomes the Brown Girl. The end of the story she is telling, and the end of the story of her life, must and always will be death; and yet for the narrator, it is also resurrection. "Shots" demonstrates that the ability to recognize the meantime *as the meantime*, to see transience in stasis, to see motion in the frozen instant, to see mortality in the immortalizing photograph—these temporal experiences of the photograph—all depends on the knowledge that "death is coming." Death, the ultimate, unequivocal end, is always at the end. In the meantime, the middle parts, the "here-now," the narrator is *waiting* for death. It is the labor of waiting that confers on the photograph—and on all moments, "Shots" suggests—the trace of transitoriness.

In the collision of the narrator's lived experience and the photograph's apparent immobilization and atomization of time, the narrator arrives at the temporal conditions

of duration—transitoriness, the flow of time, the inter-influence of past, present, and future. However the photograph may seem, on its surface, to relate to time, in its textual mediation it cannot be separated from the narrator's interpretive flow of lived time. Even if the narrator learns from the Brown Girl that "now will become then," that "this orphaned moment will leave us," in her lived time-as-duration she does not experience past-present-future as a linear succession of moments. Even if the camera can immortalize, keep the green from "corrupting to brown," capture "time as stasis," or immobilize the fraction of a second that a bullet leaves a neck, these photographic temporalities rupture when she translates them as a viewer living in the durational flow of time. The key to her temporal experience is her knowledge of her future. Just as the photograph speaks to her future death, we all *know* our ending.

In "Shots," Ozick plumbs the temporal mysteries of the photograph—"it represents both mortality and immortality. It both stands for death and stands against death because it's statuary. It doesn't move. It's immobile like the dead, and it also saves"—to suggest that an awareness of our own inevitable death precludes an experience of time as an atomized, linear, static vector comprised of a succession of discrete instants. This is the duration; in the continual awareness of past, present, and future, death achieves the same temporal paradox that photography does—we *know* we will die, that now will become then. For Hawthorne's Pyncheon family, Porter's Miranda, Faulkner's Quentin and Rosa, and Ozick's unnamed narrator, and for us, this knowledge of this inevitable future pervades and invades our experience of our present and past. Perhaps the only "cure" is to understand that there isn't one—we must live through the "middle part," allowing past and future to saturate it, coloring the present, enlivening moments precisely because they will not last, rendering the radical,

miraculous, tragic transience of each instant so acute that it stings the neck.

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