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Jacob Kasel December 17, 2018

Poignant Immobility: Temporality in the Works of Barthes, Lispector, Proust and Tarkovsky

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Abstract

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By Jacob Kasel

Roland Barthes's 1980 text *Camera Lucida* explores the emotive potentials of the photographic medium in light of the recent death of Barthes's own mother. In this work, Barthes claims that when photographs are poignant to us, they are "without culture" and leave us unable to "transform grief into mourning," indicating that no cultural explanation for our pain can assuage it (90). Barthes's ideas serve as a constant inspiration and reference point in my analysis of how visual images can generate intellectually and culturally uncapturable pain. I examine this concern across literary and cinematic examples. I begin with an analysis of Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector's 1973 work *Água Viva* and its focus on the capacity of language to capture, almost photographically, the present moment of experience. I then look at another literary text concerned with our experience of the present moment and its relation to the past: French writer Marcel Proust's seven volume *Á la recherche du temps perdu*. I pay special attention to the role of still and moving images in Proust's depiction of our vision of the present and the past, which, as I discuss, exists in constant relation to our desires. Finally, I move further into a discussion of moving images by examining Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's 1975 film *Mirror* and the constant haunting presence of absence in it. By putting Barthes's ideas into conversation with those of these three artists, I argue that our relation to the past is intricately intertwined with the ability of stillness and movement in our vision to generate unrepresentable sensorial experiences.

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Introduction

"What I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance." – Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

My interest in Roland Barthes's work on photography, *Camera Lucida,* came about retroactively, by way of my constant love for film. Accompanying my parents and grandparents to the movie theatre as a child, I grew up in the constant presence of movies. My consumption of film exploded upon moving to a small town in Ohio: a place that I perpetually resented as a permanently inadequate substitute for my seemingly happy and luminous existence in Seattle. I began to consciously seek out the realities and ideas of movies, seeing them as richer and more thought provoking than my surroundings. By the age of eleven, I was attempting to watch every film nominated for Best Picture from the late 1930s forward. Movies always provided me with alternative ways of seeing the world around me and effectively integrated themselves into my imagination. I would graft my experiences visually and thematically onto the images and plots I watched in movies and would subsequently let a new film play out in my mind. Such an imaginative process constantly offered me new ways of relating to and challenging my environment (hence, perhaps, my father's concern that movies were a "bad influence"). But the films that most affected my imagination did so because they moved me through their aesthetic qualities, which often dominated my experience of watching them. I always found that I could not adequately explain culturally or symbolically what about the aesthetic appearance of these films touched me. At the age of sixteen, I found it deeply striking to read Barthes's discussions of photographic madness. According to Barthes, photography can be maddening—an extreme emotional effect—when it provokes the desire to enter into its temporality (something that seemed familiar to me and my sense of imagination) in order to prevent, in the present, a past occurrence (117).

Barthes's ideas suddenly illuminated a distinct aspect of my own relation to visual images and my desire to inhabit them. Images became a way of trying to mitigate my perpetual incapacity to bear witness to life in communist Czechoslovakia, where my mother grew up and abruptly left after marrying my American father. But I would also look to images for more than sight: for the possibility of feeling what about her past generated such a swift departure that resulted in the permanent loss of a law career followed by years of financial difficulty. A certain flatness was always present in the fragmentary stories I heard about my mother's youth (often told in broken translations due to my nonexistent understanding of the Czech language). These stories did not allow me to reenter into the past and experience what occurred there, but rather provided perpetually lifeless snapshots that lacked any movement: they did not come to life. (I later began to direct the focus of my questions away from determining if I could or could not understand the past definitively and towards considering why memories take on certain—often differing—appearances both when recalled and overheard). While looking through a photo album given to my mom by her parents, I noticed an odd paradox: a family whose members are unable to discuss the past, yet they meticulously memorialize it in an album made of delicate sheets of translucent colored paper. I also experienced the sense that while many photos were simply uninteresting and flat to me, others affected me in a way that I could not explain. Those images, having the capacity to come to life in my imagination, became the basis for my efforts to enter into my mom's past. Later, when faced with Barthes's ideas, I found that they illuminated the imaginative and emotional potential that photographic images had to affect my ways of imagining the past.

When presented with the opportunity to work on a thesis project after many years of reflecting on such concerns, I immediately aimed to conceive of a work that could contemplate how images—written, photographic and cinematic—all have the power to provide a deeply

poignant relationship to the past not based on some cultural understanding of it. As I mentioned, a simple narrative or historical explanation of my mother's past always felt flat and lacked the liveliness I found in film and photography.

The three chapters of this thesis are inspired by Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, which was published in 1980 and marks a distinct change from many of his other writings about photography. While Barthes had focused on the artificiality and ideological uses of photography in many of his previous texts, *Camera Lucida* finds him favoring discussions of the relationship between photography and loss (Rabaté 3). Loss and, specifically, the loss of Barthes's own mother in 1977 directed his attention towards the connection between photography and mourning. Barthes contemplates this topic in relation to the so-called Winter Garden Photograph of his mother that, despite never being shown, is central to his discussions (Dyer ix). Barthes claims that when photographs are poignant to us, they are "without culture" and leave us unable to "transform grief into mourning," indicating that no cultural explanation for our pain can assuage it (90). This assertion provides me with a distinct view of images that I maintain throughout this thesis: that what is poignant to us in images is precisely that which we cannot explain away culturally and which retains a powerful effect over our senses.

Over the course of my thesis, I aim to show how images can retain this culturally and intellectually inexplicable poignancy by examining Barthes's discussion of photography alongside literary and cinematic examples. In Chapter I, I look at Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector's 1973 work *Água Viva* and its focus on the capacity of language to capture, almost photographically, the present moment of experience. This chapter serves as an opportunity to discuss literary images and their ability to affect our senses in a way that we cannot make sense of through thought. In Chapter II, I analyze another literary example: French writer Marcel Proust's seven volume *Á la recherche du temps perdu*. I pay special attention to the role of still

and moving images in Proust's depiction of our vision, which, as I shall discuss, exists in constant relation to our desires. Finally, in Chapter III, I move further into a discussion of moving images by examining Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's 1975 film *Mirror*. In my analysis, I contemplate how cinematic images can provide a poignant view of the past. Such poignancy comes about through how images alert us to the constant presence of absences that we have no way of altering. By putting Barthes's ideas into conversation with those of these three artists, I aim to suggest that the status of an image as explicitly still or moving does not determine whether it provides an emotionally profound way of relating to present and past experiences. I would like to suggest that the ways in which stillness and movement interact to produce what we see visually and feel with our senses holds the ability to offer a resonant relation with temporality.

Chapter I: Seeing with the Body: Photography and Writing in Clarice Lispector's *Água Viva* and Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*

"What am I doing in writing to you?" the narrator of Clarice Lispector's novel *Água Viva* questions, responding that she is "trying to photograph the perfume" (47)[1]. Writing's potential to capture photographically the qualities of perfume presents us with a distinct question. How can language capture (as a camera does visually) perfume's qualities, which are neither linguistic, nor explicitly imagistic, but related to corporal sensation (to smell)? Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, points out a similar quandary involving photography's relation to the body. He discusses a distinct **"**trick of vocabulary: we say 'to develop a photograph'; but what the chemical action develops is undevelopable, an essence (or a wound), what cannot be transformed" (49). Barthes, like Lispector, associates photography with a corporal experience that is similar to the sensation of "a wound," the qualities of which (painfulness) are not explicitly visual. Such associations between photography and the sensations of the body form the basis for this chapter on *Água Viva* and *Camera Lucida*. Through a close examination of these two texts, I aim to contemplate how writing, photography, and photographic writing potentially trouble and immobilize our capacity to specify what about these mediums affects us corporally. When photography and writing produce bodily sensation, they also offer non-visual modes of relating to the past. I would like to suggest that writing and photography are moving when they stimulate déjà vu like corporal sensations. While these sensations are related to previous experiences, they are unavailable to intentional acts of recollection in the present.

Lispector's *Água Viva* is the product of a complicated editing process. While Lispector had already finished an early draft of the novel called *Beyond Thought: Monologue with Life*[2] by

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[1] "Que estou fazendo ao te escrever? estou tentando fotografar o perfume" (54).
[2] *Atrás do pensamento: monólogo com a vida* in Portuguese.

1971, she decided to devote additional time to editing the respective manuscript before attempting to publish it. Such editing produced a new and longer version entitled *Loud Object*.[3] This draft features autobiographical references to Lispector's daily life and the country of her birth, the Ukraine. The final version was published in August of 1973 and was entitled *Água Viva* in Portuguse (a title that often remains untranslated in English editions[4]). This title invokes multiple meanings, as *água viva* can mean either jellyfish or living water (evocative of a fountain or stream). Due to such a multiplicity of meanings, there is not just one single translation of the title available in English. By giving her work this title, Lispector already hints at the importance of destabilizing concrete relationships between words and stable meanings (Moser vii-xiv). Furthermore, Lispector opens her work with a quotation from Belgian artist Michel Seuphor, which states that "There must be a kind of painting totally free of the dependence on the figure—or object—which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirt, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence"[5] (xv). The presence of an epigraph written by an artist known for his work as a painter already highlights the importance of vision to a novel whose own narrator is a painter. These lines also introduce an important theme in *Água Viva*: visual works affect us not just through what they display (a "figure—object"), but through what remains "incommunicable" and is akin to "the spirt" and is thus nonphysical and nonvisual. This incommunicability is then transferred to how we think and exist, with dreams and lines (not easily specifiable objects) forming our mode of experiencing the world. In the spirit of *Água*

[3] *Objeto Gritante* in Portuguese.
[4] The Elizabeth Lowe and Earl Fitz translation carries the title *The Stream of Life*.
[5] "Tinha que existir uma pintura totalmente livre da dependência da figura—o objeto—que, como a música, não ilustra coisa alguma, não conta uma história e não lança um mito. Tal Pintura contenta-se em evocar os reinos incomunicáveis do espírito, onde o sonho se torna pensamento, onde o traço se torna existência" (7).

Viva's title and epigraph, I would like to focus my analysis on how the novel calls into question writing's status as a visual medium and its potential to spur sensations not directly linked to specifiable visual objects or stable meanings.

In *Água Viva*, Lispector is concerned with the potential of writing as a medium. She aspires to a kind of writing that does not focus on assigning specific meanings to words. For Lispector, words are alive like bodies, and just as we cannot fully separate the body from what gives it life, we also cannot separate the word from what gives it meaning. In reference to the lack of such a demarcation, she states that:

> So writing is the method of using the word as bait: the word fishing for whatever is not word. When this non-word—between the lines—takes the bait, something has been written. Once whatever is between the lines is caught, the word can be tossed away in relief. But that's where the analogy ends: the non-word, taking the bait, incorporates it. So what saves you is writing absentmindedly.[6] (15)

On one level, Lispector's fishing analogy presents a way of thinking about writing and how it generates meaning. She depicts writing as a "method" that features two components: "the word" and the "non-word." The word functions as a "bait" to attract the non-word. When they come together, "something has been written," and when something has been written, such a logical analogy about language "ends." The narrator's capacity to neatly parcel out *what* specifically word and non-word are also ends along with the analogy. Thus, on another level, Lispector offers such an analogy only to show that it is highly limited and to portray her narrator's attempt to discuss a kind of writing that is not tied to fixed meanings separable from words. Lispector's

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[6] "Então escrever é o modo de quem tem a palavra como isca: a palavra pescando o que não é palavra como isca: a palavra pescando o que não é palavra. Quando essa não palavra—a entrelinha—morde a isca, alguma coisa se escreveu. Uma vez que se pescou a entrelinha, poder-se-ia com alívio jogar a palavra fora. Mas aí cessa a analogia: a não palavra, ao morder a isca, incorporou-a. O que salva então é escrever distraidamente" (21-2).

language emphasizes this point, particularly in the Portuguese. The word for "bait" is "isca," which refers both to bait and to pieces of meat, often codfish. Lispector is already blurring the distinct separation between word and non-word: she is discussing fishing for live fish with dead fish, meaning that her bait already contains the body of what she fishing for. Lispector further associates words with the body through her verb choices. The non-word does not just "take" the bait as is the case in the English translation—it bites ("morde") it. In doing so, comes into physical contact with something that, possibly being meat, is already not completely alien to it. When the non-word bites the word, it "incorporates it" ("incorporou-a"). The use of the verb *to incorporate* (incorporar) invokes a corporal melding between word and non-word (as would occur if an animal ate meat) and removes the lines of demarcation between them that the fishing analogy offered. While Lispector actually marks the end of the analogy, it already began to disintegrate in the passage itself, where explicit lines between what word and non-word are (bait and fish) are intertwined. Lispector's subsequent commentary does not generate further efforts to separate word from non-word. She expresses a need to write "absentmindedly" ("distraidamente"). By suddenly mentioning the role of the mind (or lack thereof) in relation to writing, Lispector presents a contrast to her previous discussion and its focus on the body. While Lispector begins this passage by trying to offer, via analogy, an intellectual depiction of how language functions, she ends it by both showing the limits of such discussions and suggesting that we cannot pinpoint how language generates meaning through intellectual thought. For Lispector, the act of writing allows words to convey meanings that are not intellectually predetermined, but are already embedded in language and not fully accessible to thought.

As has been mentioned, Lispector poses the following question and answer in regard to writing and photography: "what am I doing writing to you? trying to photograph perfume"[7] (47).

[7] "Que estou fazendo ao te escrever? estou tentando fotografar o perfume" (54).

Through writing, the narrator is trying to capture visually something that in and of itself is neither imagistic, nor visual, but rather sensorial (we smell perfume) (47). Photographic writing of this type would therefore have to be more than just visual: it would have to spur sensorial experience. The narrator is writing "to you" and to an audience. Being able to accomplish her goal as a writer involves the perception of having someone to receive what is she is writing. In the Portuguese, a present infinitive verb structure is maintained ("estou tentando"), using both the verb "to be" (estar) and the present participle of "to try" ("tentando"). The English only features the present participle. The presence of the complete first-person conjugation in the Portuguese emphasizes the narrator's voice and her role as the author of the text. But, by leaving "estou" (I am) in lowercase font at the beginning of the sentence, Lispector also draws attention to a lessening of the properness and authority of the narrator's voice. Thus, for Lispector's narrator, writing involves a sense of the world around the her, and her effort to use writing as a means to spur sensorial experience contains a preoccupation with who will actually have that experience.

I would like to suggest that Lispector's discussion of writing, language, and photography shares a common affinity with Roland Barthes's discussion of photography in *Camera Lucida*. Despite differences in how these writers discuss the relation between meaning and the written and photographic mediums respectively, both indicate that we cannot specify intellectually what allows writing and photography to generate sensorial experiences. If we compare Lispector's aforementioned description of language via fishing analogy to Barthes's discussion of photography in *Camera Lucida*, we can observe a shared preoccupation with how both mediums (language and photography) are not fully separable from what they are causing us to perceive with our bodies. Barthes describes photography as follows:

> It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funeral immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures; or even those pairs of fish (sharks, I think, according to Michelet) which navigate in convoy, as though united by an eternal coitus. The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object: dualities we can conceive but not perceive. (5-6)

Barthes indicates that spectators of a photograph cannot separate who or what the photograph captures ("the referent") from the image itself—they are both seen in the present together in the image. Barthes's notion that the photograph carries its referent is seemingly very different from Lispector's fishing analogy: no fishing between photograph and referent occurs at all. The photograph already has its referent built into it (they are not separate entities), and it impossible to perceive with the senses any kind of separation between the two. Barthes also emphasizes the importance of the body to this discussion of photography. What he sees as the presence of an "amorous or funeral immobility" in photography evokes an incapacity to alter how we feel emotionally about what we see due to its amorous and funeral qualities. In this case, photography reminds us of love, death and the loss of life accompanying death, which, Barthes suggests, is immobile and bound to the body. We cannot physically separate the "condemned man and the corpse" and "pairs of fish" without destroying life or the "convoy" and "coitus" (both terms evoking a corporal togetherness) of the fish. [8] If a physical separation occurred in either of these

[8] As Elissa Marder points out, "the very gesture of 'making sense' of Barthes's text is not the most productive way to read it" as Barthes wants to look at a "'stupid metaphysics'" focused on "point and touch" (corporal experience), as opposed to focusing on how photography serves as symbolic representation (151-2).

cases, then both the live person and the relations between the fish would be destroyed. We conceive of these separations intellectually, but cannot achieve them physically. Thus, for Barthes, the use of thought via "conceptual frameworks," such as those found in "dualities," cannot mobilize the immobility central to these images and to life more broadly. This immobility occurs because intellectual thought used in this fashion represents what we "can conceive but not perceive." By "perceive," Barthes, with his focus on the body in this passage, refers to what we can feel. Here, Barthes's ideas share an affinity with Lispector's. For both writers, photography and words respectively already contain what they allow us to perceive in them. Separation between the medium and what they allow us to perceive cannot occur due to how we relate corporally with photographs and written texts.

In *Água Viva*, Lispector's concerns with photographic writing involve how what we perceive (feel with the body) relates to our perception of the present. She presents two contrasting ways of thinking about this relationship. Firstly, Lispector suggests that writing actually captures the present moment because words grant the narrator a vision as she is writing. This vision, the narrator hopes, can remain part of the present by not becoming a fixed visual. Lispector offers a view of writing about the present that is simultaneously photographic (it captures a vision) and seemingly non-photographic (it does not fix a visual). Lispector discusses writing, photography and capturing the present as follows:

> I write to you as an exercise in sketching before painting. I see words. What I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space. It's always current, and a camera's photometer opens and immediately closes, but keeping within it the flash.

> Even if I say "I lived" or "I shall live" it's present because I'm saying them now.[9] (12)

Lispector presents writing as an act that comes "before painting" or before the formation of a fixed, painted visual. Writing is an act of sketching—something malleable and open to alterations. While the narrator writes "to you" or to an audience, the lines between what experiences writing offers her and to her readers respectively are blurry. Writing does indeed produce sight (or at least for the narrator). "I see words" she declares. The succinctness of this phrase suddenly transfers focus to the sight of the "I," of the narrator, as opposed to that of the reader. She is not just writing: she is also saying ("what I say"; "O que falo"), emphasizing an oral quality of her use of language. By linking her writing to speech, the narrator is suggesting that her use of the latter via the former captures a "pure present" or that it is like words as they are spoken. The "book is a straight line in space" and more of a marker of something in nothing (empty "space") than a complete picture. The written text also is perpetually "current" and always capturing the present. Lispector evokes the photographic potentialities of writing to illustrate this point. In the same sentence in which she declares that her writing is always "current," she adds a clause that discusses how "a camera's photometer opens and immediately closes, keeping within it the flash. She does not directly compare writing to photography here. Instead, she follows her commentary on the ties between her writing and the present with a description of the instant in which a camera takes a photo. But this is not any kind of photography: while the camera's "photometer" (the mechanism that measures the optical qualities of what is being captured) opens and closes, it keeps "within it the flash." Lispector, by

[9] "Escrevo-te como exercício de esboços antes de pintar. Vejo palavras. O que falo é puro presente e este livro é uma linha reta no espaço. É sempre atual, e o fotômetro de uma máquina fotográfica se abre e imediatamente fecha, mas guardando em si o flash. Mesmo que eu diga "vivi" ou "viverei" é presente porque eu os digo já" (18).

stating that the flash remains "within" the camera, simultaneously evokes the camera's capacity to capture the present (and various optical characteristics, such as lightness and color) and removes its ability fix a visual of present experience. If the flash did indeed take place, the camera would freeze an image that would subsequently be part of the past and no longer the present. She wants fluidity—to be able to make past ("lived") and future ("shall live") part of the present in her writing. Her writing is photographic not in the sense that it freezes visual images that, when looked at, are preservations of the past. It is photographic in its effort to capture the present and, in doing so, to keep pace with the passage of time and to continue capturing other, now present, experiences.

Secondly and somewhat contrastingly, Lispector also indicates that writing may generate the flash of a camera and produce visual images that are not as fleeting as those she previously discussed. In reference to her own use of language and the camera's flash, the narrator reflects on how:

> It's so odd to have exchanged my paints for this strange thing that is the word. Words—I move cautiously among them as they can turn threatening; I can have the freedom to write this: 'pilgrims, merchants and shepherds led their caravans toward Tibet and the roads were difficult and primitive.' With that phrase I made a scene be born, as in a photographic flash."[10] (16)

This passage diverges from Lispector's previous discussion of the photographic flash, which, here, does indeed occur. While the narrator previously emphasized that she was sketching and not painting with language, she now expresses how it is "odd" not to be using paints. Using

[10] "É tão curioso ter substituído as tintas por essa coisa estranha que é a palavra. Palavras—movo-me com cuidado entre elas que podem se tornar ameaçadoras; posso ter a liberdade de escrever o seguinte: 'peregrinos, mercadores e pastores guiavam suas caravanas rumo ao Tibet e os caminhos eram difíceis e primitivos'. Com esta frase fiz uma cena nascer, como num flash fotográfico" (23).

language requires caution because words “can turn threatening.” The narrator no longer just portrays language as being able to capture a pure present. It now generates an estranging and threatening sensation. These two characteristics stand in contrast to the freedom mentioned in the narrator’s sudden declaration about having “the freedom to write this.” She has the “freedom” to produce a detailed “scene,” with lists (“pilgrims, merchants and shepherds”), specificity of location (“Tibet”), and qualities (“difficult and primitive”). The detailed description of this scene differs from previous discussions of language as creating “a straight line in space,” which does not evoke specific qualities beyond infiniteness. Writing now has a photographic flash and gives birth to a “scene,” which, being “born,” is almost a living entity. By associating photography with birth, Lispector pairs a mechanical act with an organic one—writing, by being photographic, gives birth to a lifelike scene. The narrator juxtaposes her fear of language as being threatening with her ability to conjure a seemingly lifelike scene via photographic writing. This juxtaposition suggests that language becomes threating at the moment in which we are free to make it specify what it describes. What is at threat here is the previously discussed mode of writing and its ability to remain free of a language that visually defines the present and, thus, can no longer generate a line in space to be felt. By presenting these two visions of photography’s relationship to writing, Lispector also destabilizes any effort to pin photographic writing down to being just one thing or another. For Lispector writing’s photographic potentiality is more complex—it can both capture the present in an almost nonvisual format or it can give birth to a visual scene.

But the search of Lispector’s narrator to explore the visual potentials of writing is not without limitations: how can language allow us to see and to understand sensations that do not correspond to any kind of intellectual explanations for or visual representations of them? Lispector explores this question, paying particular attention to how, even if language spurs sight,

it does not necessarily produce an understanding of why she relates to what she sees in a particular way. "It's because I suddenly *see*" Lispector's narrator says "that I haven't been *understanding* for a long time. Is the edge of my knife growing blunt? It seems more probable to me that I don't *understand* why what I am *seeing* now is difficult" (41; emphasis added).[11] The repeated use of differing forms of the verb "to see" in this passage once again evokes the narrator's position as a painter—she wants to capture something that she sees. Various forms of the verb "to understand" emphasize our incapability to grasp intellectually what we are seeing. What the narrator is "seeing" generates a sensation. She senses that her mode of sight (her "knife") is growing "blunt" or "cego" in the Portuguese (a term that can mean both blunt or blind). The multiple meanings associated with the knife's bluntness further emphasize that she is beginning to feel the limits of her capacity to use paint or words to capture experience. She continues, "I'm slyly coming into contact with a reality new to me that still has no corresponding thoughts and not even a word that signifies it—it is a sensation beyond thought" (41).[12] Lispector's narrator encounters the difficulty that, while writing, she experiences a new "reality" lacking "corresponding" representability in either thought or language. This "reality" is not a concrete place or object, but rather "a sensation beyond thought"—a corporal feeling that exists before any intellectual framework tries to make sense of it. Lispector, therefore, portrays how writing and its ability to capture the present involves the body. For the narrator, the process of writing itself spurs the sensation that language cannot fully capture experience.

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[11] "Eis que de repente vejo que há muito não estou entendendo. O gume de minha faca está ficando cego? Parece-me que o mais provável é que não entendo porque o que vejo agora é difícil" (47).

[12] "estou entrando sorrateiramente em contato com uma realidade nova para mim que ainda não tem pensamentos correspondentes e muito menos ainda alguma palavra que a signifique: é uma sensação atrás do pensamento" (47).

The style of *Água Viva* responds photographically to the aforementioned limitations on intellectual thought. Lispector does not use language to build a narrative with a broad underlying logic (ordered events with particular meanings attached to them). Instead she tries to confront readers in a photographic fashion. She provides fixed images (via writing) that can generate sensorial experiences. Hélène Cixous, in *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, focuses on *Água Viva* and how its language affects the body. She asserts that:

> *Agua Viva* is not calculated in a mathematical fashion. It is, as Clarice constantly reminds us, a text that follows itself, which lets itself be led, which takes risks with the acacias and is not afraid to let itself go. It is not an unconscious populated with Freudian scenes…It is prelogical, prediscursive. It happens because there is, because 'there takes place.' This place is largely that which would be delimited by the range of the body: within reach of hand, ear, or the senses. It always goes through something concrete. There is a propagation that does not allow for the imaginary or phantasm. (23)

For Cixous, *Água Viva* lacks a "mathematical" logic that someone outside of the text imposes on it. Cixous portrays the "text" as its own entity functioning in relation to "itself" and, therefore, its own contents. Its autonomy actually allows the text to "be led" or to give itself over to external ideas and to "let itself go." It is a text that follows itself even if doing so does not produce completely logical concepts. According to Cixous, Lispector's text is not an "unconscious populated with Freudian scenes" whose meaning we can uncover through interpretation. In fact, the text's function exists before logic or language and always remains in the present as it occurs ("there is…there takes place'"). "This place" where things are occurring relates to the body and what it feels. The text "always goes through something concrete" (this something being corporal sensation) as opposed to appealing to some kind of intellectual concept. It is a text so linked to feeling that it produces no imagination or fantasy. The "scenes" it does produce "are without

object, without subject. These scenes are almost naked" (23). What the novel allows readers to see is not a specific sight (an "object" or "subject") that we can logically uncover, but a nakedness, an absence of these very things, which is felt with the body. Lispector uses her text and its own wanderings via scenes to allow for sensorial experiences of this type. The scenes or visions she offers affect the body without having passed beforehand through the intellect and its modes of interpretation.

If we compare Cixous's reading of Lispector with Barthes's discussion of photography, we can observe a common preoccupation with how the textual and photographic mediums generate corporal sensation. Cixous emphasizes that Lispector's work offers scenes that affect the body as opposed to thought, imagination or phantasy. Barthes's discussion of photography highlights how the photographic image poignantly impacts our senses because it produces what are like sensorial wounds on the body. In respect to photography and its relation to corporal sensation, Barthes presents a distinct paradox, describing how "A trick of vocabulary: we say 'to develop a photograph'; but what the chemical action develops is undevelopable, an essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence (of the insistent gaze)" (49). He indicates that what we find to be painful in a photograph is something that we feel with our body (we experience "a wound"). We cannot heal this wound or develop our relationship to it, but rather just look at it repeatedly, lacking any "desire" for or "possibility" of using "rhetorical expansion" (language and thought) to deal with what we experience. Barthes adds that "we might (we must) speak of an *intense immobility*: linked to a detail (to a detonator), an explosion makes a little star on the pane of the text or of the photograph: neither the Haiku nor the Photograph makes us 'dream'" (49). What remains "intense" and "immobile" in the photograph is its ability to pain us. Barthes indicates that, for both a "text" (specifically its "pane," which evokes a smooth surface that is almost photographic) and a photograph, a "detail"

causes “an explosion”—something that has a violent effect on the senses. While explosive violence is present in both the textual (he cites the Haiku specifically) and photographic mediums according to Barthes, dreaming as a means to mitigate such a sensorial effect is not. Barthes’s focus on the body and the inability of dreaming to alter how photography involves the senses shares a common focus with Cixous’s reading of *Água Viva*, even though the latter does not explicitly refer to photography. Writing for Cixous and writing and photography for Barthes can impact the body in ways that do not allow us to use thought or fantasy to close the sensorial wound that they cause—in fact, the pain of this wound is only perpetuated.

Building off of the ideas of Barthes and Cixous, I would like to suggest that Lispector’s “scenes” and photography inspire a similar relation to the past. This mode of relating to the past does not have the structure of memory (or of memory as a past event consciously reconjured through thought in the present). Rather, both Lispector and Barthes suggest that what we see in the present can allow us to feel sensations that we experienced in the past. They both indicate that these déjà-vu like sensation can occur even if they do not accompany an authentic visual preservation of when they occurred in the past. In regard to her effort to use writing to produce a pure vision of the present, Lispector’s narrator declares, “Try to understand what I am painting and what I am writing now. I’ll explain: in painting as in writing I try to see strictly in the moment in which I see—and not to see through the memory of having seen in a past instant”[13] (68). Lispector again invokes the visuality of painting and writing. What she writes in the present is also something that she paints, and, as has been discussed, she wants to use both mediums to “see” a pure present. The narrator juxtaposes her own efforts to write visually next to a request for the reader “to understand” what she presents and a subsequent effort to “explain” what is

[13] “Tente entender o que pinto e o que escrevo agora. Vou explicar: na pintura como no escritura procuro ver estritamente no momento em que vejo — e não ver através da memória de ter visto num instante passado” (75).

occurring (to explain what she has previously discussed as unexplainable with thought). She wants to use language as a means to get at this vision of the present moment without any filter of memory. She wants to portray the present without visual memory—the memory of "having seen" something. This kind of perception resembles our perception of photographs, which, according to Barthes, are "never, in essence, a memory (whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense, whereas the tense of the Photograph is the aorist)" (91). By describing photography as having an aorist tense, Barthes points to a vision of the past whose status as complete or incomplete is left unknown. It simply hits us without reference to marks that would allow us to contain it within a specific temporal reference frame. Lispector's narrator almost seeks out an aorist like quality of the present in her own writing, trying to avoid any "perfect tense" in favor of stimulating corporal experiences in the moment in which she writes. She states that "The instant is this one. The instant is of an imminence that takes my breath away. The instant is in itself imminent. At the same time that I live it, I burst into its passage into another instant"[14] (68). Lispector presents the instant in relation to various temporalities, all of which experienced in the present and can also pertain to the past and future. The narrator experiences: the present as it occurs ("is this one"), the future felt in the present ("is of an imminence") corporally through loss of "breath", and the present becoming past (as she "burst[s]…into another instant"). While Lispector even claims to explain what her text is searching for in the quotation above, she does not explicitly say what the instant is—it just *is* in her syntax. In this way, the instant is presented in a series of flashes directed at the reader, but it is never explained through logical thought. Similarly, the photograph appears before viewers and provides a vision of the past. This vision

[14] "O instante é este. O instante é de uma iminência que me tira o fôlego. O instante é em si mesmo iminente. Ao mesmo tempo que eu o vivo, lanço-me na sua passagem para outro instante" (75-6).

can move them because they cannot explain away the sensation that what they are seeing is not strictly part of the past.

Lispector's writing offers a mode of experiencing the past again, not through sight (we do not recall the past and then, subsequently, see it), but through sensorial, corporal experience. Lispector provides varying, contrasting reflections on the past while not openly discussing their contrasts. In doing so, she opens up a way for language to provoke a sensorial relationship to the past that does not correspond to a single vision of it. Lispector presents a contrast between sight and corporal experience in the following passage: "Beyond thought—even further beyond it—is the ceiling I *looked* at when I was an infant. Suddenly I was *crying*. It was already *love*. Or I wasn't even *crying*. I was on the *lookout*. *Scrutinizing* the ceiling. The instant is the vast egg of *lukewarm entrails*"[15] (35; emphasis added). While the narrator once again presents us with a visual scene, she does not present us with a conscious memory. She constantly contrasts sight and hardness with the interior of the body and fluidity. There is hardness ("the ceiling") met with visual perception ("looked," "lookout," "scrutinizing"). The narrator provides little in terms of visual detail—we know that the narrator looked at the ceiling, but we know neither how the ceiling nor the scene of her looking at it appeared. Then there are emotions or emotional reactions ("crying," "love,") and parts of our own bodies that remain invisible to us ("lukewarm entrails") and whose non-concreteness contrasts with the solidity of the ceiling. All of these characteristics the narrator sensed as an infant, which would seemingly place them beyond the grasp of memory as a conscious recollection. Lispector presents a mode of relating to the past other than conscious memory: one in which sight has limited depth (we only see the ceiling) and a kind of organic corporal sensation of "the instant" (the present moment as it occurs) is felt and

[15] "Atrás do pensamento—mas atrás ainda—está o teto que eu olhava enquanto infant. De repente chorava. Já era amor. Ou nem mesmo chorava. Ficava à espreita. A perscrutar o teto. O instante é o vasto ovo de vísceras mornas" (42).

that, being a "vast egg of lukewarm entrails," is related to the body. On one hand, a description of the appearance of the narrator's body is absent despite evocations of the body more generally. On the other, only glimpses of her emotions are present and remain in contrast to the wall she remembers but does not describe. Lispector does not give readers a body to which they can assign a clear vision. She offers contrasts without discussing their meaning and leaves readers to feel these contrasts, as opposed to understanding them intellectually. Lispector thereby opens the possibility for a textual mode of relating to the past that stimulates sensorial qualities that are linked to it. While she does not illustrate past experiences with detailed visual descriptions of them (she may in fact not remember any more than having seen a ceiling), she does allow the reader to feel the contrasts between various elements that do not always explicitly refer to the past.

A question that haunts both of these texts is to what extent writing and photography can inspire sight that is not just visual and actually produces a sensorial relationship to the past. Such a relationship would hold the power not just to allow us to envision what the past looks like, but also to feel that which may even be inaccessible to conscious memory. For Barthes, photography can generate a distinct sensation of having been somewhere before. This sensation allows the image to do more than just aid us to visualize a time or place. In relation to a landscape photograph, Barthes describes how "This longing to inhabit, if I observe it clearly in myself…is fantasmatic, deriving from a kind of second sight which seems to bear me forward to a utopian time, or to carry me back to somewhere in myself…Looking at these landscapes of predilection, it is as if I *were certain* of having been there or of going there" (40). While the photograph does indeed allow Barthes to see a place, it also generates a "longing" for feeling—a desire to actually physically inhabit a place with the body. For Barthes, the desire to inhabit functions as a "second sight" that dissolves the lines between past and future, making both temporalities accessible in

the present. This other kind of sight allows Barthes to feel the possibility of inhabiting a place once again in a utopic fashion and to actually reenter into "somewhere in" himself. This somewhere evokes a kind of connection to the past that, while preserved, is not a conscious, visual memory. Photography inspires a certainty—a sensation that is felt—of having been somewhere. While Lispector's discussion of the ceiling she saw as a child is not made in direct reference to photography (Lispector is not giving us a photograph, and the narrator is not looking at one), it also evokes a kind of second sight. Lispector's narrator sees a place that she probably could not recall through conscious memory, and it inspires sensations associated with having been in that place. The topic of reentering into the past with our senses comes up again in *Água Viva*, this time in relation to the sensation of having really had physical contact with something. The narrator ponders: "What do I want to write now? I want something calm and without fashions. Something like the memory of a tall monument that seems taller because it is a memory. But I want to have really *touched* the monument along the way. I'm going to stop because its Sunday[16] (87; emphasis added). The narrator wants to write as a means to enact "memory" and its qualities (distorted height), using a "calm" writing technique without fashions that would mask what she is trying to capture. But, in doing so, she wants to "have really touched" something—she wants to have a tactile relationship with the past in the present. While Barthes claims through his discussion of landscape photographs that such images can actually inspire a sense of having been somewhere, Lispector expresses a desire ("I want") for such a sense. Suddenly, Lispector declares that she will "stop because its Sunday." While she does describe what she wants her writing to do, she suddenly directs focus to the present and does not go any further. It is as if language cannot go any further in producing a tactile relationship to the

[16] "O que quero agora escrever? Quero alguma coisa tranquila e sem modas. Alguma coisa como a lembrança de um monumento alto que parece mais alto porque é lembrança. Mas quero de passagem ter realmente tocado no monumento. Vou parar porque é sábado." (95).

past. Both language and photography face the common challenge of how they can spur more types of sight then just one: visual sight and kind of sensorial sight that allows us to feel parts of the past that we may not be able to recall through conscious memory. Without this second kind of sight, all we are left with is a visual reflection that, as Lispector says, is "only image and not the body[17]"—an image that allows us literally to see something, but that does not produce any corporal sensation beyond visual sight (71).

[17] "só imagem e não o corpo" (78).

Moving Stillness: the Photographic and Cinematic Potentials of Writing in Proust's *Á la recherche du temps perdu*

Abbreviations: SW (*Swann's Way*), ISYGF (*In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*), GW (*The Guermantes Way*), SG (*Sodom and Gomorrah*), TP (*The Prisoner*), TF (*The Fugitive*), FTA (*Finding Time Again*)

As I have discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, Lispector, in *Água Viva,* contemplates the difficulty of capturing a pure present due to its irrepresentability in images, language or thought. I would now like to focus on how Marcel Proust, in *Á la recherche du temps perdu*, examines how our vision of the present and of the past is not stable and pure, but rather in a constant state construction. In the final volume of the novel, the narrator declares that "Time which is normally not visible, which seeks out bodies in order to become so and wherever it finds them seizes upon them for its magic lantern show" (FTA 233). For Proust, "Time" becomes "visible" through "bodies," meaning that its visibility depends on its visible manifestation in in the appearance of objects and people. The ability of these appearances to shift points to a distinct vision of "Time" functioning like a "magic lantern show." The magic lantern is an image projector that passes light through various lenses whose images are subsequently projected onto the world surrounding it. Proust introduces the magic lantern in the first volume of *La recherche* when the narrator's mother and grandmother attempt to sooth his unease by placing one into his bedroom. Instead, the device only exacerbates the narrator's frustration: it removes his habitual way of seeing his room by producing a new virtual aesthetic (SW 9-10). Over the course of this chapter, I would like to contemplate Proust's suggestion that our vision of the past and the present is, like the projected images of the magic lantern, virtual. To do so, I pay special attention to his focus on still (photographic) and moving (cinematic) images and argue that his literary vision involves both. As I shall explain, the way in which a perceptual framework links visual images together

produces our vision of the past and present without actually authenticating any of these visions as corresponding to a true reality.

I. Proust and Cinema

Marcel Proust's seven volume *Á la recherche du temps perdu* was written and published between the years of 1913 and 1922. According to Julia Kristeva, the novel "gives an X-ray image of memory, bringing to light its painful yet rapturous dependence on the senses" (3). Kristeva's analysis highlights a distinct quality of Proust's literary project, which I will be pursuing throughout this chapter. *La recherche* focuses less on telling a chronological story and more on providing an X-ray like image of the differing ways in which we relate to the past in the present. An X-ray allows us to see what lies below visible surfaces. Thus, if the novel functions as an X-ray image of memory, it renders visible what is otherwise invisible to us when we remember the past. The novel's unnamed narrator (who is often associated with Proust himself) and writer (as we eventually find out) tells the story of his life from his childhood to his experiences after World War I. In the novel's final volume, the narrator attends a party whose guests include many people he knew before the war and whose social status and health have dramatically changed in the years since he had last seen them. The capacity of this party to render these shifts visible spurs him to begin working on the text that we have been reading up to that point. Importantly, this party provides the narrator with an "optical view of years, a view not of one moment, but of one person set in the distorting perspective of Time" (FTA 234). As I shall discuss, Proust's focus here on an "optical view" points to how visual sight is involved with how we perceive "Time." Proust, by capitalizing the first letter of "Time," points to a distinct notion of temporality: Time is a vision of many experiences that shift and become distorted when seen together. This type of sight, by placing many visions of a single thing next to each other, allows us to perceive changes between the past and the present. Central to Proust's discussion of

temporality is his conception of so-called involuntary memory. In reference to this kind of memory, Proust describes how "The past is hidden outside the realm of our intelligence and beyond its reach, in some material object (in the sensation that this material object would give us) which we do not suspect. It depends on chance whether we encounter this object before we die, or do not encounter it" (SW 44-5). We experience involuntary memory by chance when an object in the external world spurs sensation. Thus, physical objects can be more than just surfaces that we see: they allow us to experience sensations that generate a renewal of past experiences. Reexperiencing the past through these sensations has nothing to do with the "intelligence," which means that we cannot conjure this kind of relation to the past through conscious thought. As I shall contend, in *La recherche*, such involuntary memory arises through an involuntary linking of present and past images to produce how we relate to time.

Proust's narrator frames the style of *La recherche* as different from that of cinematic realism or a cinematic approach that aims to maintain viewers' credibility in the reality of what they are watching. Writing after World War I, the narrator observes a desire of those in his social milieu for such a realist style. He describes calls for "'no more style…no more literature'" in favor of supposedly accurate depictions of "life" and "realities." (FTA 191). Nevertheless, the narrator describes his own literary efforts as being distinct from a cinematic realist mode of representing reality when he states the following:

> The reality to be expressed resided, I now realized, not in the subject's appearance but at a depth where appearance hardly matters, as in the case of its symbolization by the sound of the spoon on a plate, or the starched stiffness of the napkin, which had been more valuable for my spiritual renewal than any number of humanitarian, patriotic, internationalist or metaphysical conversations… Some even wanted the novel to be a sort of cinematographic

> stream of things. This was an absurd idea. Nothing sets us further apart from what we have really perceived than that sort of cinematographic approach" (FTA 190-1).

Reality is not, for Proust, simply manifest in the visible surface of objects. While it resides in an object, it has to be "expressed" or brought out through sensorial experiences. The sort of reality Proust discusses is not readily available in an "appearance," but in depths that sensorial qualities such as "sound" and "stiffness" bring about through feeling. For the narrator, intellectual discourses ("humanitarian, patriotic, internationalist or metaphysical conversations") do not generate this kind of sensorial experience. Relatedly, cinema that functions as a "cinematographic stream of things" offers various "things" or objects in an effort to show reality as it really is—the appearances we see correspond to reality in this model.[18] A cinematic vision of "that sort" universalizes experience into a particular vision that claims to provide an universally realistic representation of life:

> If reality were a kind of residue of experience, more or less identical for everybody, because when we talk about bad weather, a war, a cab-stand, a brightly lit restaurant, a garden in flower, everybody knows what we mean, if reality were just that, then no doubt some sort of cinematographic film of things would be enough and 'style' and 'literature' which departed from their simple data would be an artificial irrelevance. (FTA 198)

Proust once again points to a connection between visual appearances, reality and film. Seeing "reality" as a kind of "residue of experience" suggests that our experiences remain immediately visible on the surfaces of what we see around us. If this were the case, reality would be "identical

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[18] Katja Haustein claims that "The cinematic stream, understood less as a sequence of moving images than as a succession of blurred photographs, can only grasp reality's material surface, never its essence" (30). Haustein emphasizes Proust's criticism of "the cinematic stream" and its focus on appearances. As I shall discuss, the cinematic quality of Proust's images is key to his discussion of memory, which does not just function like individual photographs in succession, but contains movement.

for everybody" because it would correspond to images (those of banalities like "bad weather") that everyone shares. According to Proust, a type of cinema whose goal is to present this vision of reality has no need for anything like literary style because what it portrays is universally recognizable. Proust, by focusing on the importance of individually experienced sensations to our relationship with the past, problematizes the ability of a universalized view of reality to actually capture what past experiences were like.

While Proust does oppose a cinematic realist vision of this sort, he favors a mode of writing that, through movement in what it allows readers to see, can permit them to have a reading experience particular to their own sense of desire. Through his discussion of gender roles[19] and literature, he suggests that readers' personal modes of experiencing the world generate what they see as they read (the gender characteristics of a text' characters for instance). Proust analyzes literature, authorial intent, sight, and gender as follows:

> A writer must not take offence when inverts give his heroines masculine faces. This mildly deviant behavior is the only means by which the invert can proceed to give full general significance to what he is reading…It is only out of a habit derived from the insincere language of prefaces and dedications that writers talk about 'my reader'. In reality each reader, when he is reading, is uniquely reading himself. The writer's work is only a kind of optical instrument which he offers the reader to enable him to discern what without this book he might not perhaps have seen in himself. The recognition within himself, by the reader, of what the book is saying, is the proof of its truthfulness." (FTA 219-20)

[19] For a detailed analysis of gender and photography in Proust's work, see Áine Larkin's work *Proust Writing Photography: Fixing the Fugitive in Á la recherche du temps perdu*.

Proust does not see the relationship between the writer and the reader as one in which the former offers a vision of experience to the latter, who then accepts it as true. Only the "insincere language of prefaces and dedications" can link the author's intent and the reader's experience in this fashion. While the narrator does see writing as a distinctly visual medium (an "optical instrument'), he sees the visuals it creates as being open to modification. The narrator continues, providing a commentary on gender roles and homosexuality ("inverts" referring to those with same-sex attraction). For the narrator, readers do not find "significance" in what they read unless they can have their own vision of it. To experience such a vision, they can give a work's "heroines masculine faces" or change the gender of its characters due to how they individually relate to the body and to gender characteristics. Thus, Proust challenges the notions that the reader's sex corresponds to a stable identification with either masculine or feminine gender characteristics and that the bodies portrayed by a literary work have any stable physical appearance at all. The creation of such an individualized vision on the level of the reader demonstrates that "each reader, while he is reading, is uniquely reading himself" or experiences a kind of sight that allows for self-reflection. Such self-reflection is not dependent on a fixed relationship between the individual and the body, but is more fluid and can take on varying forms.

II. Fixation and Movement in Vision: Proust, Photography and Film

I would like to suggest that, despite Proust's seeming opposition to a certain type of cinema, his writing contains both photographic and cinematic characteristics. The narrator's discussions of the past in *La recherche* often combine the stillness of photographs and the movement of cinema to produce how the narrator sees the past in the present. In her book *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Mieke Bal focuses on the relation between language and sight in Proust's work. She bases her analysis in a discussion of what she denominates as

"flatness" in *La recherche*. Such flatness refers to, firstly, the imaginative freedom of the reader in a literary universe haunted by the "absence of depth in volume" (meaning that we are imaginatively free even if what we see while reading seems visually flat) and, secondly, the flat banality of conversation throughout the novel such as "in the salons of Mme Verdurin and the Duchesse de Guermantes" (3). Bal reflects on the relationship between writing and movement, paying particular attention to the photographic and cinematic qualities of Proust's work. She states that:

> If the photographic mechanism suggests cinematographic possibilities, it only does so if the cinema in question is avant-garde[20] and self-reflexive, like a succession of images spread out in space, each one held still. It would have nothing to do with the illusion of 'real' movement created by the rapid projection of images. In other words, the technique in question here is crucial because it enables the production of not only a visual writing that is the trace of movement, but also a movement that is the trace of writing." (231-2)

Bal emphasizes that Proust's writing involves the "cinematographic possibilities" of photography. Such cinematic potentialities, being "avant-garde and self-reflexive," are not focused on reproducing a stable reality, but on causing viewers to reflect on their own experiences. Proust's vision, like cinema, offers multiple images in a "succession"; but these images also have a degree of stillness (how they remain before our sight) like that of

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[20] Rebecca Comay in her article "Proust's Remains" describes how "the photography that Proust achieves in writing bears little resemblance to the photographs he describes" (13). She emphasizes how Proust's project and its depiction of past experience relates to mechanically reproduced images in a more complex manner than simply providing a written photograph of experience (13). Comay, like Bal, also emphasizes the avant-garde potentials of Proust's writing, stating that "it [*La recherche*] is anything but portrait, snapshot, advertisement, or document; it is spirit photography, it is pornography, it is chrono-photography, it is experimental, avant-garde photography, it is Impressionism, it is Cubism, it is Surrealism, it is photography that might have learned a thing or two from Man Ray himself" (13).

photographs. The presence of this stillness in movement differentiates Proust's style to that of the aforementioned form of cinematic realism, which uses a rapidly projected series of images to create "'real' movement." Thus, "technique"—Proust's literary style—determines how writing causes readers to relate to their own experiences through different kinds of sight.

Bal's reading of Proust and her focus on writing and movement are particularly relevant to how memory is presented in *La recherche.* As I shall discuss, the kind of writing that Bal describes actually speaks to Proust's vision of memory. Proust suggests that while, when recalling the past, we see images that are held still like photographs, this perceived stillness comes about due to our sense of desire for what we see. To describe this function of memory, Proust compares it to a store window, whose contents appeal to the desires of potential customers. He declares that "Our memory is like one of those shop windows where different photographs of a certain person are displayed on different days. Sometimes it is the most recent one that stays on show for a time, in isolation" (ISYGF 469). Proust indicates that memory, like a shop window, is a curated creation that works to provoke our desire to possess what it displays. If memory functions in this manner, then what we remember is no authentic preservation of a past reality: it is a visual display that is brought to life in relation to desire—to our desire to buy or to possess what we are seeing. Still and moving visual images are key to the function of memory as such. While different displays are put up at different times (providing movement), certain ones—the most recent one according to Proust—can remain visible (still) for more time and appear isolated from others. Memory allows us to see a display, and memory puts up different displays depending on the present moment. While the stillness of certain images is almost photographic, the movement in what we see is cinematic. Furthermore, the physical objects we see—elements of a storefront—and their ability to change almost resemble the mise-en-scène of cinema. This combination of stillness and movement does not offer a single real

view of past experience. Rather, it points to how certain experiences, when seen in retrospect, carry differing qualities at different moments. These images never offer a single universal image of the past, but, being displays, are always open to alteration depending on our desire for what we see.

As I shall discuss, both Proust in *La recherche* and Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* share a common interest in how a particular visual aspect of a still image can cause us to imaginatively reenter into a past time cinematically. Reading Barthes's text alongside Proust's illuminates how the depictions of memory in *La recherche* often contain cinematic and photographic qualities that go beyond just being visual: they evoke a type of memory related to sensations.

In order to explain how the texts of Barthes and Proust share common preoccupations with memory, photography and the capacity to renter the past, I would like first to offer a discussion of Barthes's views on photography and its cinematic potentials in *Camera Lucida*. Firstly, I will focus on how he sees photography as having the ability to spur a desire to see and to feel more than what a photograph offers to the vision. Barthes's discussion of photography and desire stems from his distinction between the so called studium and punctum. The studium corresponds to "inconsequential taste: I like / I don't like," which means that it does not inspire more profound emotions such as "*loving*." The "punctum" can "break (or punctuate) the studium" and, thus, "pricks" the viewer (pricking evoking a physical effect) because it is "poignant." (27). Whether photography does or does not have punctum for the spectator is not a question of intentionality on the part of the photographer. According to Barthes, it is "a question of 'luck"' and of if the camera captured "the *right moment,* the *kairos* of desire" (59). As was the case with Proust's discussion of involuntary memory and the importance of "chance" to finding

an object that inspires it, Barthes[21] also focuses on the importance of chance to experiencing the punctum and its distinct mode of provoking desire (SW 44-5). The punctum directs desire not towards an object that can simply receive it, but towards a notion of a non-specifiable state of being. Barthes's comparison between pornographic and erotic images illustrates the punctum's potential to generate a "blind field," which spurs the desire for more (for a sensorial state of being) than what is visible in the photograph (57). Pornography, according to Barthes, does not generate a blind field. By displaying "sexual organs, making them into a motionless object (a fetish)," pornography gives full visual representation to potentially desired bodies (59). The sexual organs of these bodies become "a motionless object (a fetish)," which indicates that they do not spur any imaginative movement of the viewer's thoughts beyond what is visible in the photograph. For Barthes, this type of image contains "no *punctum* … at most it amuses me (and even then, boredom follows quickly)," which indicates that it does not leave a profound emotional impact on him. Contrarily, in regard to the erotic image, Barthes explains that:

> The erotic photograph…takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see: not only toward 'the rest' of the nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis,* but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together. (59)

In his depiction of the erotic photograph, Barthes conceives of different kind of relationship between photography, its spectator, and desire than that which occurs with the pornographic

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[21] Elissa Marder relates the ideas of Proust and Barthes in a discussion of so-called "involuntary photography" present in *Camera Lucida.* Involuntary photography takes place when Barthes "allow[s] himself to reproduce the photograph in his own psyche" and thereby experience, again, with his senses, the texture of his mother's clothing and the smell of her perfume (181). Marder's discussion suggests that we have an involuntary photographic relationship to the past in which we involuntarily see a photograph in our psyche and are able to enter, with our senses, into its temporality.

photograph. For Barthes, the erotic photograph "takes the spectator outside of its frame" or actually directs vision towards something that it does not show. In this outside space, a dualistic relationship occurs between spectator and photograph: the spectator animates the image (meaning that he senses movement towards something that it does not show) and the image actually animates him to continue doing so. The punctum allows us to go "beyond" what we "see" and to go beyond a visual "*praxis*" (embodiment via fantasy) of what we see. The punctum directs our desire towards an object that has no complete visual representability because it is not just visual, but combines the corporal (the "body") and the non-corporal (the "soul"). Photography is animating and creates movement precisely in how it can inspire desire that corresponds to no specifiable object. Desire's search for such a nonexistent object produces a sensorial movement that conjoins the visual with that which remains unreducible to visual representation.

Furthermore, the movement associated with the blind field points to the cinematic potential of photography. Barthes's focus on the animation that occurs outside of the image indicates that a still image can create a sense of movement that allows us to enter into a past temporality with our imagination. Philip Watts, in his book *Roland Barthes' Cinema* describes the relation between Barthes's ideas and cinema. While discussing *Camera Lucida* and its commentary on the difficulty of film to provoke thought, he states that "by speaking of photography's 'blind field' Barthes is coming very close to turning the photograph into a film frame. As Adam Lowenstein contends, it is with the blind field that 'the *punctum* animates the photograph with cinematic power'" (47). As discussed, Barthes not only sees the punctum as having the power to spur images other than those in front of the viewer, but also to generate a search with what Watts calls "the imagination" for an object whose sensorial qualities lack full visual representability (47). Such imagination "adds off-screen action to the still. Thus, at the

very moment he [Barthes] seems to be claiming that that cinema spectatorship is necessarily unthinking, he also arrives at the opposite conclusion: in giving a 'cinematic' quality to the still photograph, he continues to reflect upon the imaginary potential of the cinematographic image" (47). Watts emphasizes how such imaginary off screen action and its cinematic characteristics actually correspond to moving images (those that still images generate) that manifest themselves in imaginary thought. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes the punctum as producing imagined off screen action. He experiences this action as the sense of actually entering into the temporality of the photograph itself. Barthes describes how "I passed beyond the unreality of the thing represented, I entered crazily into the spectacle, into the image, taking into my arms what is dead, what is going to die" (117). Photographic "madness" of this type can cause its spectators not just to envision themselves as embodying[22] the image in front of them (simply becoming what they see), but also as being able to enter into it, breaking—hence the madness—any division between past, present and future by treating what is past as part of the present and preventing a future that is already part of the past (117). The cinematic potentiality of the photographic image is brought to life when viewers experience "Pity" for what they see (pity for how what they see will die, even if it has already died) (117). The impulse to go beyond simply trying to embody what we see in the photograph, but also to enter into its reality—to prevent loss or death from occurring—occurs almost involuntarily due to how we perceive time in relation to

[22] Barthes's articulation of photographic madness and the almost involuntary blurring of any separation between the temporality of the viewer and that of the photograph stands in contrast to his discussion of "taming the Photograph" (118). According to Barthes, living "according to a generalized image repertoire" produces a relationship between photography and the body in which sensation only "passes through the image" (118). This indicates that a corporal sensation like pleasure can only be experienced "if this pleasure joins the stereotyped (worn-out) image" (118). In this case, it is not that we involuntarily entering into the temporality of the image due to a personal sense of pity, but rather that we only feel when we embody—become—a banal, generalized image.

photography. Mad photography is distinct for Barthes because its viewers become mad and enter, with their imagination and senses, into the temporality of the photo.

But the question still remains: how does Barthes's discussion of photography and its cinematic potentials illuminate aspects of Proust's text? As was previously discussed, Proust distinguishes his literary style from a cinematic realist style. As with his discussion of literary meaning and gender roles, Proust is less concerned with offering a single and true vision of the past than with providing a view of how our vision relates to desire. One particular example of this occurs in how Proust depicts the desire of his narrator for certain visual sights, which dominates how he sees the world at that time and in his subsequent memories. A particular visual detail of this type, like the punctum and its generation of the blind field, is more than just visible: it pushes our imagination towards something outside of what sight allows us to explicitly visualize. Like with the blind field, we begin to experience sights and sensations in an almost cinematic fashion that is not limited to the visual constraints of the photograph.

The narrator's recollection of Albertine—who in the fifth and sixth volumes of *La recherche* becomes the object of the narrator's jealousy—serves as an example of this way of relating to the past visually. The narrator's memory of Albertine centers around a punctum like visual component that affects the subsequent succession of images he sees and the sensations he feels. The narrator asserts his ability to demonstrate with sincerity to his current love interest Gisèle that he is not attracted to her friend Albertine. This assertion is quickly complicated by his sight of Albertine:

> In any case, I could have assured her [Gisèle] with total veracity that I was no longer attracted to Albertine. That morning, as she walked over to speak to Gisèle, I had caught a glimpse of her from behind: her head was bowed, a posture that made her look moody, and the hair at the back was different, even blacker than it was at the front, and shining as though

> she had just come out of the water. It had made me think of a wet hen and see her as embodying a soul very unlike the one that filled the mauve of her complexion and the mystery in her eyes. For a moment, she had been reduced to the sheen of this hair on the back of her head: and it was still the only thing I could see in my mind's eye (ISYGF 468-9).

The narrator's assuredness that he does not feel attracted to Albertine dissolves as he launches into his memory of her. The particular visual focuses of his memory reveal that he does not have any sort of definitive, true view of Albertine, but sees her through lenses tinted with his desires. In this recollection, his gaze captures an almost photographic "glimpse" and condenses seemingly cinematic movement (Albertine walking) into a series of frozen images ("head was bowed," "a posture," "hair at the back"). This photographic glimpse also functions to preserve (in the present) various non-static and non-visual qualities of past experience ("moody," "different," shining"). These attributes bring the narrator's vision of Albertine to life and make it more than just a visual image. The simile used here ("as though she had come out of water"), which results from the "shining" quality of Albertine's hair, in and of itself evokes movement. This vision produces further sight. It causes additional images to emerge in the narrator's imagination. Something specific (Albertine's hair) causes him to see beyond what is in front him. While some of what he sees is visually representable (to "a wet hen"), what he senses ("a soul," something nonvisual and nonphysical) is not. At the time of this experience, "for a moment," the "sheen" of Albertine's hair reduces her to this sheen and the related series of images and sensations. This imagistic and sensorial proliferation indicates that the narrator, by simply seeing Albertine, does not actually have any view of her as she really is. The narrator then shifts focus back to the present moment in which he writes. In his memory of this experience, he "still" reduces Albertine to the sheen of her hair. As this occurs in his "mind's eye," it takes place in visual space. He relates to the past in a visual fashion that remains fixated on a particular image

and the sensorial qualities it invokes. Proust demonstrates that our vision, when focused on the present or on the past, centers itself around a punctum like sight. The visual detail activates an unfurling of images and senses that, when experienced together, become the particular reality we see.

For Barthes, the capacity of mad photography to cause us pain and to push our imagination beyond what it displays cannot be mitigated through a cultural explanation. While Proust's narrator describes the presence of something similar to the photographic punctum in his vision of Albertine, he also suggests that his sight is programmed to produce a vision that he desires. After discussing his vision of Albertine and the sheen of her hair, the narrator describes his relation to love more broadly. He claims that he does not experience love itself, but rather experiences the desire to live out an idea of it. He describes how:

> for, at those moments in my life when I was not in love but wished I was, the ideal of physical beauty I carried about with me—which, as has been seen, I could recognize in a distant glimpse of any passing stranger who was far enough away for the imprecision of her features not to impede that recognition—was partnered by the emotional shadow, ever ready to be brought to real life, of the woman who was going to fall in love with me and step straight into the part already written for her in the comedy of fondness and passion that had been awaiting her since my childhood. (469)

The narrator observes that he is not experiencing love, but rather the desire to experience it. What he finds physically beautiful—what provokes his desire—is that which fits into his existing ideal of what love is like. In such cases (like the narrator's vision of Albertine), he does not actually see in detail the person in front of him. By having imprecise sight, he can generate a vision that corresponds to his idea of what love is like. The narrator feels an "emotional shadow," which evokes a lingering sensation that almost any woman (any "passing stranger")

will “step straight into the part already written for her” in this “comedy” of what love is like. The narrator senses that this comedy can actually “be brought to life” and be something he really lives out. The irony of this is that Albertine actually does step into the role of being the narrator’s love interest—she steps into a part for her that was determined during his childhood. What remains immobile and fixed are the narrator’s ideas of what an experience is like. Due to the malleability of his vision, what is mobile (or perhaps altogether irrelevant) is who plays a part in helping him to embody such ideas.

Proust’s discussion of love suggests that we project our desires onto the world around us, giving them a visual body. I would now like to suggest that a sort of organizing mechanism (like a cinematic projector) arranges various visual images to form our vision of the past and present. With Albertine, the arrangement of images comes about through the narrator’s sense of desire. The dependence of our sight on particular arrangements indicates that what we see is not a true reality: it is virtual and open to change. The aforementioned magic lantern resembles a cinematic apparatus because it reproduces and projects varying images. It also creates a completely new visual reality for the narrator:

> The anesthetizing influence of habit having ceased, I would begin to have thoughts, and feelings, and they are such sad things. That doorknob of my room, which differed for me from all other doorknobs in the world in that it seemed to open of its own accord, without my having to turn it, so unconscious has its handling become for me, was now serving as an astral body for Golo” (SW 10).

The magic lantern, by completely altering the visual appearance of the narrator’s surroundings, removes the anesthesia like effect of habit and allows the narrator to have sensations and thoughts previously unavailable to him. The appearance of something like a doorknob that makes the narrator’s room distinctly familiar is suddenly removed: the doorknob becomes a virtual

"body for Golo." Proust suggests that what we see and sense as reality is in fact a virtual mirage that, in an "unconscious" manner, becomes integrated into our mode of interacting with our surroundings. The magic lantern comes up again in direct relation to how we see the past: "Time which is normally not visible, which seeks out bodies in order to become so and wherever it finds them seizes upon them for its magic lantern show" (FTA 233). A visible relation between the past and the present ("Time") exists due to how perceived change (between what we see now and our memory of it) manifests itself in "bodies," altering their physical appearance. This is also a "magic lantern show," but one that involves people and not just the narrator's bedroom. The shift in the appearance of actual individuals that the narrator had known before World War I, breaks the way he, by habit, envisions these people, alerting him to the passage of time. Proust continues to direct attention to the importance of how images are placed in relation to each other by what I previously referred to as an organizing mechanism:

> From all these aspects, a party like the one at which I found myself was something much more valuable than an image of the past, as it offered me, as it were, all the successive images, ones I had previously never seen, which separated the past from the present and, better still, the relationship that existed between the present and the past; it was like what we used to call an optical viewer, but giving an optical view of years, a view not of one moment, but of one person set in the distorting perspective of Time. (FTA 234)

As is the case with the magic lantern, time becomes visible through physical manifestations, here in those attending the party. For the narrator, this party is more "valuable than an image of the past" (something like a single snapshot of it) because it shows "all the successive images" between the past and the present, even those that the narrator has never seen. The narrator is not looking for a true image of the past. Quite to the contrary: he is saying that he can see a multiplicity of images, including those that he has never seen, and experience the "relationship"

between them, which alerts him to the passage of Time. An "optical viewer" puts various images into conversation with each other and shows us not "one moment" of time, but how Time can "distort" what we see at a given moment. Thus, for Proust, there is no stable image of Time that we can access whenever we want. We have to come into a contact with a visual sight (such as those at the party) that produces multiple images related to differing temporalities. When these images come together in a particular way—and, as is the case with film, there can be multiple ways—they form the display that we can see as Time.

Proust, by comparing the waking and sleeping states in the opening pages of the third chapter of the second section of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, suggests that how we envision the past is not just a matter of finding a particular authentic image of it. Rather, he indicates that such vision is completely determined and limited by our individual perceptual framework and how images interact within this framework at any given moment. For Proust, the relation between memories and thoughts determines the reality that we envision, which does not exist independently outside of this particular interaction. Proust describes how "I entered into sleep, which is like a second apartment that we have, into which, abandoning our own, we go in order to sleep. It has its own system of alarms, and we are sometimes brought violently awake there by the sound of a bell, heard with perfect clarity, even though no one has rung" (SG 376). By comparing sleep to a "second apartment," Proust portrays it as functioning in a completely separate fashion from waking life, with its own "system" that can generate experiences which have "perfect clarity" and seem real only when perceived in that particular perceptual state (how we see and understand the world). For Proust:

> The race which inhabits it [sleep], like that of the earliest humans, is androgynous. A man there will appear a moment later in the aspect of a woman. Objects have the ability to turn into men, and men into friends or enemies. The time that elapses for the sleeper, in

> sleep of this kind, is utterly different from the time in which a waking man's life transpires." (376)

Sleep, according to the narrator, represents a completely different world than that of waking life. This world does not follow the descriptive systems (such as those related to gender characteristics) that we use to define what we see. For this reason, what exists in dreams is "androgynous" or does not have a specific gender and can adapt masculine or feminine qualities with fluidity (just as people can become friends or enemies in a similar fashion). His discussion of gender as being fluid in this sense indicates that, in a state of sleep, gender is an act open to change and is not fixed. In "sleep of this kind" (where the social categories of waking life are not present) our sense of time is completely different. Objects and people have the ability to take on completely different appearances that are not fixed. The ability of the appearance of an object to shift does not mean that the shift has really occurred. It only seems so when seen under a particular perceptual lens that orients our memories and thoughts: "Everything takes place as if this were how it was, but perhaps only a layer of cotton-wool has prevented the sleeper from perceiving the inner-dialogue between his memories and the incessant verbiage of sleep" (SG 377). The "inner-dialogue" between memory and the "verbiage" of a given perceptual framework like sleep determines our perception of something as real, but does not necessarily make that vision objectively true. We only perceive it as such due to "a layer of cotton-wool" that prevents us from having the realization that what we see is a construction. Thus, Proust indicates that varying perceptual states can create completely different visions while involving the same things due to how they organize our relation to memory. Proust continues, "moreover, when sleep carried him so far away from the world inhabited by memory and thought, through an ether in which he was alone, more than alone, without that companion even in whom we perceive ourselves, he was outside of time and its measurement" (SG 378). For Proust, how

"memory and thought" organize themselves in our perception determines what we perceive in the first place. Hence, our sense of identity, of being "ourselves," and "time and its measurement" do not exist independently of thought-memory structures that create the sense that these very things are stable. Proust indicates that perception is not stable and amenable to a single vision of the past and the present, but rather, like sleep, arises from a particular mode of organizing how we experience the world. Instead, how memory and thought are (or are not) linked together determines the look or appearance of the past and the world around us.

Proust demonstrates that the kind of perceptual framework (how images are melded together) which organizes our relation to the past determines what we remember in the first place. What parts of the past are accessible to us in the present depends on how images join together rather than our simple capacity to recall a particular frozen image of a past time. A differing perceptual framework could make different memories visible to us and completely alter our vision of the world.

Proust indicates that our very sense of experience (what we see and feel) is tied to memories, including those that we cannot consciously recall. The narrator's reflections on sleep and memory also allow him to explore this concern. He questions "But what is a memory that we cannot recall? Or let us go further. We do not recall our memories of the last thirty years; but we are totally steeped in them; why then stop at thirty years, why not continue this previous existence back beyond our birth?" (SG 380). Proust dismantles the notion that memory is simply a vision of the past that we can "recall." For him, while we live, we do not constantly consciously recall memories of what has happened to us over the last "thirty years" even though we are "steeped in them." Proust's discussion of being steeped in memoires evokes the madeleine scene in *Swann's Way* in which the taste of madeleines soaked in tea (made from steeped leaves) generates the narrator's sense of involuntary memory (SW 45-7). Steeping also

evokes a physical relation between us and what we are steeped in. We are so completely submerged in these memories that all we can see is what we are steeped in. Just as water causes tea leaves to unfurl and change their shape, what we are steeped in (memories) affects our own sense of experience and may even affect us physically. Furthermore, steeping can cause the steeped object (tea for instance) to release its flavor into the steeping liquid, or the liquid can infuse its flavor into the steeped object. In the first case, we would release our own memories (even those we are not conscious of), projecting them (as the magic lantern does) onto the world around us to form what we see and experience. In the second, we would absorb memories we are steeped in that are almost collective in nature and become part of our sight and senses. Proust suggests that our experience of the present (and of the past when seen from the present) depends on our relation to memories, which affect both how the world appears and how it feels.

As I have discussed, Proust indicates that a perceptual framework (what allows a memory to be accessible to recollection) determines what we see in the present. He also depicts how the existence of the memories arranged by this framework has nothing do with the body or with physical location. The narrator continues his discussion of sleep and memory, describing how:

> Given that I do not know a whole portion of the memories that are behind me, given that they are invisible to me, that I do not have the faculty of summoning them, who is to say that in this mass which is unknown to me, there are not memories that date back long before my life as a man? If I can have in me and around me, so many memories that I do not remember, this oblivion (a *de facto* oblivion at least, since I do not have the faculty of seeing anything) may apply to a life that I have lived in the body of another man, or even on another planet" (380-1).

For Proust, memories that we cannot recall are "invisible," meaning that they are constantly present but cannot be seen. Proust directs attention to the lack of a "faculty of summoning" these

memories that would render them visible. The lack of such a faculty (what I have called a perceptual framework) does not mean that they do not exist (380). It just means that we have no means of recalling them. Proust extends his discussion of such a faculty to that which occurred before our birth. He suggests that events we may have never experienced affect us even if we have no way of visualizing them or specifying what they are. But Proust, in questioning the time "before my life as a man" and the possibility of living "in the body of another man, or even on another planet," continually refers to himself as "a man." This repetition contrasts to previous discussions of the inhabitants of sleep as being androgynous. By suggesting that he has an existence before "my life as a man," the narrator suggests that there can be existence without readily recognizable gender or human characteristics. In fact, he could live in another body or on another planet. Doing so would not necessarily mean that he has a completely different set of memories: his body or location do not determine what memories he has. The fact that we "do not have the faculty of seeing anything" in such cases (an emphasis on sight again) is an actual state of oblivion for Proust. We are steeped in memories and surrounded by them, but their invisibility leaves them "unknown" to us. While the existence of a memory has nothing to do with temporal or spatial proximity (when and where it occurred), its visibility has everything to do with our faculty of recalling memory. The photographer Brassaï relates the photographic apparatus to such a faculty, describing how "No memory, and no latent image, can be delivered from this purgatory without the intervention of the deus ex machina which is the 'developer,' as the word itself indicates. For Proust, this will habitually be a present resemblance which will resuscitate a memory, as a chemical substance brings to life a latent image" (139). According to Brassaï, a process—what he claims resembles the photographic process—determines what, precisely, we can remember. His focus on the importance of "a present resemblance" to the development of such an image evokes the conjunction of more than one image. A resemblance we see in the

present causes other memories, other "latent image[s]," to become visible. Such a resemblance can "resuscitate" and "bring to life" a memory. We begin to see more than just a still image (as when we experience the photographic punctum): we see a living, moving image as we do in cinema. In this sense, the faculty that determines what we recall also determines how images come to life for us virtually in our memory.

"What my eyes did, automatically, in the moment I caught sight of my grandmother was to take a photograph" Proust declares in reference to his ailing grandmother, once again drawing attention to the connection between photography and sight (GW 134). As I have discussed, Proust depicts our sight and its photographic capacities as being more complex than just serving as a means of freezing particular visual images. In fact, our sight lets us see that which lacks a physical presence in front of us: it lets us see an idea of what we are seeing. While I discussed this in reference to the narrator's vision of Albertine when he wanted to be in love, it also occurs in relation to those he indeed does love:

> We never see those who are dear to us except in the *animated workings*, the *perpetual motion* of our incessant love for them, which, before allowing the images their faces represent to reach us, *draws* them into its *vortex*, *flings* them back onto the idea of them we have always had, makes them *adhere* to it, *coincide* with it." (GW 134; emphasis added)

Even though our sight captures an image of a person in the present moment, our love constantly throws that image into motion with others ("animated workings…perpetual motion…draws…vortex…flings"). The narrator indicates that out of his love for his grandmother, he sees anything but a still image of her as if captured with a camera.

He depicts love as a visual "vortex" akin to a moving machine with "animated workings" that "draws" in the photographic image our sight captures and "flings" it back—transformed. Such a

visual machine takes what our sight captures in the present and makes the existing "idea" we have of a person "adhere to it, coincide with it." The adherence and coincidence of the present with this idea makes it so that, experientially, the two cannot be separated: we see the idea "we have always had" of the person. However, Proust also points out that the perpetuation over time of such a virtual version of those we love is not infallible. Now, photography has a different cinematic function: it alerts us to the virtual nature of our vision. Proust states:

> Similarly, some cruel trick of chance may prevent the intelligent devotion of our affection from rushing forward in time to hide from our eyes what they ought never to linger upon, and, outstripped by chance, they get there first, with the field to themselves, and start to function mechanically like photographic film, showing us, not the beloved figure who has long ceased to exist, and whose death our affection has never wanted to reveal, but the new person it has clothed, hundreds of times each day, in a lovingly deceptive likeness. (GW 135)

In this case, the vortex like visual machine (our love for the person) malfunctions. Just as we experience involuntary memory by chance, we also experience "by chance" a failure to maintain our idea visually of a person we love. Our vision "start[s] to function mechanically like photographic film" in the sense that it shows us an image of the present that breaks our habitual way of seeing. Our vision previously "clothed, hundreds of times each day, in a lovingly deceptive likeness" those we love in order to give them a particular fixed appearance. I have argued that this constant creation of vision, here due to our sense of love, is cinematic: images are constantly related to each other over and over again (indicating movement), bringing them to life. Here, our vision also functions like a camera and captures an image of the present. But this image of the present alerts us to the "death" of what we had been seeing previously, which was effectively a virtual image of an idea whose physical embodiment is absent. Suddenly, what we

see makes us aware of loss and even of permanent loss: death. What remains a question is how this break in our habitual mode of seeing the world can affect our faculty of relating to memory. What remains to be seen is if this break—through the pain it causes us—can sufficiently puncture and break the organizing framework behind our sight and forces us to construct a new one, altering how we experience the past and the present.

Ghostly Reflections in the Mirrors of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*

As we have seen over the course of the previous chapter, Proust, in *Á la recherche du temps perdu*, provides an account how our vision of the past and present is virtual in nature. In this chapter, I aim to explore how Andrei Tarkovsky, in his 1975 film *Mirror*, offers a cinematic depiction of the continued presence of loss and absence across time.

In the closing sequence of *Mirror*, we bear witness to an impossible scene. We see the narrator's mother and father lying next to each other in a field located in front of the family dacha. Then, the camera shows the narrator's mother, suddenly elderly, walking with the narrator and his sister as children. We are also offered a shot of film equipment submerged in some kind of water filled ditch. Film allows Tarkovsky to imagine a scene that ignores the passage of time and loss, where young and old inhabit the same space and where father and mother are together despite the audience's awareness of their separation during the narrator's youth. Early in the film, the narrator laments how words "can't really express a person's emotions" and are "too inert." By the end of the film, cinema allows Tarkovsky to bring the impossible to life—the past (the narrator and his family during his youth) and the future (the elderly mother) exist side by side. This melding of temporalities suggests that each has a presence that haunts the other in the present—the past haunts the future and the future haunts the past.

Over the course of this chapter, I aim to explore, paying special attention to the writings of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Tarkovsky himself, how the presence of loss in film is important to its ability to spur emotion. Through a close examination of the theoretical writings of these three authors, I discuss how the past has a distinct presence on the present of the film (what we watch) that is spectral (haunting and intangible) in nature. In doing so, I not only respond to Barthes's concern in *Camera Lucida* that cinema may lack a spectral quality, but also point out an affinity between the ideas of Barthes, Derrida and Tarkovsky. To illustrate this

point, I subsequently focus on the spectral qualities of *Mirror*. I analyze how the past and the losses that occurred in it have a constant presence throughout the film, even if this presence arises from absence. For Tarkovsky, film offers a way not only of visualizing the past, but also of recreating the emotional resonance of individual and collective loss.

I. Barthes, Derrida, Tarkovsky and the Specters of Cinema

Mirror (1975) is a film that portrays events take place across many decades, utilizes the same actors to play multiple roles, incorporates documentary footage and blurs the lines between lived experience and dream. Tarkovsky uses these varied narrational devices and formal elements to create a cinematic production about his own memory of the past and those that inhabit it. In *Sculpting in Time*, he describes the importance of his own experiences and emotions to the film, stating that "*Mirror* was not an attempt to talk about myself, not at all. It was about my feelings towards people dear to me; about my relationship with them; my perpetual pity for them and my own inadequacy—my feeling of duty left unfulfilled" (134). As I shall discuss further, the aim of *Mirror* is not to tell the story of Tarkovsky's life, but to convey the director's sense of "inadequacy" or the feeling that there is no way for him, in the present, to adequately repay the people he cares about for what they have done for him throughout his life. To do so, he casts the same actors in multiple roles (Margarita Terekhova as both Maria, the narrator's mother, and Natalia, the narrator's wife, and Ignat Daniltsev as both Aleksei, the narrator during childhood, and the narrator's son, Ignat), incorporates Purcell, Pergolesi, and Bach into the soundtrack of the film, includes the sketches and paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci, and references the landscapes of Bruegel (Skakov 10). Additionally, the dacha shown during the film's many childhood memories is a reconstruction of the one in which Tarkovsky spent his youth (Martin 23). When released, Soviet authorities offered the film "official condemnation for being obscure and elitist," which spurred Tarkovsky to consider halting his career as a filmmaker and, later, to

begin working outside of the Soviet Union (13). As I shall discuss, Tarkovsky uses such varied stylistic and thematic elements and blurs the lines between dream and lived experience in order to provide the viewer with ways to relate to his depiction of the past on a distinctly emotional level.

I would like to argue that, in *Mirror*, Tarkovsky does not assign specific meanings to moving images. Instead, he actually aims to create an emotional relationship between viewer and image based on the constant presence of loss, which he maintains throughout different shots and sequences. While the writings of Barthes, Derrida and Tarkovsky on film differ, they all share a common preoccupation with this issue.

If we once again look at Barthes's ideas in *Camera Lucida*, we can observe that he questions the ability of cinematic images to affect our senses poignantly. For Barthes, cinema and photography differ in their capacity to create the sensation that what we are seeing while watching a film *has really occurred*. In *Camera Lucida*, he asserts that film does not allow for this sense to cling to our emotions, saying that:

> In the cinema, whose raw material is photographic, the image does not, however, have this completeness (which is fortunate for the cinema). Why? Because the photograph, taken in flux, is impelled, ceaselessly drawn toward other views; in the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic referent, but this referent shifts, it does not make a claim in favor of its reality, it does not protest its former existence; it does not cling to me: it is not a *specter* (89).

Barthes acknowledges that, materially, cinema consists of photographs put into motion. This motion does not provide any sensorial "completeness" for us. We constantly sense that what we see will change with the passage of time. Cinema's "flux" of images does not allow for the sensation that the outcome of what we watch is already determined and is, therefore, immobile.

What cinematic shots refer to is constantly shifting, which never allows them to "cling to" our senses. We simultaneously lack focus on the "reality" of a particular shot (that we are seeing something that is really occurring) and on its "former existence" (that we are seeing something that has occurred). According to Barthes, this removes "the specter" from the cinematic image. They do not haunt our senses in a way that, like a specter, we cannot fully grasp physically or visually. Barthes's depiction of cinema here significantly differentiates it from his discussion of photography. Earlier in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes asserts that the "essence" or "*noeme*" of photography manifests itself in how "I can never deny that *the thing has been there.* There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past" (76). When Barthes looks at a photograph, he senses that what he sees has really been "*there*" where the photograph was shot. Reality and the past are perceived as being superimposed or glued together. Therefore, the past has a continued, clinging reality for Barthes when he looks at a photograph. Barthes's comparison between photography and film illustrates his view that an image is poignant to its viewers when it attests to its own reality.

Despite Barthes's claims that cinema lacks a spectral quality, I would like to suggest that the very spectral qualities he associates with photography in *Camera Lucida*—those that make it poignant—can manifest themselves in film depending on how it interacts with our senses. Specifically, I want to draw attention to how such poignancy arises through our sense of the intangible presence of loss. As I shall discuss, the ability of film to have a spectral quality gives loss a constant presence even if it is not always explicitly visible in front of us.

Philosopher Jacques Derrida focuses directly on how the emotional weight of film depends on its spectral quality—the extent to which absence has a presence for us as we watch cinematic images. Derrida, in "Spectographies," the eighth chapter of his interview *Echographies of Television* with Bernard Stiegler, discusses the interrelatedness of film,

photography, and their spectral characteristics. This discussion is made in direct reference to Barthes's ideas in *Camera Lucida*. Derrida responds to the emphasis Barthes places on the importance of the sense of touch[23] to how we experience photography. He describes how:

> When Barthes grants such importance to touch in the photographic experience, it is insofar as the very thing that one is deprived of, as much in spectrality as in the gaze which looks at images or watches film and television, is indeed tactile sensitivity. The desire to touch, the tactile effect or affect, is violently summoned by its very frustration, summoned back [*appelé à revenir*], like a ghost [*un revenant*], in the places haunted by its absence. In the series more or less equivalent words that accurately designate haunting, *specter*, as distinct from *ghost* [revenant], speaks of the spectacle. The specter is first and foremost something visible. It is of the visible, but of the invisible visible. It is the visibility of a body that is not present in flesh and blood. It resists the intuition to which it presents itself, it is not *tangible*. (115)

For Derrida, Barthes's focus on the senses—the tactile sense—is also relevant to how we relate to "film and television" more broadly. Derrida associates Barthes's discussion of touch with the simultaneous deprivation of and desire for it. When we experience any of these visual mediums, we are "deprived of" the actual touch of what we see, which only "violently" spurs the desire for that very thing. The desire for the sense of touch referred to, being a "tactile effect or affect," produces both a physical "effect' and an emotional "affect." The "absence" of such a physical

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[23] Stiegler offers the following excerpt from Barthes's text, part of which I have also cited above: "[I]n photography, I can never deny that the thing was there. Past and reality are superimposed…. The photo is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body which was there proceed radiations that come to touch me, I who am here. The duration of the transmission doesn't matter. The photo of the departed being comes to touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A kind of umbilical cord ties the body of the photographic thing to my gaze: light though impalpable, is really a carnal medium here, a skin that I share with the one who was photographed…. The bygone thing has really touched, with its immediate radiations (its luminances), the surface that is in turn touched by my gaze (115).

and emotional touch stimulates further desire for it—this desire is "summoned back [*appelé à revenir*], like a ghost [*un revenant*]." The ghostly lingering of this desire haunts the viewer of these images. Derrida uses the term *specter* as opposed to *ghost* to focus on the "spectacle" of how we experience this desire. While this absence of touch integrates itself into how we see the world (thus, it is "visible"), it corresponds to no physical object "in flesh and blood." What becomes visible in our view of the world is a virtual specter. Even if the specter constantly embeds itself in what we see and sense, it is something that we cannot touch, which removes its physical and virtual tangibility. Derrida adds that "A specter is both visible and invisible, both phenomenal and nonphenomenal: a trace that marks the present with its absence in advance" (117). Derrida sees the specter as having a presence in "the present" that is not simply visible or invisible or directly available or unavailable to the senses. He sees it as having a presence due to a future absence that, in the present, is already set to occur. Derrida's view suggests that if cinema is indeed spectral—if it can unexplainably linger on our senses—it occurs through absences that already mark not just what we see, but how we experience film.

I would now like to suggest that both Derrida and Tarkovsky share a common concern with how film itself is, to use Derrida's term, spectral. What we watch, hear about, and more broadly experience in film is already absent (no longer occurring), even though it has a virtual (spectral) body that we can watch over and over again. Derrida, with his focus on the specter, suggests that film preserves a reality within its images whose future absence was already marked when filmed. He illustrates this point in "Cinema and its Ghosts," an interview conducted from 1998 to 2000 with *Cahiers du cinéma*, while discussing Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film *Shoah,* which presents interviews with witnesses and victims of the Holocaust. While I am in no way suggesting that Derrida's comments about *Shoah* (a documentary film that shows actual individuals discussing events they experienced or witnessed) are universally applicable to a

fictional film like *Mirror*, they do, nevertheless, illustrate the importance of spectrality to cinema more broadly. When asked about "What is it in *Shoah* that seems to you specifically cinematographic" (in what ways does *Shoah* contain qualities specific to film as a medium), Derrida responds that:

> The presentation of the trace is not a simple presentation, a representation, or an image: it takes on a body, matches gesture with speech, recounts and inscribes itself in a landscape…Before being historical, political, archival, the power of *Shoah* is thus essentially cinematographic. Because the cinematic image allows the thing itself (a witness who has spoken, one day, in some place) to be not reproduced but produced once again "itself there." This immediacy of the "itself there," but without representable presence, produced with each viewing, is the essence of cinema and of Lanzmann's film. (32)

The type of trace that Derrida associates with film "is not a simple presentation, a representation, or an image," meaning that is not simply a visual sight. Rather, it is a presence that becomes complexly imbedded within the broader cinematic image and experience,[24] in "body…gesture…speech." In this sense, the trace becomes part of the "landscape" that we bear witness to as we watch movies. For Derrida, *Shoah* is more of a "cinematographic" work than one that is "historical, political, archival," which indicates that its power does not arise from some kind of cultural basis. Its power comes from showing "the thing itself" (a witness of the Holocaust speaking), not just allowing it to be "reproduced," but to actually have an immediate presence of "being there" in what we see. The irony of this (and what Derrida claims is the "essence" of film) is that the "there" we are watching does not have any physical presence. It is

[24] Like with the "spectacle" discussed in "Spectographies," Derrida points to how the experience of the trace is more complicated that just seeing it. (115).

virtual and can be reproduced over and over again. Derrida suggests that what makes cinema distinct as a medium is that, despite offering the constant reproducibility of the past as a virtual specter, it makes the past, when viewed in the present, seem like it is really unfolding there in the film we watch.

Tarkovsky's own thoughts about film in *Sculpting in Time* also highlight the relationship between cinema and its capacity to produce the sensation that what we are watching is really occurring within the cinematic shot. While Derrida offers his own mode of discussing this issue in terms of the specter, Tarkovsky asserts that film offers an impression of time, whose passage is printed onto the film we are watching. Film is a distinct medium for Tarkovsky because it allows us to watch actual time as it occurred, which is now preserved infinitely. In his discussion of film and temporality, Tarkovsky asserts that, with film:

> For the first time in the history of the arts, in the history of culture, man found the means *to take an impression of time*. And simultaneously the possibility of reproducing that time on screen as often as he wanted, to repeat it and go back to it. He acquired a matrix for *actual time*. Once seen and recorded, time could now be preserved in metal boxes over a long period (theoretically for ever) (62).

Tarkovsky describes film as a unique medium because it can "take an impression of time." An impression indicates that time is leaving an imprint—its trace—on film and that we can see its passage ("to repeat it and go back to it") over and over. In this sense, what we are seeing is "actual time" that now has a potentially infinite existence. Tarkovsky maintains his focus on the imprint of time on film, suggesting cinema, through its reproducibility, is actually a printed form of time. He describes how:

> In what form does cinema print time? Let us define it as *factual*. And fact can consist of an event, or a person moving, or any material object; and furthermore, that object can be

> presented as motionless and unchanging, in so far as that immobility exists within the actual course of time…But the virtue of cinema is that it appropriates time, complete with that material reality to which it is indissolubly bound, and which surrounds us day by day and hour by hour…*Time, printed in its factual forms and manifestations*: such is the supreme idea of cinema as art" (63).

As has been discussed, for Tarkovsky, time imprints itself onto film. But film can actually "print time" or can give it a "factual" body that we can access at any time. By factual, Tarkovsky refers not to a film's status as fictional or if what we see moves or changes with time, but to how we are watching time as it passed. Furthermore, the passage of time is not separable from what we are seeing: Tarkovsky claims that it is "indissolubly bound" to the "material reality" that we see in the film and that we experience every day. Film prints time by giving it a body: by rendering it visible and imbedded in "factual forms and manifestations" and by making it reproducible. Like Derrida and his discussion of the trace, Tarkovsky suggests that printed time is not tangible in a way that would allow us to simply separate it from what we experience while watching film. Furthermore, his focus on our ability to preserve time in a filmed format shares Derrida's preoccupation with the virtual aspects of the cinematic medium. While we are watching time as it occurred, we are essentially seeing its virtual imprint.

As I have discussed, despite some differences in how Barthes, Derrida and Tarkovsky discuss film and its ability to linger on the viewer's senses, all three contemplate how images (be they photographic or cinematic) can generate haunting viewing experiences. I would now like to direct attention to how, for all three, that which haunts us about a photographic or cinematic image remains undefinable because we cannot separate it from the image itself.

As we have seen, for Derrida, film can be distinctly moving due to how it gives presence to that which has no physical presence. His discussion of *Shoah* illuminates the power that

documentary style cinema has to present loss (specifically death) in a way that we cannot simply explain away: death—a predetermined and absolute absence—weighs on us. In "Cinema and Its Ghosts," Derrida continues his discussion of this trace in reference to *Shoah*. He describes how "The trace is the is the 'that-took-place-there' of the film, what I call survivance. For all of these witnesses are survivors: they lived *that* and say so. Cinema is the absolute simulacrum of absolute survivance. It recounts to us what we cannot get over, it recounts death to us" (31). While watching film, our sense of "'that-took-place-there'" in what we see creates "survivance." Survivance is the continued presence, the survival, of what, effectively, is already absent. In the case of *Shoah,* we are, on one hand, seeing witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust being interviewed *there* in the image. While these interviews have already ended, they take place virtually in front of us. On the other, the "that" discussed by the interviewees (what they say and, more specifically, the death they recount in relation to the Holocaust) continues in the present through the film. Even if past occurrences and death have no tangible visible or physical presence when discussed or referred to, they continue to have spectral presence that haunts the present of the film. For Derrida, cinema, as "the absolute simulacrum of absolute survivance," holds the power to offer the virtual survival (a simulacrum) of that which has no physical presence. Derrida claims that, in doing so, film "recounts to us what we cannot get over, it recounts death to us." *Shoah* recounts the death caused by the Holocaust and gives it a continued presence. While this continuance has to do with the fact that it is preserved in a virtual format that can be viewed over and over again, it also concerns the nature of death itself. The absence that death leaves is one that "we cannot get over." Derrida's words simultaneously evoke the sense that we neither "get over" this loss of life emotionally (we cannot explain away our emotions about the loss) or physically (we cannot get back what is dead). For Derrida, film's capacity to give an intangible virtual body to that which has no physical presence places

absence—absence that we have no way of getting over—at the center of the cinematic viewing experience.

Barthes, in his analysis of photography in *Camera Lucida*, shares with Derrida a similar concern about the importance of loss to our experience of looking at images. Barthes emphasizes that photography pains us by generating a simultaneous sense of past and future absence in what we see. In his discussion of Alexander Gardner's photograph of Lewis Payne (who is "waiting to be hanged") Barthes declares "But the *punctum* is: *he is going to die*. I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake" (95-6). Barthes pays particular attention to how photography punctures our emotions when we look it: we feel pain due to our sense that who we see will die in the future. Nevertheless, when we "read" the photograph in the present, we also sense that this death has already occurred: a paradox. The paradoxical presence of past and future absence in the photograph produces a sense of "horror" that what we are seeing is still alive and is marked to die and that what we are seeing is already dead. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, the interplay of past and future absence constantly haunts the experience of watching *Mirror* in the present.

Furthermore, Barthes sees the painful temporal experience of photography as irremediable through intellectual or cultural explanation: our pain remains fixed. Barthes indicates that such fixation occurs because we cannot transform death that is set to occur or death that has already occurred. In this case, his ideas on photography share an affinity with those of Derrida on film: loss (specifically due to death) marks an absence that perpetuates feeling, which remains beyond our ability to alter. This point emerges in Barthes's discussion of the so-called Winter Garden Photograph of his recently deceased mother, which provides him with a painful

vision of his mother before his birth. He describes the emotional poignancy generated by the photograph as follows:

> I cannot *transform* my grief, I cannot let my gaze drift; no culture will help me utter this suffering which I experience entirely on the level of the image's finitude (this is why, despite its codes, I cannot *read* a photograph): the Photograph—my Photograph—is without culture: when it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning. And if dialectic is that thought which masters the corruptible and converts the negation of death into the power to work, then the photograph is undialectical: it is a denatured theater were death cannot 'be contemplated,' reflected and interiorized; or again: the dead theater of Death, the foreclosure of the Tragic, excludes all purification, all *catharsis* (90).

The photograph immobilizes Barthes and his sense of pain. He is unable to "transform" his "grief" and to allow his "gaze [to] drift," which indicates that he is unable to loosen his emotional and visual fixation. He can neither alter the grief he feels, nor focus his sight on something else that would lessen his pain. Explaining the image through culture also fails to help Barthes "utter this suffering," to verbalize what it is. He meets the "image's finitude" or cannot go beyond suffering and continuously looking at what causes it. This is why he "cannot *read*" a photograph of this type (one that is deeply personal to him) through culture. Barthes once again highlights that he cannot "transform" what he feels and thereby neutralize the poignancy of his grief by turning it into "mourning." The photograph is "undialectical" because it provides no way to "master" or to "convert" death into anything else through thought—it is an absolute loss. The photograph is a "denatured theatre": a spectacle that is unnatural, both as a mechanical reproduction of what no longer exits and as a space where past and future collide. We cannot contemplate, reflect on, or interiorize death in this theater and succeed, through thought, in ridding ourselves of our pain. The qualities of the photograph remain tragic and beyond

"purification": there is no "*catharsis*" of the emotions photography causes us. As is the case with Derrida's discussion of death and film, Barthes demonstrates that the unconquerability of death—we sense that it either has occurred or will occur—makes its presence emotionally impactful. For Barthes, this emotional impact maintains our emotional and visual fixation on the image, which then only further perpetuates the poignancy of our emotions.

While not a direct discussion of death like *Camera Lucida*, Barthes's essay "The Third Meaning" evokes the ways in which the resonance of cinematographic images also remains culturally and intellectually unexplainable. Barthes describes this unexplainable quality of cinema through his analysis of various stills from the films of director Sergei Eisenstein. According to Barthes, while cinematic images transmit information and contain symbols for concepts, they also involve "the other meaning, the third, the one 'too many', the supplement that my intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive, I propose to call it the obtuse meaning" (54). For Barthes, cinematic images also contain a quality that he cannot attribute to a specific meaning. Being "persistent," it affects us clingingly; being "smooth and elusive," it is also not something that he can explain (absorb) intellectually. For Barthes, the obtuse meaning "appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information…Indifferent to moral and aesthetic categories (the trivial, the futile, the false, the pastiche), it is on the side of the carnival" (55). In other words, the obtuse meaning, like the pain photography can cause us according to Barthes, cannot be explained through thought, whether it be cultural, informational, moral or aesthetic in nature. It is like "the carnival": a space in which rules are suspended. Barthes adds that "If the obtuse meaning cannot be described, that is because, in contrast to the obvious meaning, it does not copy anything – how do you describe something that does not represent anything?" (61). The indescribability of the obtuse meaning comes from the absence of a specific meaning associable with it: it does not "copy anything" or

replicate a specifiable meaning that is representable. Once again, Barthes's commentary shares a similarity to that of Derrida. Both claim that what affects us about cinematic images is that which has no completely representable body. Barthes commentary also suggests that cinema and photography share a common capacity to produce profound experiences through how they generate a kind of sensorial meaning marked by the absence of cultural or intellectual meaning.

Tarkovsky makes related claims in his own writings on film. He suggests that *Mirror* portrays the his perpetual inadequacy in his relationships with those he cares about. For Tarkovsky, portraying such complex emotions does not come about through indented meanings being assigned to cinematic images. Instead, he wants to cause us to go beyond what we see on the screen with our vision and senses. As I have discussed, for Tarkovsky, "*Mirror* was not an attempt to talk about myself, not at all. It was about my feelings towards people dear to me; about my relationship with them; my perpetual pity for them and my own inadequacy—my feeling of duty left unfulfilled" (134). *Mirror* is not just a film about Tarkovsky, but also about his feelings toward the people he loves. In particular, it is about his "pity for them," his "inadequacy," and his "duty left unfulfilled." The film deals with loss and the absences that accompany it: the absence of an adequate way to relate to those Tarkovsky loves and to repay them for their acts. A way to fulfill his "duty" to these people—what he owes them—remains unavailable and absent. Therefore, the painful presence of the absence of any means for Tarkovsky to make up for what occurred in the past is central to *Mirror*. In his discussion of how artistic images (such as those in poetry, painting, and film) inspire such complicated emotions, Tarkovsky claims that "Such feeling [of infinity] is awoken by the completeness of the image: it affects us by this very fact of being impossible to dismember…A true artistic image gives the beholder a simultaneous experience of the most complex, contradictory, sometimes even mutually exclusive feelings" (109). Tarkovsky asserts that a complete or "true artistic image" can

inspire emotion due to how it is infinite—how it directs our feelings infinitely towards that which it does not display. If the image inspires a sense of infinity, then it does not launch our emotions towards an identifiable object. Rather, it perpetually provokes and offers no explanation for them. For this reason, we cannot "dismember" the image or take apart what we see and what it means for us individually. The inability to associate the image with an interpretable meaning of this type allows it to have a "complex, contradictory" and "mutually exclusive" (evoking inseparability) emotional effect. Thus, for Tarkovsky, cinema that conveys profound emotions has no "final meaning that can be gradually deciphered like a charade," meaning that we cannot interpret what affects us about it.[25] (106). While Barthes makes similar claims about the lack of specifiable cultural meaning assignable to photographic and cinematic images, Tarkovsky does so in order to differentiate his cinematic style from the "montage cinema" associated with director Sergei Eisenstein. Tarkovsky argues that this type of montage "brings together two concepts and thus engenders a new, third[26] one" and works to create "the interplay of concepts as its ultimate goal" (114). Tarkovsky rejects what he claims is a focus on making intellectual concepts the goal of cinema because it "presents the audience with puzzles and riddles, makes them decipher symbols, take pleasure in allegories, appealing all the time to their intellectual experience" and, in doing so, does not allow "the film to continue beyond the edges of the screen" (118). Tarkovsky rejects what he portrays as a cinematic style built on causing the audience to decipher images in the search of intellectually determined meanings. He

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[25] Interestingly, Tarkovsky makes this claim citing the poetic form of the Haiku. Barthes also discusses the Haiku in *Camera Lucida* to emphasize how it shares with photography a common capacity to produce an "*intense immobility*" that cannot be altered through explanation (49).
[26] Barthes, in the "The Third Meaning," actually shares an affinity with Tarkovsky's ideas while discussing Eisenstein's films. He focuses on how a third meaning is resonant because it "appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information" and is not simply an intellectual concept (55). He also offers a revision of Eisenstein's theory of montage to direct attention to how what is "'*inside the shot*'" affects us emotionally (67). Barthes's discussion suggests that there may be other ways to look at Eisenstein's work and ideas than Tarkovsky proposes.

favors a style that, theoretically, can push our vision and senses beyond what is visually available to us in the film.[27] Reading the ideas of Derrida, Barthes and Tarkovsky together points to a common preoccupation: images, both cinematic and photographic, can have emotional weight for their viewers by causing them to interact with absence. In this way, viewers constantly sense absences whose inexplicability via intellectual thought only perpetuates their presence.

II. Spectral Reflections in *Mirror*

I would like to draw attention to how film allows Tarkovsky to revive the narrator's past spectrally because he can grant us visual access to what, for his narrator, is absent. In doing so, Tarkovsky suggests that film allows us to visualize that which remains otherwise inaccessible. In one particular sequence, the narrator describes how he has a repeated dream that "seems to be forcing me to return to the bittersweet site of my grandfather's house." While the dream causes him to interact with a certain space that remains emotionally poignant to him, he is not able to inhabit the space in the dream, as he cannot enter into the house. We as viewers, however, have complete access to the house in color as the camera sweeps through it (Image 1). We are witnessing a sight that can only be brought to life through film. The narrator informs us that this dream spurs the sense that there may indeed be a way of returning to the past. He explains that if this were the case, "I'll be happy again knowing that all still lies ahead and nothing is impossible." His words evoke how the dream spurs the sense that past occurrences can be turned into future occurrences that have not yet occurred or may occur differently. Thus, the narrator's comments on dreaming echo those of Barthes on photography and its ability to generate the sense that the completion of what we see will take place in the future. After the narrator says that "nothing is impossible," the film suddenly cuts to a black and white shot of a film reel

[27] This claim echoes Barthes's discussion of photography's "blind field" and its role in pushing the imagination beyond the visual image of the photograph (57). For a more complete analysis of the blind field, see Chapter II.

submerged in water (Image 2). Tarkovsky indicates that what makes nothing impossible (and allows us to see the interior of the house) is cinematic technology. The film reel, being submerged, evokes the inaccessibility of such a vision otherwise. The following shot (Image 3) emphasizes this point by depicting what seems to be the previously discussed dream: the boy only in front of the house. The black and white images of the dream contrast to the previous images of the home's interior in color. This contrast indicates that the filmed reality of the interior may actually be more lifelike than the narrator's own dreamed experience. In this way, Tarkovsky gives film the power to bring the past to life, even if what appears alive before our eyes has no form outside of the film itself. In this sense, we feel the limits of the ability of the narrator to enter into the past, as film provides a more living version of it than his own dreams.

In *Mirror*, Tarkovsky demonstrates that our relationship with the past in the present exists in constant tension with loss. Through film, he is able to perpetuate the presence of loss across memories, dreams, and the present of the narrator. Tarkovsky suggests that the presence of loss haunts our relationship to the past in all of these spaces. He does so by maintaining the constant sense that what we are watching is already marked by a future or past loss and the respective absence it creates.

An early sequence serves as an example of the constant presence of loss throughout the film. A stranger arrives at the dacha where the narrator would spend his summers before World War II and begins to converse with the narrator's mother, who sits on a fence bordering a large field (Image 4). The voiceover narration describes how, if the person passing through the field turns by a particular bush, then that person is the narrator's father, who, we are told, will not return to the family. This information marks an absence in the life of the narrator from the very beginning of the film. During the conversation between the narrator's mother and the stranger, it becomes even clearer that the narrator's father is absent. After this conversation, inside the

family dacha, the editing pace is very slow. The camera pans in a circle, showing the preoccupied gaze of the narrator's mother as she looks at her children (Image 5). It then follows her to a window as she looks out at a field (Image 6) and, finally, offers us her perspective (Image 7). Only one edit occurs to show her from the front, crying (Image 8), emphasizing her emotions in relation to the empty field from which her absent husband does not return. The camera then pans around once again. We hear a combination of distress outside and the constant ticking of a clock (evoking the passage of time), and we see the narrator and his sister (Image 9). The camera edits once more to show the family hay loft on fire in a mirror (Image 10) and then pans around again to capture the actual fire (Image 11). Again, only one edit occurs to capture the mother helplessly gazing at the fire: another loss (Image 12). A black and white dream sequence then follows, showing the narrator as a child lying in bed (Image 13). The narrator gets out of bed and sees his father and mother bathing (Image 14) in, what we find out, is quite literally a crumbling version of his Moscow flat in the 1970's (Image 15). A shot of the mother (Image 16) is followed by a shot of her reflection in the mirror as the elderly version of herself (Image 17). Suddenly, we are in what we now recognize as the narrator's Moscow apartment in the 1970's. The camera pans around the room and then moves through the length of the apartment (Image 18) as the narrator speaks to his mother on the phone. He asks about when his father left the family and when the hay loft burned down, and he mentions that he dreamed about her (what, potentially, we just watched). The film then presents yet another loss: the death of the mother's colleague Lisa. The following sequence takes place at the printing press where the two worked during Stalin's regime and shows the mother's fear upon thinking that she may have caused a grave error in the publication of a document. As we enter into this sequence, we are aware that we are seeing a youthful version of someone who is now old and a living version of someone who is no longer alive.

To review: the following losses take place. Firstly, there is the loss of the father, who we know is absent, even as we see him in a dream and hear about him in discussions. Secondly, there is the loss of the hay barn, which, along with its emotional toll on the mother, we know about when it is discussed in the present. Thirdly, there the simultaneous presence of the narrator as a child and the mother as youthful and elderly in the dream sequence, suggesting that the past has a continued presence in the crumbling world of the present. Finally, there is the death of Lisa, which we already know about before seeing her in the following sequence.

Throughout this sequence, Tarkovsky constantly presents the audience with a loss before bringing it up yet again, emphasizing its emotional weight across memories, dreams, and the present. In the present moment in which we watch *Mirror*, we know that what we are seeing or hearing about is already absent. As we see the mother looking out of the window, we are aware that her husband will not emerge from the field she looks at, which explains her pain. In the dream, our knowledge that the narrator's father is absent alerts us to the virtual nature of what we see. The crumbling of the the narrator's apartment foreshadows the challenges he faces in the present and relates them to his past. During the following scene in the apartment, the lack of editing as the camera slowly moves does not tell us what to think about the absences discussed by the narrator and his mother: they are left to be felt. Tarkovsky, therefore, constantly alerts us to the absence of a person or place before he offers us a reminder that these very things no longer exist. In this way, Tarkovsky creates a distinctly spectral dynamic in *Mirror* because we are constantly watching sequences in the present that have absences built into them. These absences perpetuate a constant presence of loss and the respective pain it causes the film's characters.

Tarkovsky suggests that the past and the loss that took place in it survive in our experience of the present through the replication of themselves through time and space in the relationships between people. In *Sculpting in Time*, the director discusses the importance of the

past on our experience of the present. He describes how "in a certain sense, the past is far more real, or at any rate, more stable, more resilient, than the present…time cannot vanish without a trace for it is a subjective, spiritual category; and the time we have lived settles in our soul as an experience placed within time" (58). The present is not a pure recording of what is occurring around us. Instead, it is the way in which the past has a presence, "a trace," for us in the present, even if, existing in our "soul," that trace remains invisible. In *Mirror*, the portrayal of the emotional dynamic between the narrator and his mother points to the constant presence of the past in their relationship and the constant projection of their relationship on to the present. Such projection occurs in terms of how they live and interact with each other and with others. In one particular scene, the narrator lay sick in a bed. The camera slowly moves towards a doctor (Image 19) who explains how the sudden death of a mother can destroy the health of her son within days. When the question is posed as to how this relates to the narrator, whose mother is alive, the doctor responds "there's his conscience, his memory." At this point, we see the narrator's mother (Image 20), who declares that the narrator considers himself guilty (the narrator responds by asking to be left alone). The slow movement of the camera and the lack of editing emphasize the tension between the narrator and his mother, which remains immobile throughout the scene. The narrator lay in bed unable to get up, the mother looks upset and the others in the room cannot remedy the situation—the tension remains. The immobilized tension between mother and son appears throughout the film in other manifestations, including the relationship between the narrator and his former wife. Early in the *Mirror*, the narrator declares to his former wife, Natalia (played by the same actress as his mother during his childhood), that she resembles his mother. As he says this, we see her looking into a mirror, evoking the reflection of his mother on the present (Image 21). The resemblance between the mother and Natalia suggests that the narrator's perception of his former wife is inflected with his perception

of the past and of his mother. Natalia then claims that their son (played by Tarkovsky's own son) resembles his father. Her comment once again indicates that a series of resemblances between past and present come to life in the present, not in fully tangible forms, but in a series of reflections in how people appear and behave. Tarkovsky only makes this concern more evident later in the film when the narrator's former wife looks at a photo of herself and the narrator's mother (Image 22) and observes their resemblance. Natalia asks the narrator "What kind of relationship do you want with your mother?" She responds, declaring that "One like you had in childhood is impossible now. You speak of feeling guilty…because she sacrificed her life for you. There's nothing you can do about it. She wants you to be a child again so she can take care of you and protect you." Her words suggest that a "feeling of guilt" haunts the relationship between the narrator and his mother due to various losses. These losses exist as various absences that haunt the present: the loss of the previous relationship between the narrator and his mother, the absence of the mother's opportunity to live for herself, and the absence of the mother's ability to care for and protect her son. This guilt-ridden relationship between the narrator and his mother only perpetuates further familial tension. Tarkovky points to the reflection of the mother-son dynamic on the present by placing mirrors throughout the room (Image 23). As the narrator argues with Natalia about her possible future marriage and the future of their son Ignat, the camera shows Ignat wandering around the room (Image 24). He is then seen outside next to a burning bush, which references the burning hay-loft from the narrator's own youth (Image 25). Ignat's constant presence and the fire suggest that the narrator's own pain could continue to be reflected on his son. The constant perpetuation of the troubled dynamic between mother and son indicates that the pain they experience is immobile and seemingly unresolvable. The fixed quality of this pain makes it so that it is constantly experienced and reconfigured in the present between the narrator and other people.

Furthermore, the replication of loss across time and space does not just occur on an interpersonal level in *Mirror*. It also takes place on a larger, collective level. Tarkovsky suggests that the experience of the individual is tied up with the absences—particularly the loss of life—brought about during Russia's history. One particular example of this occurs in relation to Tarkovsky's use of footage showing the Soviet army traversing Lake Sivash in 1943. According to Tarkovsky in *Sculpting in Time*, "hardly anyone survived…the camera-man who had made the film, with such extraordinary penetration into the events taking place around him, had been killed on that same day" (130-1). Tarkovsky once again allows us to witness a world whose inhabitants are, as we see them, already absent due to the activities we watch them participating in.[28] This time he shows us individuals whose identity beyond their involvement in historical events remains unknown but who are, nonetheless, actual participants in what we are watching. As we see these images unfold, the narrator reads from a poem, "Life, Life" by Arseniy Tarkovsky (Tarkovsky's father), which states that "The future is accomplished here and now…With shoulder blades like timber props / I held up every day that made the past" (143). These lines emphasize that the future bears the marks of the present: what will occur is marked, in advance, "here and now." In this sense, what occurs (and, thus, has occurred in "the past") is a construction that we hold up as we make it. Tarkovsky intertwines various shots of the narrator in a military camp with the documentary footage. A shot of a girl the narrator found to be pretty during his childhood shows her bleeding lip (Image 26), contrasting to her smile and foreshadowing the violence involved in the following documentary shots. Further shots of the narrator at a military camp only relate the documentary footage to his own experience (Images

[28] Tarkovsky also notes that the chief of Soviet State Cinema wanted him to remove this footage (130). A sequence that allows those who are dead (and who died in a Soviet operation) to be brought back to life in the present through film was one that the government saw as particularly concerning.

27 and 28). Tarkovsky then includes other footage related to World War II (including the atomic bomb explosion and supporters of Mao Zedong in China). He follows these images with scenes of the narrator's childhood home, showing the narrator's father hugging his children (Image 29). In all of the cases, what connects the narrator to broader historical events is the loss that occurs in both: the loss of the narrator's father and the loss of life during war. We bear witness to multiple cinematic styles in this sequence that are not always explicitly linked to the narrator's life but are connected by the presence of loss in both. Tarkovsky demonstrates that collective loss and the absence it generates cast a shadow with poignant presence over the lives of individuals.

Ultimately, a distinct question haunts *Mirror*: to what degree can film, by allowing us to feel the presence of absence across multiple temporalities, alter how we construct the future in the present? In one scene, Ignat experiences an electric shock "as if it had already happened," evoking a ghostly sense of déjà vu and the sensorial repetition of the past in the present. The sense that the past continues to have spectral sensorial consequences on the present manifests itself further in the following scene in which Ignat reads from an 1836 letter written by Alexander Pushkin and figures resembling the narrator's mother appear three times (once serving a drink, once at the door, and once in a photo behind Ignat) (Images 30, 31, and 32). The mother's presence marks a distinct encroachment of the narrator's past on the present, even if this influence cannot be identified (the boy does not identify the woman at the door). Her presence also exists side by side with another suggestion: that particular aspects of the past and the present outside of our conscious awareness (that are invisible) continue to mark how we construct the future in the present. In the letter read aloud during this scene, Pushkin states "And—hand on heart—do you not discern something imposing in the present situation of Russia, something that will strike the future historian? Do you think he will put us outside of Europe?"

(195). These lines mark a preoccupation with how that which we "do not discern" in the present will be visibly striking to those in the future when observing the present in retrospect. It also invokes questions about the status of Russia as existing "outside" of Europe and about its identity more broadly. For Gilles Deleuze, this latter question is one, in *Mirror*, whose "seeds seem to be frozen in these sodden, washed and heavily translucent images" (75). Deleuze points to a frozen immobility central to the film, which revolves around the opaqueness of collective Russian experience (75). As Ignat reads these particular lines of the letter, the camera zooms in on a women siting at the table, showing her agitation (Image 33) while picking up a cup of tea, whose mark on the table soon disappears (Image 34). We soon discover that the whole scene was almost a hallucination, with Ignat actually being alone in the room. The physical presence of what we were watching was illusory, able to appear and disappear, like a ghost. For Tarkovsky, the process of making such a deeply personal film altered how the past had a presence in his life. He describes how, after making *Mirror*, "childhood memories that for years had given me no peace suddenly vanished, as if they had melted away, and at last I stopped dreaming about the house where I had lived so many years before" (128). The artistic process has a direct effect on how the past affects Tarkovsky in the present, lessening the pain he had previously experienced in regard to it. The concern that haunts *Mirror* and cinema more broadly is to what extent film can affect how we relate to specters—past and future absences that mark our experience of the present—whose tangibility is like the elusive condensation on the table in front of Ignat: apt to fade away.

Conclusion

In *Camera Lucida,* Barthes describes the experience of being photographed, evoking the importance of his own personal experiences to the work more broadly and the ability of photography to attach socially generalized images to those it captures. He describes how:

> each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposter (comparable to certain nightmares). In terms of the image-repertoire, the Photograph (the one I *intend*) represents that very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter. (13-4)

Barthes's discussion of his own experience serves as an example of how *Camera Lucida* is just as much about Barthes's experiences as about photography. His comments also illuminate a particular aspect of the relationship between photography and identity. While Barthes is being photographed, he feels "a sensation of inauthenticity" and "imposture," that, like a nightmare, creates the sensation of being in an artificial state from which he can wake up. Barthes mentions the "image-repertoire"—the kind of generalized images that are recognizable for all who see them. When he "*intend[s]*" to look a certain way while being photographed, he is becoming a generalized image of himself: intent does not equate to authenticity. In this situation, he is not simply a "subject" or an "object," but in the process of "becoming an object." This state of becoming an object represents a type of death: he is "truly becoming a specter" or an actual virtual version of himself maintained by the photograph. Barthes's anecdote suggests that photography, in creating a virtual version of those it captures, can also pair them with a generalized image. Their subsequent recognizability in photography—the sense that we are

seeing “Roland Barthes” upon looking at his photo—only means that we partake in the almost automatic recognition of a generalized image.

Over the course this thesis, I have explored Barthes’s ideas alongside those of Lispector in *Água Viva*, Proust in *La recherche*, and Tarkovsky in *Mirror*: four works that, in one way or another, all play with the extent to which a literary or cinematic production does or does not provide us with an image of its author. A question that arises in relation to all of their works is how these artists liberate their texts from any kind of final meaning associable with a generalized image of their creators. That is: how do they prevent their works from becoming mere photographs carrying a generalized vision of their author’s identity? Over the course of the last three chapters, I have focused on how photographic, literary and cinematic images challenge such generalization when their audience fails to name, decipher or explain (culturally or intellectually) their resonance. In Chapter I, I explored how Lispector’s narrator tries to capture photographically the experience of the present moment, only to suggest that we cannot capture the corporal experience of it through language or images. In Chapter II, I claimed that Proust’s depiction of sight evokes the ways in which our visual and sensorial relation to the past and present is in a constant state of movement occurring between visual images and their association with desire. Finally, in Chapter III, I focused on moving images, discussing Andrei Tarkovsky’s film *Mirror* and the capacity of cinema to be resonant through giving a virtual body with presence to that which has no tangible physical presence. These works all seem to contain distinct traces of their creators. As I mentioned, early drafts of *Água Viva* contained clear autobiographical references to Lispector’s past and daily activities (Moser viii). *La recherche* also contains “events and characters closely resembling those of Proust’s own life,” evoking a potentially autobiographical relation between the text and its author (Davis ix). Tarkovsky also blends the lines between his life and that of his narrator, casting his own family in the film and

incorporating memorabilia from his other works, now associated with the narrator (the poster of *Andrei Rublev* seen in Image 35). Yet, while all of these works contain clear references to the lives of their creators, seeing them simply as the autobiographical products of authorial intent has a distinct consequence: it suggests that they provide universal images of their authors. If this were case and if we deciphered the so-called authorial intent of each text, then we would arrive at a now generalized, readily available image of their creators, accessible to all: we would see Barthes, Lispector, Proust and Tarkovsky in the same way.

What these artists all do is disturb this kind of generalized photographic relationship between author and text: they remove themselves from full visibility and they escape imagistic objectification in their works. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes never shows us a photograph of himself or of his cherished Winter Garden Photograph, thus maintaining "that zone of space" where he and those he cares for "are not an image, an object" (15). In *Mirror*, we never see the narrator as an adult: we have no explicit visual image of him. Barthes, in his essay "The Death of the Author,[29]" contends that *La recherche* provides no simple replica of Proust. He describes how "Proust gave modern writing its epic. By a radical reversal, instead of putting his life into his novel, as is so often maintained, he made of his very life a work for which his book was the model" (144). Barthes argues that writing is not the reflection of the writer's life. Rather, "by a radical reversal," the text leaves its imprint on the author, becoming something that he can perform in his own life. Thus, the text can take on multiple lives and multiple meanings depending on how it takes on a distinct existence for those who interact with it. Lispector's narrator in *Água Viva* also describes her relationship to her writing, stating that "There is much I cannot tell you. I am not going to be autobiographical. I want to be 'bio'" (29)[30]. Her words

[29] In this essay, Barthes argues for the indecipherability of writing and against the search for final textual meaning due to authorial intent (147).
[30] "Muita coisa não posso te contar. Não vou ser autobiográfica. Quero ser 'bio'" (35).

indicate that she “cannot” simply “tell” you everything about her life—she is not going to provide a clear autobiography about herself. And she is not going to provide an account that, as the prefix “auto” evokes, functions by itself, without involving the living body. She wants to create a work that is “bio,” that is organic and living. But she does not just want to portray her life: she actually “want[s]” to be, organically, what she writes as she writes. Writing is not a way for her to depict a fixed, intended meaning that the text portrays and maintains, only affecting the intellect. Instead, the act of writing is a fluid experience in and of itself that, as I have discussed, relates to corporal sensation—it is not reducible to any intellectually determined meaning. Lispector’s words point to a distinct challenge for writing and for art more generally: to create works that generate experiences for their audiences that are so poignantly beyond representability that there is no way to take them apart and to fix them with specific meanings tied to their creators.

Appendix

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

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Image 4

Image 5

Image 6

Image 7

Image 8

Image 9

Image 10

Image 11

Image 12

Image 13

Image 14

Image 15

Image 16

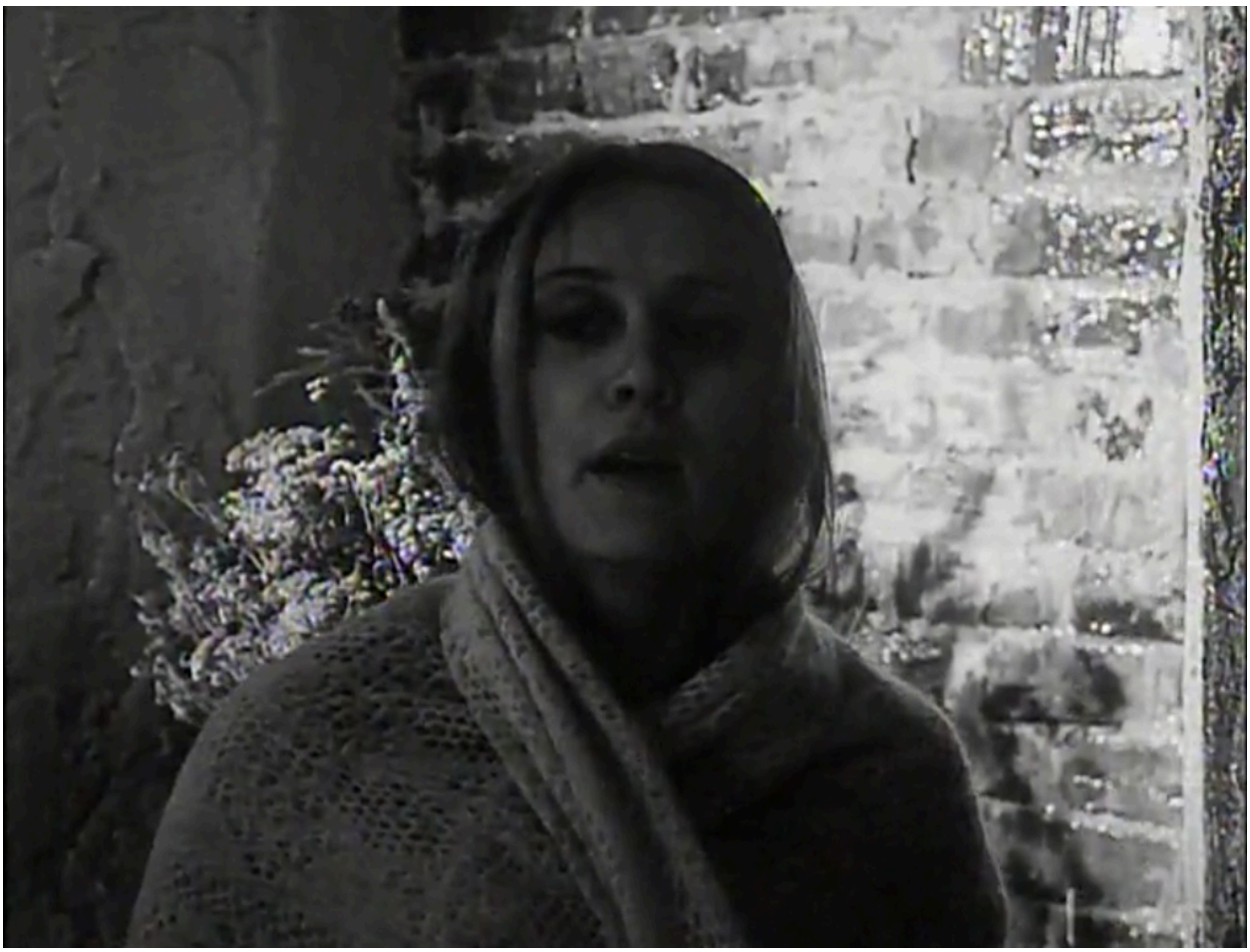

Image 17

Image 18

Image 19

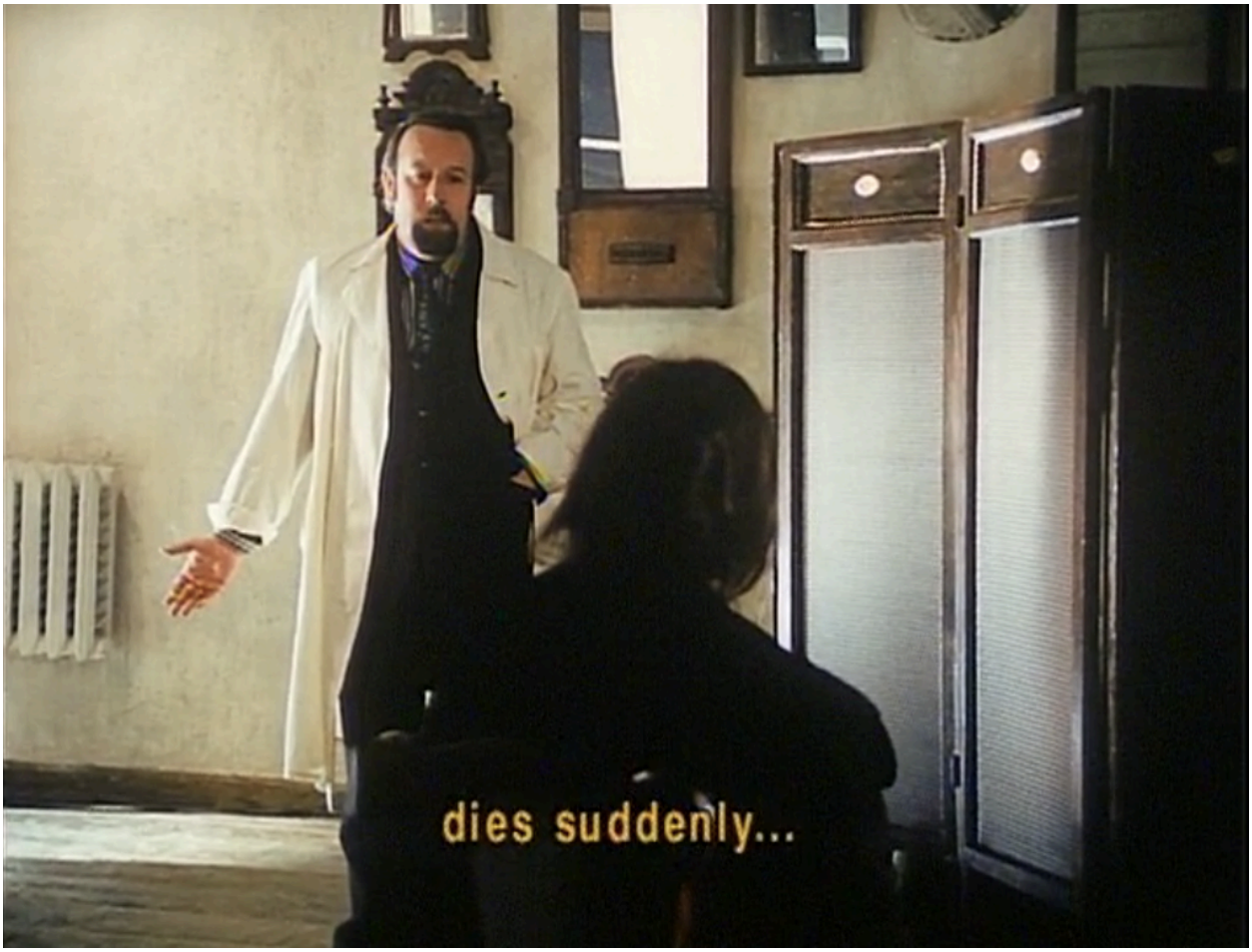

Image 20

Image 21

Image 22

Image 23

Image 24

Image 25

Image 26

Image 27

Image 28

Image 29

Image 30

Image 31

Image 32

Image 33

Image 34

Image 35

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