

# PHOTOGRAPHY DEGREE ZERO

REFLECTIONS ON ROLAND BARTHES'S *CAMERA LUCIDA*

EDITED BY GEOFFREY BATCHEN

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## PALINODE

AN INTRODUCTION TO *PHOTOGRAPHY**DEGREE ZERO*

GEOFFREY BATCHEN

“One day, quite some time ago, I happened on a photograph of Napoleon’s youngest brother, Jerome, taken in 1852. And I realized then, with an amazement I have not been able to lessen since: ‘I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor.’”<sup>1</sup> A first-person anecdote about the wonder induced by an otherwise ordinary photograph: thus begins Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, perhaps the most influential book yet written about the photographic experience. *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida* pays tribute to that book and to that influence in the best possible way—by subjecting both to analysis and critique.

This volume came into being when a number of its contributors discovered that we had a common interest in *Camera Lucida*, an interest in part driven by our frustration with being unable to get beyond it. All of us frequently quoted from the book. Indeed, we found we could rarely write an essay on photography without having first to pay our respects to ideas and vocabulary established by Roland Barthes. And so it has been for many other scholars too; this is surely the most quoted book in the photographic canon.<sup>2</sup> At a recent conference in Spain, its organizer announced that anyone heard quoting from *Camera Lucida* would be levied with a fine. The joke is further evidence of the book’s ubiquity but also of a certain fatigue. Terms established by Barthes, such as *studium* and *punctum*, have become part of the standard lexicon of photographic debate, along with a particular understanding of photographic time and of photography’s relationship to death and a certain narcissistic way of speaking. All these aspects of *Camera Lucida*, and more, have come to be so frequently repeated in the works of others that they have congealed into what Barthes himself would call a *doxa*: “Public Opinion, the mind of the majority, petit bourgeois consensus, the Voice of Nature, the Violence of Prejudice.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, some of us said to each other, we all should write essays about this

conundrum and by this means bring *Camera Lucida* back to life or, better yet, get it out of our systems altogether. *Photography Degree Zero* is the end result of this impulse.

It is, of course, not the first book to be published about Barthes's discussion of photographic images. Nancy Shawcross's commentary, *Roland Barthes and Photography: The Critical Tradition in Perspective*, appeared in 1997 and still offers a provocative overview of the topic.<sup>4</sup> In focusing her attention on *Camera Lucida*, Shawcross locates it in relation to themes found in Barthes's other works and to the writings of predecessors like Charles Baudelaire and contemporaries such as Marguerite Duras. Later in this same year, an anthology of essays edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté was also published. Based on a 1994 conference held at the University of Pennsylvania, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes* comprised nineteen papers on a variety of aspects of Barthes's work, including his writing on photography.<sup>5</sup> Another impressive anthology, *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, edited by Diana Knight, appeared in 2000; its chapters include both an early French review of *La chambre claire: note sur la photographie* (of which *Camera Lucida* is an English translation) and a number of challenging essays, mostly by French authors, in which that book is a central concern.<sup>6</sup>

Coming almost ten years later, *Photography Degree Zero* supplements and extends these important predecessors. But it also differs from them in a number of respects. *Photography Degree Zero* presents an exclusively Anglo-American perspective, investigating the significance of *Camera Lucida* for a select group of scholars who are based in the United States and Great Britain. The focus of these scholars is on this particular book and its contribution to an understanding of photography rather than on, say, Barthes's broader contributions to literature or criticism.<sup>7</sup> The hope is that the act of gathering these essays together here will allow for a productive conversation between a diversity of points of view and give new readers an opportunity to compare and contrast these views. It is assumed that a reader of *Photography Degree Zero* will also have a copy of *Camera Lucida* nearby and will be able to consult its pages and examine its illustrations when necessary. The two books should, in other words, be read together.

Something needs to be said about this anthology's choice of title. *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida* implies a continuity of purpose that links Barthes's last book, *Camera Lucida*, with his first, *Writing Degree Zero*.<sup>8</sup> Published in 1953 (although based on essays written between 1947 and 1950), *Writing Degree Zero* was written as a response to Jean-Paul Sartre's 1947 book *What Is Literature?*<sup>9</sup> Sartre's existential polemic suggested that all texts involve a mutually productive exchange of responsibilities between reader and writer. Barthes's book agrees with this basic premise but argues that how a text is written, its form, is as important to the politics of this exchange as what the text says. Among the subversive textual strategies that Barthes discusses is "colorless writing," a kind of writing

then fashionable that attempts to achieve a neutral or “zero degree” of form—a form of writing that, like most photographs, denies it even has a form. But even this writing, Barthes concludes, has a noticeable style “loaded with the most spectacular signs of fabrication” (WDZ 64).

Thirty years later, on the first page of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes acknowledged his debt to the work of Sartre by dedicating his new book to the older man’s 1940 study *L’imaginaire*.<sup>10</sup> The two books share a common theme (photography and memory), a “tragic dimension,”<sup>11</sup> and a phenomenological heritage (Barthes describes his approach to photography in *Camera Lucida* as “a vague, casual, even cynical phenomenology,” CL 20). But Barthes is also writing his book the year after teaching a class at the Collège de France on a state of being he called *le neutre* (usually translated as “the neutral”<sup>12</sup>), a theme that was inspired, he claims, by his disappointment that a bottle of pigment of that name turned out to be “a color like the others.”<sup>13</sup> As a form of words, then, *Photography Degree Zero* succinctly recalls both this long, complex history and these multiple, enduring interests.

#### BARTHES ON PHOTOGRAPHY

*Camera Lucida* was by no means Barthes’s first effort at writing about photography. In fact, photographs had been a frequent talking point in his earlier work. Between 1954 and 1956, for example, Barthes wrote a series of short essays that were about the imagery he encountered in everyday life and were primarily for publication in the monthly French journal *Les lettres nouvelles*. Fifty-three of these were eventually to appear as a single collection under the title *Mythologies* (the 1972 English translation of the same name includes only twenty-eight of them).<sup>14</sup> As he tells us in his preface, “The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the ‘naturalness’ with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. . . . I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn” (M 11). His aim is to unmask this naturalization and to account in some detail for precisely *how* it occurs. Photographic images of various kinds turn out to be central to this process.

Among the essays in *Mythologies* is one titled “Photography and Electoral Appeal,” an urbanely sarcastic commentary on the mythical personas conveyed by the portraits that politicians attach to their election materials: “what is transmitted through the photograph of the candidate are not his plans, but his deep motives, all his family, mental, even erotic circumstances, all this style of life of which he is at once the product, the example and the bait” (M 91). In a few short words, Barthes manages to skewer a genre of photography that we tend to take for granted; his acidic observations restore its strangeness to it. His review

of *The Family of Man*, Edward Steichen's famous 1955 exhibition devoted to the "essential oneness of mankind throughout the world," is less jocular, more urgent:<sup>15</sup> "Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behavior where historical alienation introduces some 'differences' which we shall here quite simply call 'injustices'" (*M* 101). Barthes mentions the apparently "universal" experiences of birth and death, experiences that, he points out, are in fact always mediated by historical and thus political circumstances. Echoing a famous remark by Bertolt Brecht, he contends that "the failure of photography seems to me to be flagrant in this connection: to reproduce death or birth tells us, literally, nothing."<sup>16</sup>

Another exhibition, at the d'Orsay Gallery, induces a meditation on what Barthes calls "shock photos."<sup>17</sup> In a remark that seems prescient of those that will follow in *Camera Lucida*, he suggests that "the photographer must do more than signify the horrible, if we are to feel horror. . . . straight photography leads you to the scandal of horror, not to horror itself" (*CC* 33–34). Complaining of the degree to which his reactions to such photographs have been preordained by the photographer ("by the use of contrasting and complementary elements"), he compares them unfavorably to certain heroic "literary" paintings (he seems to be thinking of Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Saint-Bernard Pass* of 1801) that exhibit "a sort of disturbing recklessness, leading the reader of the picture into a kind of astonishment more visual than intellectual" (*CC* 34). For him, the only photographic pictures at the exhibition that induce this same response—that induce "the *critical* catharsis demanded by Brecht"—are those that are unstudied and obstinately literal: "these images astonish because they seem at first sight strange and unfamiliar, almost calm" (*CC* 34).

Barthes's commentaries in *Mythologies* are informed by his recent encounter with the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure as well as by a Brecht-inspired Marxism that, as he says in a 1970 preface, sees the "essential enemy" as "the bourgeois norm" (*M* 9).<sup>18</sup> In a long afterword titled "Myth Today," Barthes offers a semiotic analysis of the kinds of myths that he has been talking about, equating them with an identifiable *system* of representation—that is, with language (*M* 110). Accordingly, he wants to consider everyday images as operating like sign systems. He turns for an example to a seemingly innocent photographic image on the cover of *Paris Match* magazine of a "young Negro in a French uniform . . . saluting, with his eyes uplifted" (*M* 116) and sees there not just a mystification of French imperialism but a greater semiological system at work whose ultimate goal is to depoliticize speech of any kind (*M* 143). By providing a brief account of the rhetorical figures and structured internal relationships that facilitate this depoliticization, Barthes

hopes to also provide a means for their interpretation and contestation (a means that came to be called *structuralism*). But what he doesn't yet provide is a discussion of the importance of the *photographicness* of this example to its functioning within his schema. This is the issue he will address in a group of essays published in the early 1960s.

In the first of these, "The Photographic Message," written in 1961, he considers the press photograph as a type of ideological message orchestrated by its makers and distributors.<sup>19</sup> He quickly concludes that, due to "the unique structure that a photograph constitutes," the photographic image has a special status: "*it is a message without a code*" (*IMT* 16–17). A photograph appears to have no form of its own; we automatically look through the surface of a photograph to see what it is of.<sup>20</sup> Other types of image, such as drawings, combine a *denoted* message (its analogical content, the thing the drawing depicts) and a *connoted* message (its style of representation but also "the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it," *IMT* 17). In a photograph, Barthes observes, these two qualities—denotation and connotation—are inseparable. Indeed, Barthes contends that "of all the structures of information, the photograph appears as the only one that is exclusively constituted and occupied by a 'denoted' message, a message which totally exhausts its mode of existence" (*IMT* 18). This special status makes a photograph (or at least a press photograph that is seemingly transparent to its subject) a paradoxical sort of sign because it is simultaneously "objective" and "invested," natural and cultural. But it also makes it a powerful ideological weapon because photography works to naturalize a view of the world that is in fact always political and interested.

In 1964, in an essay titled "Rhetoric of the Image," Barthes returned to these same issues but this time with an advertising image as his object of analysis.<sup>21</sup> In the process of considering whether photography should be considered to operate like a language, he examines an advertisement for pasta sauce to skim off the different messages that it contains. He begins with the linguistic messages contained in its caption and labels and even in the "Italianicity" (one of Barthes's many apt neologisms) implied by the product's own name ("Panzani"). He then moves on to discuss the play between the denoted or literal elements of the image (what it's of, the arrangement of these elements, the colors deployed in the image) and their symbolic meanings (freshness, plenty, Italianicity again), which he collectively calls *connotation*. Barthes's interest is in how these various elements systematically relate to each other to impart these messages to us transparently. He is once more anxious to separate photography from both drawing and cinema, describing the former as an "anthropological revolution . . . in man's history" and even as a "truly unprecedented" type of consciousness (*IMT* 44). He does so on the basis of photography's introduction of a "new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority"—an experience that he sums up as

the “having-been-there” that is the basis of every photograph’s sense of witness. Many of these concepts, even if not the vocabulary or semiotic analysis that accompanies them here, will reappear in *Camera Lucida*.

As important to *Camera Lucida* as these early efforts at photographic critique is Barthes’s developing character as a writer. In one of his most famous essays, “The Death of the Author” (from 1967),<sup>22</sup> he advocates a kind of self-conscious writing that he describes as “performative” (*IMT* 145)—an open-ended textual practice that, he argues, is “truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law” (*IMT* 147). Shifting critical emphasis from the traditional notion of a singular originating author to multiple, newly empowered readers, he finishes with a call that continues to reverberate even now: “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (*IMT* 148). Subsequent books such as *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), and *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* (1977) offer versions of this performative style of writing, in each case inviting the reader to induce something from Barthes’s text that exceeds the intentions of its author.<sup>23</sup> This interaction, a kind of consummation of text and reader, conjures themes that have now become central to Barthes’s work—pleasure, desire, and the body (the body of the writer, the body of the reader, and even the body of writing itself).<sup>24</sup> These various bodies are also broached in his book on photography, as are a number of his earlier concerns. As we have seen with his use of denotation and connotation, Barthes often liked to structure his arguments around two opposing terms of his own invention (his deployment of *plaisir* and *jouissance* in *The Pleasure of the Text* is another example) and this tactic recurs in *Camera Lucida*.<sup>25</sup> In *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, he also rehearses the play of image and text that one finds in the later book by opening with a series of personal photographs accompanied by erudite, meditative captions. The particular tone of these captions—at once philosophical and autobiographic, poetic and analytical, questioning and assured—makes them a kind of foreword to his last major writing project.

#### WRITING *CAMERA LUCIDA*

*Camera Lucida* emerged as a consequence of a commission by *Les cahiers du cinema* for a contribution to its series of short books on cinema. Barthes had been elected a member of the Collège de France in March 1976, and the following year’s publication of *A Lover’s Discourse*, which sold very well, brought him an added measure of celebrity. He opened 1977 with a short commentary on the work of photographer Richard Avedon and then published others on French photographers Daniel Boudinet and Bernard Foucon (to be followed in 1978



with a brief text on the photography of Wilhelm von Gloeden).<sup>26</sup> However, 1977 was also the year in which his mother, Henriette Barthes, died, on October 25, thus depriving him of a beloved companion with whom he had lived most of his life. His introspective mood is indicated in an interview with Angelo Schwarz late in that year, where he describes every encounter with a photograph as “a contact with death . . . at least, this is how I experience photography: as a fascinating and funereal enigma.”<sup>27</sup> It was perhaps the traumatic event of his mother’s passing, as much as his admiration for the writer, that also led to Barthes’s lecture at the Collège de France in October 1978 on Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*.<sup>28</sup> The opportunity presented by the invitation from *Cahiers du cinema* therefore allowed him to bring together a number of themes preoccupying him during this period—photography, remembrance, and death.

On December 23, 1978, Barthes was interviewed on French radio, and he again discussed his long interest in photography and suggested the possibility of writing a book to explain that interest: “In the final analysis, what I really find fascinating about photographs, and they do fascinate me, is something that probably has to do with death. Perhaps it’s an interest that is tinged with necrophilia, to be honest, a fascination with what has died but is represented as wanting to be alive.”<sup>29</sup> With his mother’s death very much on his mind, this fascination, then, was what he decided to write his next book about.

Barthes began writing his manuscript on April 15, 1979, and completed it, as he tells us in a concluding note in *La chambre claire*, just forty-nine days later, on June 3. The inference of such a note is that he wrote a section a day, or close to it, as the finished book comprises exactly forty-eight distinct sections. It also suggests that the book was written at high speed, implying in turn an unrehearsed, almost conversational flow of thought. The idea is further reiterated in his choice of subtitle, the self-consciously modest *Note sur la photographie*. However, it is likely that Barthes had for some time been preparing index cards or paper slips covered in notes to himself with this project in mind, as he had for previous books.<sup>30</sup> Using these slips as prompts, Barthes’s habit was to write his manuscripts in blue ink, using a fountain pen, and then to type them up on his electric typewriter, revising the text as he went. The index card had provided an organizing logic for previous books, such as *A Lover’s Discourse* and *Roland Barthes*, where each of their subsections is headed by a key word or phrase. *La chambre claire’s* forty-eight discrete sections are, in contrast, designated by a number in the body of the text, with added titles appearing only on the contents page (which in the French edition comes at the back of the book). Although the sections vary in length, the book is divided into two equal parts, twenty-four sections in each, giving it the added gravitas of an internal symmetry. It is yet another sign that every aspect of this book has been carefully thought out and calibrated.<sup>31</sup>

The manuscript incorporated the diverse range of Barthes's own reading, such that one finds, for example, marginal references to the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and a book on Zen Buddhism on the same page.<sup>32</sup> Other pages acknowledge the influence of Italo Calvino, Proust, Paul Valéry, and of course Sartre. His bibliography also includes philosophical works by Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, and Edmund Husserl as well as books on photography by Raul Beceyro, Pierre Bourdieu, Susan Sontag, and Gisèle Freund.<sup>33</sup> Barthes also consulted the 1964 edition of Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography* and several photographic issues of more recent French magazines.<sup>34</sup> The most notable of these was the November 1977 issue of *Nouvel observateur*, which contained, among other things, a French translation of Walter Benjamin's 1931 essay "Little History of Photography" (which Barthes does not single out for acknowledgment in his bibliography).<sup>35</sup>

These various sources and influences are transposed into a voice that is very much Barthes's own. The language that this voice uses is at once accessible and difficult, including obscure and learned vocabulary, popular expressions and witticisms, and terms whose meanings he invents on the spot. As one of Barthes's French reviewers put it, *La chambre claire* launches "a series of new, uncommon, disparaged, neological or outdated words, which bring new life to language before congealing in their turn."<sup>36</sup> Having begun in the first person, *La chambre claire* has the intimate tone of an autobiography, and it does indeed contain a number of references to Barthes's own life, including the recent death of his mother and his own grief at her passing.

However, its narrative structure also resembles a kind of philosophical detective novel, a quest where the protagonist, Barthes himself, pursues an elusive quarry (the answer to the question "what is photography, in itself?") through recourse to various clues and red herrings. Barthes had opened *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, his book about autobiography, with the hand-written warning: "It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel." And in his classes around this time, Barthes certainly expressed interest in writing a novel or at least in "the novelistic" as a mode of discourse.<sup>37</sup> Barthes makes a number of references to Proust in *La chambre claire*, and the meditative style of his manuscript could also well be described as Proustian. In short, posing neither as fiction nor nonfiction but containing elements of both, *La chambre claire* refuses to adhere to any one literary genre.

His choice of title is similarly abstruse. The words *la chambre claire* mean literally "the light room" or "the clear room," as if to provide an antidote to the camera obscura, or "dark room," an apparatus that had historically formed the basis of the photographic camera. But *chambre claire* is also a technical term used by the French to refer to an optical instrument known (in Latin, the language of science) by English speakers as a camera lucida. This instrument

had been patented by Englishman William Wollaston in 1806, well before photography's invention was announced in 1839, and was in principle quite different from the camera obscura. Barthes may well have read the description of a camera lucida given by Newhall in *The History of Photography*. This, at any rate, is where he found the illustration of it in use that came to grace the cover of *La chambre claire*.<sup>38</sup> The instrument consists of a three-sided glass prism suspended before the eye of the draftsman, such that a subject and the piece of paper beneath the prism meld together onto the back of the draftsman's retina. Thus, the image produced by a camera lucida is seen only by the draftsman and by no one else, except in the form of a tracing.<sup>39</sup> Here, then, was an apt metaphor for Barthes's own text.

Barthes makes frequent references to particular photographs in his book, but only twenty-four of these are illustrated. Reproduced in black and white, they were drawn mostly from sources close at hand and particularly from that special issue of *Nouvel observateur* devoted to photography and published in November 1977. There seems to be no particular rationale behind their choice beyond personal taste and rhetorical convenience. As he says in one interview: "The photographs I chose have an argumentative value. They are the ones I use in my text to make certain points."<sup>40</sup> Ten come from the nineteenth century and fourteen from the twentieth, but they are reproduced in no particular chronological order. Most of them fall within the realm of portraiture or journalism. There is only one landscape (more accurately an architectural study, by Charles Clifford), and even it has a figure in it. There is also one still life picture. A number of famous photographers are represented—Stieglitz, Nadar, Avedon, Kertész, Sander—but their work is joined by some ordinary, even generic images, as well as by two photographs by unknown photographers. These images are presented with short italicized captions, usually (but not always) versions of Barthes's own words in the main text.<sup>41</sup>

Barthes first saw the Polaroid photograph by French photographer Daniel Boudinet that he chose as the frontispiece to his book when he attended an opening reception for a Boudinet exhibition on April 25 while in the middle of writing *La chambre claire*.<sup>42</sup> Dated 1979 and titled only *Polaroid*, it is the most recent and only color (printed a monochrome blue-green) image to appear in the book. Barthes gives it further emphasis by having it printed on a special glossy paper stock and surrounding it with a line; it thus comes to us already framed, like an artwork. However, he never directly refers to it in his text.

#### READING CAMERA LUCIDA

As masterful works of literature, Roland Barthes's texts are never simply transparent to meaning (they are, in Barthes's own terms, *writerly*) and produce their full effects only in

the process of being read.<sup>43</sup> *Camera Lucida*, in particular, is marked by frequent double meanings, asides, learned allusions, self-assured aphorisms, and a sheer beauty of expression that all need to be appreciated at firsthand. Nevertheless, it is useful to have a general sense of how the book proceeds.

Barthes opens his manuscript, as we have already heard, with an expression of amazement at photography's capacity to touch him across time and space. As he goes on to suggest, "a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze" (CL 81). This indexicality, this direct physical link between a photograph and the thing it represents, led him to what he calls an "ontological" desire: "I wanted to learn at all costs what Photography was 'in itself,' by what essential feature it was to be distinguished from the community of images" (CL 3). Perversely, given his prior association with at least two of these same discourses, he decides that analytical methods derived from sociology, semiology, and psychoanalysis are inadequate to this task and that he will instead take himself and especially his own bodily responses to certain images as the measure of photographic knowledge (CL 9). He thus confines his study to the realm of the spectator, ignoring the question of how photographs are produced in favor of an extended exploration of their reception.

Following some wry passages about the experience of being photographed (CL 11–15), he posits his notorious opposition of two Latin terms, *studium* and *punctum*, as a way of accounting for his different reactions to photographic pictures (CL 26–27).<sup>44</sup> Some photographs, he says, elicit in him nothing but polite interest: "they please or displease me without pricking me. . . . The *studium* is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste. . . . To recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions" (CL 27). He contrasts this response with a more complicated one he calls *punctum*, which is induced, he says, by an "element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (CL 26). Barthes continues to offer suggestive and physically palpable similes, as if any simple definition cannot do the experience justice: "this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument" (CL 26), a "sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice" (CL 27). In short, he says, "a photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (CL 27).

The remainder of Part One continues to meditate on this distinction, digressing from time to time to ponder the nature of photography's effects on him: "ultimately, photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks" (CL 38). The *punctum*, he proposes, is an element of a picture that evades analysis ("what I can name cannot really prick me" CL 51)—very often an incidental detail (he mentions several examples), an uncoded aspect of the photograph that is sometimes recalled in memory or even transformed *by* memory (CL 53). This suggests that a photograph's

*punctum* is not necessarily something to be found within the image itself: “Last thing about the *punctum*: whether or not it is triggered, it is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*” (CL 55). As he has said a little earlier, “it animates me, and I animate it” (CL 20), and this makes any *punctum*-like experience a necessarily personal, subjective one.

Despite having constructed this complex analytical armature, Part One of *La chambre claire* concludes with a confession: “I had perhaps learned how my desire worked, but I had not discovered the nature (the *eidos*) of Photography” (CL 60). To do so, he says, he will have to both “descend deeper into myself” and “make my recantation, my palinode” (CL 60).

A palinode is an ode or song in which the author retracts something said in a previous poem.<sup>45</sup> And indeed, in Part Two of his book, Barthes shifts his search for the essence of photography from an investigation of many photographs to an intense analysis of just one. This is the famous Winter Garden Photograph of his mother, which he found in November 1977 after her death. It shows her in 1898 standing at the age of five next to her seven-year-old brother. Although he refuses to reproduce it (“for you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture” CL 73), Barthes describes the photograph in detail, both its physical attributes (“old . . . the corners blunted from having been pasted into an album, the sepia print had faded” CL 67) and its image (apparently the two children are standing near a wooden bridge railing in a glassed-in conservatory at their childhood home, she a little back and holding one finger in her other hand). But what he finds in this picture is not exactly visible to others. It is “something inexpressible” (CL 107), the “air” of his deceased mother (CL 107), “the truth of the face I had loved” (CL 67), what he henceforth wants to call “utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*” (CL 71).

Having discovered “something like an essence of the Photograph . . . in this particular picture” (CL 73), Barthes traces its source to photography’s peculiar articulation of time—the way photography simultaneously conjures past, present, and future in a single image form. “I now know that there exists another *punctum* (another ‘stigmatum’) than the ‘detail,’” Barthes writes, in a continuation of his palinode. “This new *punctum*, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* (*that has been*), its pure representation.” He looks at an 1865 photograph of Lewis Payne, who is about to be hanged for an attempted assassination, and sees there “at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*” (CL 96). At the moment in 1979 when Barthes gazes on his photograph, Payne is already long dead, but at the moment this photograph was taken, he is still yet to die. In the future anterior tense of the photograph, Payne is both dead (“this has been”) and is going to die (“this will be”). Although a “still,” every photograph always represents this passing of time from past to future and therefore always also signals the eventual passing of the person looking at it (always contains, as Barthes says, “this imperious sign of my own death,” CL

97). Hence Barthes's insistence that photography is inescapably haunted by the morbid promise of death: as he puts it, "whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe" (CL 96).

Barthes has already told us that "every photograph is a certificate of presence" (CL 87). Photographs, he suggests, offer us a truth-to-presence (they certify that something was indeed there before the lens in some past moment in space and time) even if not a truth-to-appearance (they do not necessarily look like their referent). As a consequence, he tells us, the photograph of his mother as a child has an effect on him that "becomes at once evidential and exclamative; it bears the effigy to that crazy point where affect (love, compassion, grief, enthusiasm, desire) is a guarantee of Being. . . . It then approaches, to all intents, madness" (CL 113). Photography, it seems, is both mad and tame, and Barthes's language takes on an extra poetic resonance to convey its familiar strangeness to us—"a bizarre *medium*, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time . . . a mad image, chafed by reality" (CL 115). Mad or tame? The choice, Barthes says, is ours, depending on our willingness to either confront photography's "intractable reality" or politely suppress it as a mere illusion (CL 119).

In that spirit, *La chambre claire* finishes with an enigmatic quotation on its back cover that is taken from a 1976 book titled *Practice of the Tibetan Way*: "Marpa was very moved when his son was killed, and one of his disciples said: 'You have always told us that all is illusion. Is it not so with the death of your son, is not that an illusion?' And Marpa replied: 'Indeed, but the death of my son is a super-illusion.'"46

This, then, was the manuscript that was submitted to *Cahiers du cinema* in June of 1979 and that was subsequently published in France by a collaboration of Cahiers, Gallimard, and Editions du Seuil. By January 25, 1980, *La chambre claire: note sur la photographie* was back from the printers, and Barthes was soon sending copies to friends, inscribed with suitable dedications. By late February, reviews were about to appear in the French press; Barthes had also conducted some interviews in which he discusses his new book.<sup>47</sup> Despite the intimations of his own mortality contained within *La chambre claire*, no one could have guessed what was about to occur. On the afternoon of February 25, after a lunch with politician François Mitterand in the company of a small group of other French intellectuals, Barthes was hit by a van while crossing the street on his way home. Although he survived the initial accident, his health gradually deteriorated while in hospital, and he died a month later on March 26, 1980, at the age of sixty-four.<sup>48</sup> Virtually all subsequent discussions of *Camera Lucida* are mediated by this fact. It has become a book marked by Barthes's indissoluble association of photography with death and by two actual deaths—the death of the author's mother (the event that inspired its writing) and the death of the author himself.

By this point, Barthes's work was eagerly read in the United States and Britain, and a number of his previous books were available in English editions. An English translation of *La chambre claire* was in fact already in the works by the time Barthes died. The American edition was translated by New York poet Richard Howard, a friend of the author's who had performed the same service for a number of Barthes's earlier books. Howard remembers receiving the proof sheets for *La chambre claire* before it appeared in bookstores in France (perhaps in January 1980) and began working on it almost immediately.<sup>49</sup> He had found in the past that Barthes took relatively little interest in the creative decisions entailed in translation and was content to trust Howard's judgment. This was the case with *La chambre claire*, and Howard does not recall Barthes making any corrections to his English version (Barthes had only a basic reading ability in English). When necessary, Howard was able to consult Susan Sontag about any particular translation problems, although this manuscript contained no memorable ones.

Howard decided on the English title—*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*—with the change in subtitle driven by the translator's desire to avoid the diminution of substance implied by the word *note* and by his thinking that the word *reflections* incorporated a suitably photographic metaphor.<sup>50</sup> It was the publisher's decision to delete the marginal notes, bibliography, illustration list, and Tibetan quotation found in the French original and to change the cover design (the engraving of a camera lucida in use was replaced by a sketch of a small camera on a tripod). The American edition, published by Hill and Wang, appeared in 1981 and by August 23 had been reviewed in the *New York Times*.<sup>51</sup> However, reviews of *La chambre claire* had already appeared in the British and American press, such as Stephen Bann's in the *Times Literary Supplement* in November 1980 and Pepe Karmel's commentary in *Art in America* in March 1981.<sup>52</sup>

Before considering the book's reception in more detail, it is worth pausing for a moment to discuss the differences between the French and American editions. The deletion of the Tibetan quotation implies that it is of no great importance, certainly that it is not a part of Barthes's original text. Many scholars would disagree.<sup>53</sup> But this relatively small intervention also points to greater liberties taken by the publishers of other editions. Versions of *La chambre claire* are available in most languages, including in Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese (one from Brazil and another from Portugal), Turkish, Greek, Czech, Russian, Chinese (one published in Taiwan and another in China), Korean, Japanese, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, as well as English.<sup>54</sup> There have even been two unauthorized editions published in Farsi.<sup>55</sup> These all vary considerably in their degrees of faithfulness to



the layout of the French original. Like the American edition, a 1981 Portuguese translation deletes the Tibetan quotation, as do a 1980 Italian translation, a 1984 version published in Brazil, a 1985 German translation, a 1986 edition in Swedish, a 1994 Czech translation, a 1996 Korean edition, a 1996 Danish edition, an English edition published in London in 2000, both Farsi editions, and a Norwegian version issued in 2001. More surprising still is the elimination of the color image by Boudinet from a 1989 Spanish edition, as well as from the German, Czech, British, and one of the Farsi versions (several others save money by reproducing it in black and white).<sup>56</sup> Is this image so unimportant to the purpose of Barthes's book that it need not even be included?

A number of scholars have argued that Boudinet's *Polaroid* is a central, perhaps even *the* central, image in Barthes's argument, despite never being mentioned by him. As Diana Knight has explained, the Boudinet image was lifted from a larger sequence titled *Fragments of a Labyrinth* that the artist shot at night in his own apartment between dusk and dawn and using only available light.<sup>57</sup> There is not much to see. We can make out the edge of a bed or couch with a pillow resting on it, but most of the picture is taken up with a diaphanous drawn curtain that overlaps in the center, obscuring our vision of what lies beyond. It parts a little as it touches the bed, allowing a flash of illumination. This, it seems, is a place for contemplation, rest, and sleep and perhaps also for sex (the curtains are drawn, after all). As the first image you see in *Camera Lucida*, its monochrome blue-green color creates a melancholy mood, setting a tone for the text that is to follow. But its significance goes further than that.

According to Knight, "Boudinet's dawn polaroid is certainly an integral part of Barthes's symbolic narrative of refinding his mother in the literal *chambre claire* of the glass conservatory."<sup>58</sup> Barthes even refers to the "blue-green of her pupils" (*CL* 66) when speaking of his mother's eyes. Moreover, he tells us (in a reference that surreptitiously links his Winter Garden Photograph to Boudinet's) that "all the world's photographs formed a Labyrinth. I knew that at the center of this Labyrinth I would find nothing but this sole picture" (*CL* 73). In keeping with this reference, Beryl Schlossman sees the Boudinet image and its "voluptuous textured curtain scene" as a symbolic stand-in for Barthes's absent mother and "the maternal body" and points to its "allegorical quality of absence-presence."<sup>59</sup> Mary Lydon is more circumspect about the meaning of the picture but again underlines its importance to Barthes's book given that, in *La chambre claire*, it is "so eloquently placed between Barthes's homage to Sartre's *L'imaginaire* and his own text."<sup>60</sup>

*Polaroid* (reproduced in color but never discussed by Barthes) is, it seems, the other to the Winter Garden Photograph, that much discussed but never reproduced *imaginaire* in which Barthes finds the essence of both his mother and photography. These two photographs are



presented by him as inseparable manifestations of the same labyrinth—one (barely) visible, the other not at all (except in our mind's eye). Borrowing an analogy pursued by Barthes in *Empire of Signs*, his 1970 book about his impressions of Japan, one might say that the Boudinet picture represents “the visible form of invisibility [hiding] the sacred ‘nothing.’”<sup>61</sup> Its presence is necessary to maintain the binary dynamic that animates every aspect of this book. Accordingly, any translated edition of *La chambre claire* that does not include the Boudinet image should be regarded as fatally flawed.

#### A LIMINAL MOMENT

*Camera Lucida* arrived on the scene at a liminal moment in the history of photographic discourse. As Barthes himself mentioned in an interview published three days before his accident: “there does seem to be a kind of ‘theoretical boom’ in photography. . . . People who are not technicians, historians, or aestheticians are becoming interested in it.”<sup>62</sup> In France, Susan Sontag and Michel Tournier had just published their own books on photography (Sontag’s is in Barthes’s bibliography), and he also points out that the University of Aix-Marseilles had recently accepted a proposal from Lucien Clergue for a doctoral program in photography—“but in the Chemistry Department!”<sup>63</sup> To these events, we might add the establishment of a photography collection at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris in 1978, the special issue of *Cahiers de la photographie* published in 1981 under the title “Quelle histoire la photographie!,” and the creation of the Centre de la Photographie in Paris in 1982.

The situation in the United States was a little different. It became possible to study for a master of fine arts degree in art photography in the United States in the mid-1960s, and by the late 1970s, photography, whether as historical object or professional practice, had become fully institutionalized, having at last found a secure niche in universities, art schools, art museums, and the marketplace, as well as in the culture at large.<sup>64</sup> For various reasons, this proliferation in turn generated an anxiety about the status of photography among its intelligentsia, evidenced equally in self-conscious art practices and a newly invigorated critical writing. Some examples of this turn might include the special issue of *Artforum* devoted to photography in September 1976 (incorporating Nancy Foote’s essay “The Anti-Photographers” and A. D. Coleman’s “The Directorial Mode: Notes toward a Definition”), the publication of Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* in 1977, the special issue of *October* magazine devoted to photography in 1978 (in which its editors called for “a radical sociology of photography to force upon us, to disclose to view, the structural and historical nature and implications of our present photographic revisionism”), and the lecture series organized in 1979 by the Art Institute of Chicago titled “Towards the New Histories of Photography.”<sup>65</sup>

To this list could be added the practices of artists like Cindy Sherman (who produced her now canonical *Untitled Film Stills* in New York between 1977 and 1980) and the essays that promoted them, in particular Craig Owens's "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2" (which appeared in *October* 13, Summer 1980) and Douglas Crimp's "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" (*October* 15, Winter 1980).<sup>66</sup> Both of these essays refer to and draw on the 1977 publication of Barthes's essays in *Image Music Text*. Using concepts proposed by Barthes himself, they also both posit a critique of modernism in general and of photography in particular that they call "postmodernism."<sup>67</sup>

This, then, was the general cultural context in which *Camera Lucida* appeared in the United States. The situation in Britain was a little different, given that country's strong left-wing intellectual tradition and closer proximity to France, along with the existence of a number of little magazines dedicated to critical discussions of photography and related media (in the 1980s, these included *Screen*, *Screen Education*, *Camerawork*, *Creative Camera* and *Ten.8*).<sup>68</sup> The character of the debate in the United Kingdom might be summed up in the title of a 1979 anthology, *Photography/Politics: One*, and in essays in this period by Victor Burgin and John Tagg that sought to reconcile a Marxist tradition with semiotics (including the earlier work of Barthes), psychoanalysis, and the work of Michel Foucault. This was an effort embodied in the influential 1982 volume *Thinking Photography*.<sup>69</sup> What postmodern critics from both countries shared was an opposition to a kind of modernist formalism most often identified with John Szarkowski and the art photography favored by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As Szarkowski proposed in 1962, "it should be possible to consider the history of the medium in terms of photographers' progressive awareness of characteristics and problems that have seemed inherent in the medium."<sup>70</sup> In other words, Szarkowski too claimed to be seeking the essence of photography, in his case by privileging the specific qualities of the photographic medium.<sup>71</sup>

Given this context, some readers were not sure what to make of *Camera Lucida*, a book that seemed to combine the ontological quest of a conservative modernism with the sophisticated vocabulary and pedigree of a postmodern semiotics. Many reviewers struggled to explain the relation of *Camera Lucida* to Barthes's earlier, more overtly political structuralist work. On the one hand, they tried to fathom how a subjective division of pictures between *studium* and *punctum* could possibly further a critical analysis of photography, and on the other, they worried about Barthes's reliance on what Michael Starenko called "the heresy of sentiment."<sup>72</sup> Every reviewer concedes the seductive quality of Barthes's writing, especially in its role as a moving eulogy to his deceased mother, but some were distinctly hostile to its more general discussion of photography: as Sam Vinedoe put it, "*La Chambre Claire* is the kind of book photography does not need now."<sup>73</sup>

Despite this ambivalence, the book was extensively reviewed at the time of its publication (in one case, by three critics in the same journal).<sup>74</sup> More important, it quickly found a responsive English-speaking audience (it went through eighteen printings by 1996), and its distinctive vocabulary and elliptical style soon came to influence photographic writing of all kinds.<sup>75</sup> That influence continues, although today it is evidenced less powerfully by the ubiquity of the word *punctum* or an obsession with indexicality than by the attention now being paid to ordinary and vernacular photographs and by the popularity of subjective, novelistic, and affective modes of writing about them.<sup>76</sup> In that guise, the *Camera Lucida* effect promises to resonate within photodiscourse for some time to come.

#### CAMERA LUCIDA NOW

Indeed, as many of the essays in *Photography Degree Zero* attest, *Camera Lucida's* intellectual density and evocative prose remain more than capable of stimulating significant debate. The earliest essay in the present book is Victor Burgin's 1982 review of *Camera Lucida*, first published in *Creative Camera* as "Re-reading *Camera Lucida*." Burgin provides a sympathetic overview of Barthes's book as a literary text, relating it to his earlier work and arguing that, despite Barthes's adoption of a phenomenological approach that "rejects the concept of the unconscious," "Barthes's approach to the photograph in *Camera Lucida* is compatible with the sort of psychoanalytic/intertextual approach" that Burgin himself advocated. Jane Gallop's 1985 essay, "The Pleasure of the Phototext," was first published in *Afterimage* as part of a group of texts concerned with the representation of sexuality.<sup>77</sup> In it she draws a comparison between *Camera Lucida* and *The Pleasure of the Text* as a way of "pursuing the idea of a relation between sexuality and the medium of photography, which is not sexuality *in* photography, but is something like the sexuality *of* photography."

From these relatively early discussions, we move to Margaret Iversen's 1994 essay "What Is a Photograph?," another effort to argue that Barthes's brand of phenomenology, steeped as it is in the author's own desire, is "psychoanalytical through and through." The work of Jacques Lacan serves as a touchstone for Iversen's analysis of Barthes's text, allowing her to emphasize its relation to the gaze, trauma, and the death drive. Margaret Olin's 2002 essay, "Touching Photographs: Roland Barthes's 'Mistaken' Identification," examines the privileged relation of the photograph to its referent posited by *Camera Lucida*, pointing out Barthes's own mistaken identification of a detail in a James Van Der Zee photograph that he reproduces. She even speculates that the famous Winter Garden Photograph involves a similar displacement, "mistakenly" conjuring an image of Kafka as a child and thereby casting doubt on the role of truth in Barthes's narrative.

Jay Prosser's contribution, "Buddha Barthes: What Barthes Saw in Photography (That He Didn't in Literature)," suggests a correspondence between what Barthes found in photographs and what he sought in Buddhism. First published in 2004, Prosser's essay argues that the photographic flash that illuminates the darkness is the equivalent, for Barthes, of the mystic's light of revelation. Eduardo Cadava and Paola Cortés-Rocca combine voices in a 2006 meditation on love and loss inspired by *Camera Lucida*. Their "Notes on Love and Photography" examines "the general relay between photography and the mother" in terms that acknowledge the photograph's "magical and uncanny power to procreate," associating this power with music and even with "the entire logic of our relation to the world."

Michael Fried's 2005 essay, "Barthes's *Punctum*," is one of a series he has written on photography in which he seeks to locate his discussion of the medium in relation to his own interest in what he calls "*antitheatrical* critical thought and pictorial practice."<sup>78</sup> He seeks to underline what he regards as common claims in *Camera Lucida* and his own 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood."<sup>79</sup> Fried's discussion of *Camera Lucida* has in turn generated several responses, including one by James Elkins, also from 2005, that ponders the centrality of Barthes's book as a text about photography given what Elkins regards as "its limited value in the history or criticism of photography."<sup>80</sup> Rosalind Krauss also offers a short commentary on Fried's text for this book, pointing to a number of important questions of translation and emphasizing Barthes's interest in escaping the "fascism of language."

In another previously unpublished essay, "*Camera Lucida*, circa 1980," Gordon Hughes reads *Camera Lucida* as a lament for a kind of photographic experience and practice that Barthes sees as increasingly under threat, most seriously by the photographic avant-garde. Carol Mavor, in her essay "Black and Blue: The Shadows of *Camera Lucida*," regards Barthes's "obvious, erroneous readings of race" and explores, in a deeply personal text, the figuring of blackness throughout *Camera Lucida*. Race is also the major concern of Shawn Michelle Smith's 2007 commentary, "Race and Reproduction in *Camera Lucida*," a theme through which she reveals the book's "most evocative power and its most frustrating limitations." My own contribution, "*Camera Lucida*: Another Little History of Photography," builds on an earlier essay of the same name that pursues the possibility that Barthes's book might productively be read as a history rather than a theory of photography.

Thirteen essays, then, plus this introduction: Barthes's modest text is still capable of provocation, still able to make us think about photography. And this despite the frequent predictions in recent years of photography's own demise, a death induced—it has been variously suggested—by a combination of its own success (whereby it has managed to eclipse "the very notion of a medium"), by the introduction of digital technologies that have displaced its most fundamental properties and undermined its truth values, or more generally

by an “evolution taking place in the whole framework that provided photography with a cultural, instrumental and historical context.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, for some, *Camera Lucida* appeared on the scene just as the photography it sought to describe was about to disappear from view. Has the photography pursued by Barthes perhaps already gone, transformed into a mere ghost of its former self? Can we any longer feel the affect that so transported Barthes as he looked at certain photographs?

“It has already disappeared,” says Barthes in 1979. “I am, I don’t know why, one of its last witnesses . . . and this book is its archaic trace” (*CL* 94). Exactly what photography, then, are we today trying to be the witnesses of? What are the contemporary identities, the political economies, the physical and conceptual forms of this phenomenon that continues unabated, even after all the obituaries have been written? Any account of photography written after *Camera Lucida* is haunted by such questions, just as surely as by the specter of the photographic image. What we don’t know yet is quite how these questions should be answered. It is fair to say that we are now at a moment that sees itself as being after postmodernism but that has yet to attract the burden of a proper name or the motivation of an enabling politics. The invention of such a politics and with it a mode of critical writing that is appropriate for the times in which we live therefore remains the most pressing task to face the present generation of photography’s interlocutors. What *Photography Degree Zero* proposes is that, even twenty-five years and more after its initial publication, *Camera Lucida* remains a good place from which to begin.

## NOTES

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 3 (henceforth *CL* in the main text). This is the English translation of Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire: note sur la photographie* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, Gallimard, Seuil, 1980).
2. Note, for example, the central role assumed by *Camera Lucida* in the various discussions gathered in James Elkins, ed., *Photography Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2007). The canonical status of *Camera Lucida* is evidenced also by the frequency with which extracts from the book itself are included in anthologies devoted to photographic history and theory. See, for example, Julia Thomas, ed., *Reading Images* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 54–61, and Liz Wells, ed., *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 19–30. The British photographic artist Idris Khan pays further homage to the book’s influence in a multiple-exposure image titled *Every page . . . from Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida* (2004). In this work (as the title suggests), one gets to see every page of the book at the same time. See Geoff Dyer, “Between the Lines,” *The Guardian* (London), September 2, 2006: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2006/sep/02/art> (accessed 16 January 2009).

3. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 47.
4. Nancy Shawcross, *Roland Barthes and Photography: The Critical Tradition in Perspective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).
5. Jean-Michel Rabaté, ed., *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).
6. Diana Knight, ed., *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes* (New York: Hall, 2000). For French commentaries, see also Jean Delord, *Roland Barthes et la photographie* (Paris: Créatis, 1981), and Gilles Mora, ed., *Roland Barthes et la photo: le pire des signes* (Paris: Contrejour, 1990).
7. Numerous surveys of Barthes's career have been published. A useful introduction, including summaries of previous surveys, can be found in Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes* (London: Routledge, 2003).
8. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967) (henceforth *WDZ* in the main text). The continuity of *Writing Degree Zero* and *Camera Lucida* is discussed by, among others, Jacques Derrida, in "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" (1981), in Hugh Silverman, ed., *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1988), 259–296.
9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1947), published in English as Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Society, 1949).
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire* (1940), published in English as Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* (1940), trans. Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004).
11. See Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Introduction," *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 6–8.
12. See Rosalind Krauss, "Translator's Introduction," *October* 112 (Spring 2005): 3–6. She also comments that "The fantasy on which Barthes's penultimate course 'Le Neutre' is based . . . held steady . . . over the trajectory that took him from *Writing Degree Zero*, with the zero degree an early version of 'le neutre,' through all the rest of his books" (4). Indeed, in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes laments: "if only Photography could give me a neutral, anatomic body, a body which signifies nothing!" (12).
13. Roland Barthes, "From *The Neutral*: Session of March 11, 1978," *October* 112 (Spring 2005): 9. In his "Session of May 6, 1978," Barthes ruminates (under the heading "Oscillation") on some possible meanings of *neutral*, including "degree zero." He concludes with "in short: Neutral = to cancel and/or to scramble." Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977–1978)*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 130.
14. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1957); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) (henceforth *M* in the main text).
15. The phrase comes from Edward Steichen, "Introduction," *Family of Man* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955), 4.
16. In his "A Short History of Photography" (1931), Walter Benjamin refers to Brecht's thinking as follows: "For the situation, Brecht says, is complicated by the fact that less than ever does a simple reproduction of reality express something about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or of the A.E.G. reveals almost nothing about these institutions." See Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" (1931), in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 213.

17. "Photos-Chocs," in Barthes, *Mythologies*, 119–121. An English translation (originally published in *Creative Camera* in the United Kingdom in July 1969) can be found reproduced as "The Scandal of Horror Photography," in David Brittain, ed., *Creative Camera: Thirty Years of Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 32–34 (henceforth *CC* in the main text). The essay is translated as "Shock-Photos" in Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 71–73.
18. Algirdas Julien Greimas remembers introducing Barthes to the work of Saussure in 1949 or 1950 while they were both working in Alexandria. Barthes claims that he first read Saussure in 1951. See Louis-Jean Calvet, *Roland Barthes: A Biography*, trans. Sarah Wykes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 94–95. Barthes knew the work of Brecht from his role as a theater critic in the 1950s, positively reviewing the Berliner Ensemble's production of *Mother Courage* in Paris in May 1954. However, he also wrote several more general essays on Brecht's method. See Roland Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein" (1973), *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 69–78; and Roland Barthes, "Brecht and Discourse: A Contribution to the Study of Discursivity" (1975), *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 212–222. See also Philippe Roger, "Barthes with Marx," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 174–186. Barthes sums up his view of Brecht's theatrical work in *Camera Lucida*: "this impasse is something like Brecht's: he was hostile to Photography because (he said) of the weakness of its critical power; but his own theatre has never been able to be politically effective on account of its subtlety and its aesthetic quality" (36).
19. Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message" (1961), *Image Music Text*, 15–31 (henceforth *IMT* in the main text).
20. Barthes, of course, does the same; in each of his examples, he looks at a photomechanical reproduction and sees through it to the photograph at its origin.
21. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," *Image Music Text*, 32–51.
22. This essay was first published in English (having been translated by Richard Howard) in the United States, appearing in 1967 as part of *Aspen*, numbers 5 + 6, an art project posing as a magazine. This issue consisted of twenty-eight numbered items gathered in a box, including essays by Barthes, Susan Sontag, and George Kubler. It was edited and designed by Brian O'Doherty and published in 1967 by Roaring Fork Press, New York. As its editor, artist Brian O'Doherty, recalls: "To my distress several people, including Barthes, didn't get paid. Barthes was in Philadelphia at that time and he came to New York to talk about the project. He got it immediately. My notion that art, writing etc., was produced by a kind of anti-self that had nothing to do with whoever 'me' was, an excellent preparation for our conversation. He said, 'I think I may have something for you.' When 'The Death of the Author' arrived, I knew it was revolutionary." See "In Conversation: Brian O'Doherty with Phong Bui," *The Brooklyn Rail* (June 2007): <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2007/06/art/dougherty> (accessed 16 January 2009) and Alex Alberro, "Inside the White Box: Brian O'Doherty's 'Aspen 5+6,'" *Artforum* 40, no. 1 (September 2001): 170–174. Barthes's essay was published in French in *Mantéïa* 5 (1968): 12–17, and was also included, in a translation by Stephen Heath, in the 1977 anthology *Image Music Text*, 142–148.
23. See Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), trans. Richard Miller (New



- York: Noonday Press, 1975); Barthes, *Roland Barthes*. For an appreciation of Barthes as a writer, see Susan Sontag, "Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes," in Susan Sontag, ed., *A Barthes Reader* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), vii–xxxvi.
24. Graham Allen sees this shift as a tactical one that is designed to avoid the absorption of Barthes's work into the *doxa*. "The body of the writing subject is that, according to Barthes, which seems most scandalous to both bourgeois and petit-bourgeois culture (with its ideas of perversity and sexual deviance) and Marxist-inspired left-wing discourses (with their ban on the personal, the sentimental, that which is pleasurable). Conservative and left-wing discourses seem to conspire together to ban the writing subject from indulging in the pleasures and perversities of the body. . . . Against such orthodoxies, on the right and left sides of the political spectrum, Barthes defiantly takes post-structuralist theory and directs it at his own body and his own pleasures." Allen, *Roland Barthes*, 101. Barthes ensured that his writing about such pleasures encompassed all possible sexualities. In *A Lover's Discourse*, for example, he refers to the "beloved object" rather than to a specific sexed subject. When asked about this, he replied: "I think that exactly the same *tonality* can be found in a man who loves a woman or a man, and a woman who loves a man or a woman. And so I was careful to de-emphasize the sexual difference." Roland Barthes, "The Greatest Cryptographer of Contemporary Myths Talks about Love" (*Playboy*, September 1977), *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–80*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 293. Since Barthes's death, his own homosexuality has become a topic of discussion. See, for example, D. A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
  25. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes distinguishes two kinds of experience that can be had from texts—*plaisir* (pleasure) and *jouissance* (bliss, ecstasy). The first "comes from culture and does not break from it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading," whereas the second "imposes a state of loss, the text that discomfords." Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 14.
  26. In his 1980 review of *La chambre claire*, Hervé Guibert lists recent essays by Barthes on the work of Avedon (for *Photo*), Faucon (for *Zoom*), Boudinet (for *Créatis*), and von Gloeden (for "a German publication"—actually, for *Wilhelm von Gloeden* [Naples: Amelio editore, 1978]). See Hervé Guibert, "Roland Barthes and Photography: The Sincerity of the Subject" (*Le monde*, 28 February 1980), trans. Diana Knight, in Knight, *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, 115. Barthes's essay on Wilhelm von Gloeden is translated into English in Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 195–197. For a commentary by Renaud Camus on Barthes's essay on Boudinet, see Renaud Camus, "Barthes and the Discourse of Photography" (1979), in Knight, *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, 112–114.
  27. See Roland Barthes, "On Photography" (an interview with Angelo Schwarz from late 1977 published in *Le photographe*, February 1980), *The Grain of the Voice*, 356.
  28. The text of this lecture, delivered in November 1978 in New York as "Proust and I," has been published in English under the title "*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure . . .*," in Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, 277–290.
  29. Barthes was interviewed by Bernard-Henri Lévy and Jean-Marie Benoist, as quoted in Calvet, *Roland Barthes*, 220.



30. About 12,250 such slips are now stored as part of the Barthes bequest at Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine in Paris. See Denis Hollier, "Notes (on the Index Card)," *October* 112 (Spring 2005): 35, 40. For reproductions of some of these slips, see also Marianne Alphant and Nathalie Léger, eds., *R/B: Roland Barthes* (exhibition catalogue, Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2002).
31. It has been pointed out that, if you're inclined toward such calculations, there is even a numerological aspect to *La chambre claire's* organization: if you add together forty-eight chapters, twenty-four illustrations, and twelve bibliographic items it comes to a total of eighty-four, the age of Barthes's mother when she died. See Jay Prosser, "Roland Barthes's Loss," *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 24.
32. See *La chambre claire*, 15, and *Camera Lucida*, 4–5.
33. The books on photography in Barthes's bibliography include Raul Beceyro, *Ensayos sobre fotografía* (Mexico: Arte y libros, 1978); Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Un art moyen* (Paris: Minuit, 1965); Gisèle Freund, *Photographie et société* (Paris: Seuil, 1974); Susan Sontag, *Le photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).
34. Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964). For a commentary by William Klein on Barthes's use of his particular images in *Camera Lucida*, see William Klein, "Sur deux photos de William Klein," in Mora, *Roland Barthes et la photo*, 30–31.
35. Walter Benjamin's "A Little History of Photography" was first published in *Literarische Welt* in the September and October issues of 1931. It was first published in English in a translation by Stanley Mitchell that renders it as "A Short History of Photography," in *Screen* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 5–26. Although Barthes doesn't list the French translation of the essay in his bibliography in *La chambre claire*, he does say, in an interview from late 1977: "There are few great texts of intellectual quality on photography. I don't know of very many. There is Walter Benjamin's essay, which is good because it is premonitory." See Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, 354. However, he may well have been referring to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," a 1936 essay by Benjamin that was translated into French that same year by a friend of Barthes's, Pierre Klossowski. Speaking of influences, Colin MacCabe has commented on the similarities of Barthes's "ontological quest" to that of André Bazin, whose 1945 essay, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," is also absent from Barthes's bibliography (although Barthes does refer to Bazin in his text; see *CL* 55). See Colin MacCabe, "Barthes and Bazin: The Ontology of the Image," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 71–76.
36. Hervé Guibert, "Roland Barthes and Photography," in Knight, *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, 117.
37. In a 1975 interview with Jean-Jacques Brochier, Barthes described the style of discourse found in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* as "novelistic rather than intellectual." Barthes, "Twenty Key Words for Roland Barthes" (*Le magazine littéraire*, February 1975), in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, 223. Nancy Shawcross has argued that *Camera Lucida* represents a "third form" of writing that partakes of both the essay and the novel. See her chapter "Contextualizing *Camera Lucida*: 'The Third Form,'" in Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on Photography*, 67–85.
38. Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 14.
39. See Geoffrey Batchen, "Detours: Photography and the Camera Lucida," *Afterimage* 18, no. 2 (September 1990): 14–15.

40. Roland Barthes, from an interview with Guy Mandery, December 1979, in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, 358.
41. Barthes reproduces an 1863 portrait of Queen Victoria on horseback (CL 56) along with a caption that appears nowhere in his text: “‘Queen Victoria, entirely unaesthetic . . . ’ (Virginia Woolf).” The same caption appears, in English, in *La chambre claire* (92). In 1961, Barthes described the interplay between photograph and caption in “The Photographic Message”: “The caption, by its very disposition, by its average measure of reading, appears to duplicate the image, that is, to be included in its denotation.” Barthes, *Image Music Text*, 26.
42. Barthes describes going to the opening (by bus in the rain) in his journal entry for April 25, 1979, under the heading “Futile evening”: “At the (crumbling) Galerie de l’Impasse, I was disappointed: not by D.B.’s photographs (of windows and blue curtains, taken with a Polaroid camera), but by the chilly atmosphere of the opening. . . . D.S., beautiful and disturbing, said to me: ‘Lovely, aren’t they?’ ‘Yes, very lovely’ (but it’s thin, there’s not enough here, I added under my breath).” Roland Barthes, “Deliberation,” *The Rustle of Language*, 368. Mary Lydon has suggested that the passage from which this description comes features “three characters from *La Chambre Claire*: Barthes, his mother, and Daniel Boudinet, whose initials, as they are sounded in French, so markedly punctuate the enigmatic title: ‘D’Aibération.’” Mary Lydon, “Amplification: Barthes, Freud, and Paranoia,” in Steven Unger and Betty R. McGraw, eds., *Signs in Culture: Roland Barthes Today* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 134.
43. In *S/Z* (1970), Barthes compares “readerly” texts with “writerly” ones. As Terence Hawkes summarizes, “writerly texts require us to look at the nature of language itself, not *through* it at a preordained ‘real world.’” See Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 114–115. See also Shawcross, *Roland Barthes and Photography*, 79.
44. For a discussion of the history and implications of the palinode, see Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room*, 12–14, 163–164.
45. A number of scholars have pointed out that the distinctions conjured by these terms are prefigured in a 1970 essay titled “The Third Meaning” in which Barthes discusses a series of stills from Eisenstein’s film *Ivan the Terrible*. He is particularly taken with an opposition between “*the obvious meaning*” and “*the obtuse meaning*” of these stills, with the second of these emerging from various details: “the supplement that my intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive.” See Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Some Eisenstein Stills,” *Image Music Text*, 52–68, and also Steven Unger, “Persistence of the Image: Barthes, Photography, and the Resistance to Film,” Unger and McGraw, *Signs in Culture*, 153–155, and Allen, *Roland Barthes*, 126.
46. This translation is from the essay by Victor Burgin in this volume, chapter 2, Re-reading *Camera Lucida*.
47. See the interviews with Laurent Dispot (published in *Le matin*, February 22, 1980) and Guy Mandery (published in *Le photographe*, February 1980) in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, 351–352, 356–360. See also Hervé Guibert’s review (published in *Le Monde* on February 28, 1980, and translated by Diane Knight) in Knight, *Critical Essays on Roland Barthes*, 115–117.
48. Jean-Paul Sartre died shortly thereafter on April 15, 1980, and his funeral, which drew a crowd of 50,000 people, somewhat eclipsed that of Barthes. See Calvet, *Roland Barthes*, 254.

49. From an interview by the author with Richard Howard, New York, August 7, 2008.
50. For a commentary on the implications of this decision, see Shawcross, *Roland Barthes and Photography*, 69–70. See also Mary Lydon's comments on the losses and gains in the transference of title from *La chambre claire* to *Camera Lucida* in Unger and McGraw, *Signs in Culture*, 119–138.
51. Andy Grundberg, "Death in the Photograph," *New York Times*, August 23, 1981, 11.
52. Stephen Bann, "Emanations of the Real," *Times Literary Supplement*, November 14, 1980, 1301; Pepe Karmel, "Photography," *Art in America* (March 1981): 19.
53. See, for example, Jay Prosser's essay in this volume, chapter 6, Buddha Barthes: What Barthes Saw in Photography (That He Didn't See in Literature), and his "Roland Barthes's Loss," *Light in the Dark Room*, 51–52.
54. See, for example, *La camera chiara: nota sulla fotografia*, trans. Renzo Guidieri (Turin: Einaudi, 1980); *A câmara clara*, trans. Manuela Torres (Lisbon: Edicoes 70, 1981); *A câmara clara: nota sobre a fotografia*, trans. Júlio Castañon Guimarães (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1984); *O foteinos thalamos: seimioseis gia ti fotografia*, trans. Giannis Kritikos (Athens: Rappa Editions, 1984); *Akarui heya: shashin ni tsuite no oboegaki*, trans. Hikaru Hanawa (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1985, 1997); *Camera lucida: sajin e gwanhan note*, trans. Gwang Hee Cho (Seoul: Youlhwadang, 1986, 1997); *Det ljusa rummet: tankar om fotografiet*, trans. Mats Löfgren (Stockholm: Alfabeta Bokförlag, 1986); *La cámara lúcida: nota sobre la fotografía*, trans. Joaquim Sala-Sanahuja (Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica, 1989); *Světlá komora: vysvětlivka k fotografii*, trans. Miroslav Petříček (Bratislava: Archa 1994); *Det lyse kammer: bemærkninger om fotografiet*, trans. Karen Nicolajsen (Copenhagen: Raevens Sorte Bibliotek, 1996); *Camera lucida: fotograf uzerine dusunceler*, trans. by Reha Akcakaya (Istanbul: Altı Kirkbes, 1996); *Ming shi: she ying zha ji*, trans. Chi-Lin Hsu (Taipei: Taiwan she ying gong zuo shi, 1997); *Camera Lucida: komentariy k fotografiam*, trans. M. Ryklin (Moscow: Ad Marginem 1997); *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000); *Det lyse rommet: tanker om fotografiet*, trans. Knut Stene-Johansen (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2001); *Ming shi: she ying zong heng tan*, trans. Kefei Zhao (Beijing: Wen hua yi shu chu ban she, 2003); *La camera lucida*, trans. Pianta M. Cristina (Rome: Nicolodi, 2003); *Světlá komora: vysvětlivka k fotografii*, trans. Miroslav Petříček (Prague: Fra 2005); *A câmara clara: nota sobre a fotografia*, trans. Manuela Torres (Lisbon: Edicoes 70, 2008).
55. *Otagh-e roshan: taamolati dar bab-e akkasi*, trans. Farshid Azarang (Tehran: Mahriz, 2001); *Otagh-e roshan: andisbehayi darbare-ye akkasi*, trans. Niloufar Motaref (Tehran: Cheshmeh, 2001).
56. In contrast, the latest Japanese edition (2007) has the Boudinet image in color on its cover as well as inside. A 2001 Norwegian edition reproduces the Boudinet *Polaroid* in black and white inside the book but has a color detail of the diaphanous curtain as its cover image and a full, color reproduction of *Polaroid* on its back cover. The Korean edition has deleted the Boudinet image from the inside of the book but reproduces it in color on the cover.
57. Diana Knight, "The Woman without a Shadow," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 138.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Beryl Schlossman, "The Descent of Orpheus: On Reading Barthes and Proust," in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 149.
60. Lydon, in Unger and McGraw, *Signs in Culture*, 132.

61. Barthes's *Empire of Signs* is quoted in Allen, *Roland Barthes*, 72.
62. Barthes, interviewed by Laurent Dispot (*Le Matin*, February 22, 1980), in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, 351.
63. *Ibid.* He refers to the publication of Susan Sontag, *La photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), and Michel Tournier, *Des clefs et des serrures* (Paris: Chêne/Hachette, 1979).
64. See, for example, David Travis and Elizabeth Siegel, eds., *Taken by Design: Photographs from the Institute of Design, 1937–1971* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
65. Nancy Foote, "The Anti-Photographers," and A. D. Coleman, "The Directorial Mode: Notes toward a Definition," *Artforum* 15, no. 1 (September 1976): 46–61. This particular issue of *Artforum* was edited by John Coplans (with Max Kozloff as managing editor). Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977). Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, eds., "Photography: A Special Issue," *October* 5 (Summer 1978): 4. For one overview of this moment, see Douglas Fogle, ed., *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960–1982* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003).
66. Cindy Sherman, *The Complete Untitled Film Stills* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2003); Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2," *October* 13 (Summer 1980): 58–60; Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October* 15 (Winter 1980): 91–101.
67. As John Rajchman unkindly puts it: "Postmodernism is what the French learned Americans were calling what they were thinking." John Rajchman, "Postmodernism in a Nominalist Frame: The Emergence and Diffusion of a Cultural Category," *Flash Art International Edition* 137 (November–December 1987): 49. For another history of the advent of the discourse of postmodernism in the United States, see Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique* 33 (Fall 1984): 5–52.
68. Barthes's essay "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964), for example, was translated in Britain by Brian Trench as early as spring 1971 in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, No. 1 (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1971).
69. Terry Dennett and Jo Spence, eds., *Photography/Politics: One* (London: Photography Workshop, 1979). See also John Tagg's essay "Power and Photography," in *Screen Education* 36 (Autumn 1980): 17–55, and Victor Burgin's three essays in Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan Education, 1982). This important anthology, put together by Burgin in 1980, includes essays by himself, Walter Benjamin, Umberto Eco, John Tagg, Alan Sekula (the lone American contributor), and Simon Watney. Burgin mentions *La chambre claire* in passing in his introduction (13), while explaining that "Rhetoric of the Image" is absent from the book only because it was already widely known in English translation. The fractious tone of the period is captured in Richard West's account of a conference about photography in Britain in the 1980s held at the University of Derby in 2005. See Richard West, "Photography in Britain since 1968: The '80s," *Source* 42 (Spring 2005): 3–4. For a direct comparison of *Thinking Photography* and *Camera Lucida*, see Edward Welch and J. J. Long, "Introduction: A Small History of Photography Studies," in J. J. Long, Andrea Noble, and Edward Welch, eds., *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots* (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 1–15.
70. John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), unpaginated.

71. See Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), for an extended discussion of the relationship of formalism and postmodernism.
72. Michel Starenko, "Roland Barthes: The Heresy of Sentiment," *Afterimage* (November 1981): 6–7.
73. Sam Varnedoe, "Roland Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*," *Art Journal* (Spring 1981): 75.
74. In addition to the reviews already listed, see also Douglas Davis, "The Magic Box," *Newsweek*, September 21, 1981, 105; Clive James, "That Old Black and White Magic," *New York Review of Books*, December 17, 1981, 37; Steven Marks, "Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography," *New Art Examiner* 9, no. 1 (1981): 27; Vivien Raynor, "How We See Pictures," *The New Leader* 64, no. 17 (1981): 15–16; Phillip Monk, "The Violent Lens," *The Canadian Forum* 61, no. 714 (1981–82): 36–37; Victor Burgin, "Re-reading *Camera Lucida*," *Creative Camera* 215 (1982): 730–734, 744; Sarah Charlesworth, "Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography," *Artforum* 20, no. 8 (1982): 72–74; Michael Halley, "Argo Sum," *Diacritics* 12, no. 4 (1982): 69–79; John Roberts, "Camera Lucida," *Artscribe* 35 (1982): 68–70; Susan Butler, "Barthes: The Real Thing," *Creative Camera* 219 (1983): 862–64; Steve Baker, "Against *Camera Lucida*," *Creative Camera* 219 (1983): 864–865; Christopher Norris, "Camera Lucida," *Critical Quarterly* 25 (1983): 88–91.
75. The book has also continued to attract a diverse array of commentaries. See, for example, Minette Lehmann, "How Lucid Is *Camera Lucida*?" *San Francisco Camera* 16, nos. 2–3 (Summer–Fall 1989): 32–36; Anselm Haverkamp, "The Memory of Pictures: Roland Barthes and Augustine on Photography," *Comparative Literature* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 258–279; Kris Cohen, "Locating the Photograph's 'Prick': A Queer Topology of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*," *Chicago Art Journal* 6 (Spring 1996): 5–14; Johnnie Gratton, "The Subject of Enunciation in Roland Barthes's *La Chambre Claire*," *French Studies* 50 (April 1996): 170–181; Johnnie Gratton, "Text, Image, Reference in Roland Barthes's *La Chambre Claire*," *Modern Language Review* 91, no. 2 (1996): 355–364; Kas Saghafi, "Phantasmphotography," *Philosophy Today* (2000): 98–111; Meir Wigoder, "History Begins at Home: Photography and Memory in the Writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Roland Barthes," *History and Memory* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 19–59; Carol Mavor, "Roland Barthes's Umbilical Referent," in Richard Meyer, ed., *Representing the Passions: Histories, Bodies, Visions* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2003), 175–205; Andrew Fisher, "Beyond Barthes: Rethinking the Phenomenology of Photography," *Radical Philosophy*, 148 (March/April 2008), 19–29.
76. See (to name just a few recent books that acknowledge the influence of *Camera Lucida*), Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book 1843–1875* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble, eds., *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003); Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004); Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, eds., *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004); Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J. M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D. W. Winnicott* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

77. For a later discussion of *Camera Lucida* by Gallop, see Jane Gallop and Dick Blau, *Living with His Camera* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
78. See Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
79. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 12–23.
80. See also James Elkins, "Camera Dolorosa," *History of Photography* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 22–30. Elkins introduces this essay as follows: "This is a fragment of a book I am working on, written in the first instance against Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*."
81. Rosalind Krauss has proposed that photography's various successes heralded what she calls a "post-medium condition": "Photography's apotheosis as a medium—which is to say its commercial, academic, and museological success—comes just at the moment of its capacity to eclipse the very notion of a medium and to emerge as a theoretical because heterogeneous object. But in a second moment, not too historically distant from the first, this object will lose its deconstructive force by passing out of the field of social use and into the twilight zone of obsolescence." Rosalind Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 295. The "postmedium condition" that she describes joins "the death of photography," "postphotography," and "photography after photography" as phrases coined by scholars to describe an identity crisis for photography that is said to have emerged in the 1960s but became fully apparent only with the introduction of digital technology in the 1980s. See, for example, Anne-Marie Willis, "Digitisation and the Living Death of Photography," in Philip Howard, ed., *Culture, Technology and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century* (London: John Libbey, 1990), 197–208; Geoffrey Batchen, "Burning with Desire: The Birth and Death of Photography," *Afterimage* 17, no. 6 (January 1990): 8–11; William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Geoffrey Batchen, "On Post-Photography," *Afterimage* 20, no. 3 (October 1992): 17; and the various essays in Hubertus V. Amelunxen et al., eds., *Photography after Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age* (Munich: Siemens Kulturprogramm & G+B Arts, 1996). Juan Fontcuberta has argued that technological changes were but one aspect of a larger process of epistemological and social change that has meant photography can no longer simply be itself. See Joan Fontcuberta, "Revisiting the Histories of Photography," in Joan Fontcuberta, ed., *Photography: Crisis of History* (Barcelona: Actar, 2003), 10–11.