The Dialectics of Documents: The Case of the Real and the Fantastic

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In this article, I will provide an account of two photographers' work. Each of them represents two very particular temporal fragments: the first is Charles Marville (1813-1879), and the second is Eugéne Atget (1857-1927). Although their work does not overlap in terms of time, both worked in the central areas of the French capital otherwise referred to as Old Paris. Furthermore, both of them documented change, each in their own way; Marville captured the great restructuring of Paris by Baron Haussmann, while Atget documented the fleeting façades of old hotels, houses, or public spaces, all of which were soon to collapse in on themselves.

Before I go into further detail concerning why I have chosen these two photographers, I will first provide a dialectical argument on the relevance of photography to contemporary understandings of the "fantastic", the real, and the unseen (Armitt 1). I refer here to Marcuse's method of conceptualising history, where he provides an account of the missing parts of a given historical account; where he opposes the material with the ideological, I oppose the visible with the invisible (xii). By way of doing this, I will provide an argument for the relevance of documentary photography in particular. Concomitantly, I will also return to the works of Marville and Atget as a way of transitioning my account of documentary photography into a more particular discussion of images, and their dialectical character (*Reflections* 157).

Through the discussion of the dialectical image, I will provide an argument how both Marville's and Atget's photographs, despite fitting in the definition of documentary photography, provide insight not only into what happened historically, but also demonstrate the fantastical nature of history. In this case, history is meant as the interplay between the real and the fantastic. Through documentary photography, I will demonstrate the ways in which what is real and what is fantastic converge and obfuscate one another through ambiguity. Ultimately, the paper will make an argument for the practice of documentary photography as bearing the potential to illuminate both the seen and the unseen thus positing the existence of a dialectics of documents. I would argue that the dialectics of documents is the interplay between the visible and the invisible, the fantastic and the real. I will demonstrate this on two levels – the historic, in the case of photography's history, and the image, as exemplified by the two photographers.

A Brief History of Photography

As Benjamin writes in his essay "A Brief History of Photography":

> The mist that lies over the early days of photography is not quite as thick as the one that still lingers over the beginnings of printing; more plainly, perhaps, than in the case of the latter, the invention's

> time had come and more than one person had sensed its approach; people, namely, who were working independently of one another towards the same goal: capturing those images in the camera obscura that had been known at least since Leonardo. (*One-way Street* 172)

There are several implications of this introduction that are present in all kinds of writings on the history of photography. My historical account of photography begins by examining the validity and implications of this quotation. The claim that Benjamin is making in relation to the early days of photography, although apparently true, is somewhat more complex than his introduction bears witness to. It is true that the inception of photography is somewhat traceable through the dating of the various speeches made and presentations given in the specialised scientific communities (such as Arago's in Gernsheim and Gernsheim 29 or Herschel's in Marien 17, or Talbot's in Gernsheim and Gernsheim 27; and Talbot in Marien 17). There is, however, a need for a brief note of elucidation concerning the key figures mentioned above, namely because each of them had a particular relationship with the medium that is vital to the argument at hand. Francois Arago was a French deputy and astronomer who was instrumental in L.M. Daguerre's procurement of a patent for his invention, the daguerreotype, the first fully working photographic method.[1]

William Fox Henry Talbot was an inventor who, coincidentally, had been conducting experiments quite similar to those of Daguerre, the result of which became the calotype. Interestingly, Talbot called his invention the "pencil of nature" (Talbot in Marien 30). This is a particularly interesting narrative that formed around the invention of the photographic method. It was often the case that people, both practitioners and non-practitioners, were to a certain extent aware of the photochemistry involved, at least in principle. However, despite this, the narrative of photography as fantastical, magical, or natural (in contrast to technological) was persistent and prevalent (see Nickel 49 and Marien 30). Additionally, Sir John Herschel was a noted polymath, but most known for his astronomy, botany, and, immediately after Daguerre's invention, photography. He was also, as Gernsheim and Gernsheim show, the inventor of the cyanotype photographic process; in addition to making several prophetic claims concerning the use of photography in archiving, micro-slides, and administration in general (27). Awareness of such various photographic processes indicates that even though the official date of birth of photography is 1839, it existed as a method, albeit an imperfect one, for several years prior. The definition of a given date of the invention is a political matter, largely dependent on Daguerre's patron Arago, who pleaded for a patent to the French government. Thus, even at this point it is notable that a historical moment such as photography's announcement into the world bears a great deal of ambiguity.

Such ambiguity can clearly be exemplified through the two dominant narratives: the nationalistic endeavour of ensuring that the fixing of images is a product of the nation of France; and the idea that photography is a magic that has been long hidden as an unknown natural force of the world is put forward in various instances: by photographers (Claudet in Barger and White 1), writers (Edgar Allan Poe in Marien 28), as well as fiction preceding the invention (Nickel 49).[2] However, although the birth of photography, and its taking root in the academic environments of Western Europe, is widely documented, the precursors of photography are

rarely mentioned in such histories of photography. An approach to the history of photography that begins with the creation of the photographic is justifiable; however, I intend to provide an account of the preceding developments that made photography possible. More importantly, it should be noted that the historical account provided in this section works as an analogy to the dialectics of documents. Rather, my argument is that every visible moment (photographic or historical) is only a "pictorial image", as Benjamin calls it, which obfuscates and belies invisible forces at play (*Reflections* 157).

Similarly, the foundation of the science on which photography takes root is largely indebted to several other sciences – those of astronomy (Barger and White 89) and chemistry (Talbot in Barger and White 55), but also some more occult quasi-sciences such as alchemy and astrology (Szulakowska 79). Thus, photographic science itself consists of the dual elements of visible and invisible, official and occult. Photography itself as a visual art, as seen in Szulakowska's work, has often been likened to the alchemical and transformation of reality (Szulakowska 79). Not only this, but as Krauss's work indicates photography is strongly linked to surrealism and its varied and random character (Krauss 107). Both relations, if explored, reveal particular dimensions of photography that deal with the invisible, the transforming, the aleatory, and the transient.

Examples of these dimensions of photography include the construction of the camera obscura, as used by Leonardo da Vinci, Al-ibn, and others, as well as the creation of the lens and understanding of optics (Lovell 5). The lens and manipulation of light was largely considered to be the space for the manipulation of the elements in general (even in an alchemical sense). The lens was created several centuries before the photosensitive materials were made possible that are used in the photographic process. At that point, however, they were central to the development of the astronomic science and its inherent precision. However, there is another element, which, despite Benjamin's claim, remains obfuscated in the mists of the days preceding the photographic – the alchemical. Lindberg describes at length how people such as Francis Bacon, both medieval scientist of optics and alchemist, provided the theoretical foundation that was necessary to understand the nature of light and vision (236).

The scope of Bacon's work was wide and varied. Particularly important is the example of his treatise on the rainbow (Lindberg 277). Arguably, it illustrates the ontological considerations of seeing and the photographic. Put simply, Bacon argued that if a hundred persons are put in a line in front of a rainbow, due to the nature of optics and light, all one hundred of the persons would see a different rainbow. Such early speculations clearly mark the foundation for an understanding of the photographic as an ontological dimension to thought and experience – a way of seeing, rather than simply as a material mode of production of images.[3] Speculations such as Bacon's, perhaps, can be seen as the beginnings of a lineage of thought that is still evident today, which recognises that photography is a way of seeing; and as such it is a construction (or a relative positioning) of the thing that is being seen.

This perspective brings in an ontological dimension. Of most interest is Baudrillard's essay, called "Photography, or The Writing of Light", which attempts to problematize the subject/object dichotomy of photographer and photographed. This is an issue that is central to a perspective of photography as a way of seeing – who *sees* and who is *being seen*. Nevertheless, Baudrillard shies away from naming photography as an ontological dimension and stays firmly in the ground of mediation – namely, that photography is an ambivalent relation (1). Furthermore, however, such a view indicates that photography, as a *way of seeing*, is something more than the material; or, something more than the visible.

Thus, I assert that photography consists of an inception, an ideational event for lack of a better term, and an invention, a material event and subsequent practice. Moreover, inception preceded the invention some centuries.[4] The history of art is full of stories about painters whose work is mirror like and realistic to the extent that one would feel a desire to reach for it (Pendergrast 30). Such examples fit well into the tradition of magical mirrors as well (Pendergrast 30). Similarly, the imagination of the 18th Century imagined similar prospects for art. Most striking of these examples is the story of the island of Giphantie by Charles- Francois Tiphaigne de la Roche written in 1760 (79 years before Daguerre's official invention of photography) in which the protagonist meets the spirits of the mythic island who:

> have studied to fix these transient images [that appear on the retina of the eye]: they have composed a most subtile [sic] matter, very viscous, and proper to harden and dry, by the help of which a picture is made in the twinkle of an eye... [the] impression of the images is made the first instant they are received on the canvas, which is immediately carried away into some dark place; an hour after, the subtile [sic] matter dries, and you have a picture so much the more valuable, as it cannot be imitated by art nor damaged by time. (de la Roche in Nickel 49)

Tiphaigne de la Roche's story demonstrates in fantastic detail the various steps inherent to the photographic process. Considering that this description predates almost 80 years the invention of photography by Daguerre, it demonstrates clearly that the photographic as an idea existed before its material realisation. This exactly is what leads us to the distinction between inception and invention – while invention implies a singular point of invention, inception belongs to a brand of speculative thinking that is willing to accept all kinds of collateral, congruent, and even contrasting influences and discourses. In other words, photography can be invented, but the photographic as a way of seeing, as an ontological dimension has been deeply pervasive to European culture for centuries (see the example of magic mirrors in Pendergrast 29; also, on photographic ontology see Nickel 49). In other words, much like the images will be shown to have visible and invisible dimensions, so does the history of photography itself – the visible invention and the invisible inception.

The photographic, despite the fact that it is made to be the 'handmaiden' to all kinds of concerns, is mostly a concern of ontology. In other words, photography is an ontological dimension, a way of being and a way of seeing. In order to explore this in more detail, I will continue this line of speculation in relation to documentary

photography. This way, I will challenge any preconceived understanding of the visibility of the photograph. I will speculate on particular forms that the photograph has taken, and by drawing on the particular historical examples of Atget and Marville, I will demonstrate how it is related to other supplementary aspects such as technology, practice, and social impact. Ultimately, I will demonstrate that photography, while taking on the shape of documentary practice, produces images i.e. documents that could be understood dialectically. Furthermore, it will be my argument that the dialectical image makes clear the ontological dimension of the photographic. In other words, the dialectical image reveals an inherent ambiguity that makes evident the fantastical, the unseen, and the real.

Documentary Photography

It is widely claimed that photography is the technological development that uncovered a new epoch of seeing in the centuries following its invention in 1839 (Benjamin's *Reflections* 151). However, after the newfound revolutionary *how* of operationalizing the *camera obscura*, other considerations quickly followed – those of where the camera is located in the web of social relations, who is behind it, and who in front of it. While photography has been considered from its very beginning a practice of producing documents, it is the case that not all photography is documentary (Boggre xv). Some photography is documentary, some is activist, and some are both, while other kinds of photography are neither (Boggre xv). For the purposes of this text, I shall define documentary photography as a reflective practice of producing photographs of a particular situation, events, location, or persons that have a clear social implication (Boggre 2). The main distinction between documentary photography and general photography, for lack of a better term, is the difference in positioning the photograph in practice (Boggre 2); in the case of documentary photography, there is the necessity of transmitting a truth, as well as an implication of operationalizing the photograph (ibid.). In other words, the photograph is not envisioned solely by the practitioners themselves; it is usually directed towards an unveiling or an emphasis of the particular social implication and importance of that which is documented. As such, documentary photography is a particular convergence of the photographic method and the social element of photographic practice and act (Boggre 4).

Documentary practice, in turn, is closely related to the notion of the document, particularly the authentic document that aims to do something beyond itself and impact change in social relations in general, a notion that is prominent in documentary photographers according to Boggre (6). However, the photographic is essentially documentary, for the purposes of this argument and brevity's sake I would like to limit the current line of thought to documentary photography exclusively – a practice that deals especially with the convergence of the documentary, the authentic, and their production (see the report on 'the integrity of the image' in the World Press Association, Campbell 3).

I have already indicated that the advent of photography reshaped considerably the idea of representation, and it might be argued that it even transformed it completely (*Reflections* 151). An interesting parallel that might give further insight into not only the photographic, but also the very construction of the

documentary is painting. Put simply, painting is a representational model; it selects and builds a totality that is meant to be seen as such in its traditional form of representation. In photography, on the other hand, the camera is an intermediary between the subject and the object and thus acts as a tool that allows for a particular *way of seeing*. Thus, the debate whether photography is art in the same way that painting is, could be seen to belie the actual differences and similarities between the two practices.

As Benjamin notes, in the period in which photography first came about painting was focused on realism (*Reflections* 149); a chief example of that was the Diorama, or Panorama, co-invented by Daguerre (149).[5] The fact that Daguerre, before establishing his partnership with the pioneer Niepce, was working on the Diorama is completely not accidental.[6] The Diorama, as Benjamin suggests, is not only painting's projection forwards into realism as an attempt to vividly and truly represent the world, but also painting's projection outside of itself. It is the moment in which the Dioramas are at their most exquisite and complex, complicated vistas of prehistoric life summoning up visions of myth, demonstrating the new technology's ability to summon up a new future out of the vividness of the past (*Reflections* 148). As Benjamin aptly points out, the idea of progress is rooted both in the new technology of an era, but also in the era's prehistoric dreams of the time before it had begun as a defined time period. Thus, photography represents painting's dream of realism, by drawing on one of its most rudimentary of tools for sketching and reference work, the camera obscura.

The parallel between painting and photography demonstrates the merit of the particular kind of dialectical thinking that I aim to apply to the documentary image itself (Marcuse xii). Due to painting being the dominant mode of visual representation, photography, as a new invention in the same domain, was immediately perceived as a challenge (Marien 3). The opposition between the two was further reinforced by the evidence that photography is far superior to painting as a means of expressing information (*Reflections* 151). Precisely because of photography's overtaking of painting, that photography becomes largely synonymous with the authentic, as argued by Benjamin, the documentary as shown by Boggre, and science according to Marien (*One-way Street* 172; Boggre xv; Marien 32).

Documentary Images

The first of the two photographers I am interested in is Charles Marville, a French photographer who documented Paris of the 19th century in great detail (Sramek 8). In fact, he was the photographer hired by Baron Haussmann, who, in turn, was hired by Napoleon the 3rd to implement the structural changes of Paris that are now frequently referred to as its "haussmannisation" (*Reflections* 159; Berman 147). Haussmann's changes involved chiefly the demolition of old neighbourhoods in central Paris in order to prevent the working class from constructing barricades (*Reflections* 159). It consisted of demolishing certain working class neighbourhoods in order to prevent local opposition to the government, as had happened during the French Revolution. It is a marked historical occurrence that demonstrates the willingness of the state to completely restructure a space into something else that serves better the ideological agenda of power (see Berman 147). It is through this

process that the inception of the large and wide Parisian boulevards came about in place of the demolished neighbourhoods. Marville was the photographer hired by Haussmann to document both the old and the new – the "ruins even before they have crumbled" (*Reflections* 162).

Figure 1. Atget, Eugéne. A l'Homme Arme, Paris, France. c. 1900. Photograph. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

It is through Benjamin that this analysis moves on to Atget, a photographer with an immense legacy that continues in the same tradition of Marville. Originally an actor, he reportedly never considered his photographic work artistic until the very end of his career (Atget 11)**.** Nevertheless, he was a photographer who provided reference photos to artists such as Braque and Picasso, and Man Ray was his neighbour and friend (Atget 11). Atget's work of interest to this presentation is his documentation of Old Paris. Atget was responsible for thousands of glass plate negatives of old buildings in Paris that were in disrepair, in a state of ruins, or completely neglected by their owners. It is through his work that the archives and collections of several institutions in Paris managed to keep track of buildings that were in danger of collapse. He was both a photographer working on

commission, photographing what was asked of him, as well as photographing buildings on his own initiative that only then would become part of the lists of the various institutions and archives. In Atget's work the themes central to Marville are continued. There are still the empty streets, the abandoned buildings, every inch of Old Paris evident as a crime scene (*One-way Street* 191). To many of the surrealists, including Man Ray and Andre Breton, Atget's work was strange and represented a peculiar dimension of the city – to paraphrase Benjamin - one deprived of its aura (*One-way Street* 236). It is Benjamin who famously compared Atget's photographs to those of a crime scene, where something is apparently amiss. People are conspicuously missing and the photograph's frame reveals a surreal emptiness – the total opposite of what Berman, inspired by Baudelaire, shows it would have been like to be on the street of the great metropolis of Paris (Berman 131).

I plan to draw on Benjamin's method and rather than going into in-depth semiotic analysis of the images, I aim to simply provide a frame for them. In Atget's *A l'Homme Arme* one can see the watchful cabaret waiter as an abstract figure standing in for all possible observers (see fig.1, above). All is standing still. The technology used for the making of these images is dated and cumbersome in relation to contemporary photography, and based on chemically coated glass plates that require long periods of exposure. The people in such images tend to be ghostly, the buildings still, and light evenly distributed as befits a haunted daylight scene at a standstill. It is exactly this that Atget's photographs demonstrate - the stillness *in* place and *of* place, as well as the necessary stillness of an observer if one is to be noticed or if one is to be seen. It is the case that if there were people in Atget's photographs, due to the slowness of the technology, they would either disappear completely or show up as ghostly silhouettes. Very rarely one can see an Atget photograph that has managed to capture a person. But perhaps, it is more important to indicate at this time that in order for this to happen, the person in front of the camera must have remained still for a prolonged period. It is the first indication that we are approaching an exploration of the dialectic of seen and unseen in a photographic document.

This is also evident in Marville's Boulevard Haussmann (see fig.2, below) where the grand boulevard, itself a symbol of movement, has been stilled into a place, not a line of flight, not a transitional space, but a place of absence, where people are rendered into ghostly hauntings, whose presence seems long past, strange, and indistinguishable, but in a way much different from photos of bustling crowds and long exposures of places such as Grand Central Station in New York that grace the covers of magazines such as Time and National Geographic.

Figure 2. Marville, Charles. Boulevard Haussmann (du Faubourg St Honoré). c. 1853–70. State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

And it is this *documentary* image that, through its haunting, empty look, becomes clearer and clearer as something else – a dialectical image. It is dialectical, because even though it seems to be showing one clear image of a particular place i.e. a boulevard in Paris, it becomes evident that at the same time it also hides and unveils. It hides the people to the point that the space becomes uninhabited, eerily abandoned, abandoned like a crime scene (*One-way Street* 192). It either reminds one of ghostly hauntings or brings up associations of abandoned crime scenes. This becomes even more peculiar when one revisits the initial understanding of the image, the fact that it is a historical and documentary image. It seems that although it is only one single moment that has been captured, the image speaks of far more than one moment. It hints at the moment's emptiness, the inability to retrieve what was lost in the moment or the one previous, or the uncertainty of what happens next. It makes one wonder if people had just left the scene, are about to rush back into it, or if there are people at all. As Benjamin writes:

> Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it – as Hegel already saw – with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled. (*Reflections* 162)

And it doesn't take long to see that these palaces and boulevards are become ruins, long before they are abandoned. It is, in fact, strangely peculiar and fitting, that Marville's and Atget 's cameras captured both New and Old Paris, the Paris that is being built by the Bourgeoisie and the Paris that is being destroyed by it. Furthermore, it is not only the reverse of reality that these photographs reveal. Rather, they unveil reality as

empty, as detached from the *auratic* experience one would have in those urban spaces (for example, for an application of Benjamin's aura in another context, see Mason 146). This is what I argue to be the fantastic of documentary photography. As Benjamin argues:

> But it is precisely modernity that is always quoting primeval history. This happens here through the ambiguity attending the social relationships and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectic image therefore a dream image. (*Reflections* 157)

Thus, one becomes able to see more than the surface of the image. It is not simply "this happened" or "that which is", rather the image becomes imbued with nuance and further significance (Marcuse x). It stops being an image of only a single moment, but becomes an image of a delicate standstill, dialectically formed by the interplay of forces that both precede and succeed the particular moment. It is through this ambiguity that it becomes possible to see the image as something more than a documentary, but a dialectical image. It is both "that which is", but it is also made manifest as "other than itself" at the same time (Marcuse x).

When looking at the first image as a documentary image, while also considering its material basis (i.e. the technology that necessitates a long exposure time), and also place it in the historical context of Old Paris both having undergone the restructuring of Haussmann and currently undergoing its own collapse with old buildings being left to fall in disrepair, one makes it possible to set the foundation for a dialectical understanding. Dialectically, one would be able to see far more, in fact, to render the unseen visible. It is this method that I suggest as the tool of choice for beginning to investigate Benjamin's "crime scene" (*Reflections* 192).

Considering the historical context in which Atget took a photograph of a waiter in a cabaret bar, one would be able to analyse this further. First of all, to reiterate, the waiter is only visible in the photo because he did not move during the period it took to take the photograph. Furthermore, it is visible that his likeness is taken in great detail; this only reinforces the previous statement – in order for the high level of detail to be seen the waiter must have been almost perfectly still. However, if one looks to the left of the waiter (fig.1), it is possible to see a ghostly silhouette of someone else. Already, there is the distinction of stillness and movement, visibility and invisibility. This can be further explained from a critical perspective; namely, the figure seen only as a silhouette is likely to be a customer. This demonstrates a very peculiar class aspect, in addition to evoking connotations of alienation. In other words, the waiter has no choice but to be still, for he is not an agent in the space depicted, but rather an "ornament" of the environment (Kracauer 75; also, see Richter 118). The waiter is reduced to his functionality as a working class individual, and in a particular way objectified as a subject without agency. This is just a simple example of what the dialectical image can demonstrate as a product of underlying forces that remain invisible on the surface.

Other images taken by Marville include empty pissoires (public urinals), abandoned flower markets, places, about which one is never sure whether they were captured too early or too late in the day, they appear

timeless. Thus, it seems that all of Marville's photos point to the thought that all of them have been caught either too early or too late. Or it is, perhaps, early enough, and late enough – both for those whose homes are to be demolished in the restructuring of Paris, and for those who are building their new palaces. Such documentary images when explored through the prism of dialectic speculation and subsequently understood as dialectical images reveal the underlying forces responsible for shaping spaces. On one hand, it reveals the empty stalls of the market as the bare bones of a dead body left lifeless and inactive. On the other hand, it makes clear that the newly built palaces are, in fact, fortified under ever-present guards, much like the waiter, fixed in time like statues.

It is exactly the modern (in this case the captured moment) that conjures up the prehistoric (the unknown moment preceding), and the documentary image finds itself becoming a dialectical image. The fantastic reality of exploitation is made into a reality; the fantastic notion of rebuilding a city by uprooting its citizens in order to protect power from ever being in their grasp. In another sense, it becomes unreal that such an event is even fantastic. Much like the waiter, whose very reality is exploitation, the fantastic condition of life becomes real – it has been documented, and thus made visible. The new document portrays the new boulevards, the existing class relation as the already established and thus as eternal.

The photographic document begins what Benjamin calls a realistic mode of representation that offers what Campbell argues is a claim to truth, founded on the notion, suggested by Nickel, that the visible is the real (Reflections 151; Campbell 3; Nickel 42). This paper has demonstrated how taking such a "document" and exploring it through the notions of the invisible, the fantastic, and the generally ambiguous (be it spirits, crime scenes, or modernist grandeur), it is revealed as "other than it is". I have provided an unconventional account of historical materialism that tries to unveil what is occluded and hidden, to show that the real was once fantastic. And that it is not the potential for change that is fantastic, but rather the fact that the real exists as real. For the reality of exploitation inherent to mass government projects that destroy neighbourhoods and build boulevards in their place are, in fact, fantastic, yet real. Thus, I argue that the dialectics of documents is the interplay between the visible and the invisible, the fantastic and the real.

It is through this speculative dialectical approach that one can reverse the photographic process and uncover the crime behind the crime scene Benjamin describes (*One-way Street* 192). As the infamous surrealist Seligmann notes, quite similarly to alchemy, the transformation of reality into an image can be reversed – from image to reality (see Seligmann 120); from a modernist project to a lived experience on the street and from a lived experience into a photographic document.[7] It is this interplay that is revealed in photography, to paraphrase Benjamin, where the observer is not only allowed a glimpse into the past, but also into the future (*Reflections* 148). These buildings, cabarets, and boulevard are real, *were* real in fact, but understood dialectically one can begin to see how they hide their inexistence as well. The boulevards, buildings and cabarets are already ruins – the process that has created the conditions for their existence is based on the destruction of what has come before. Thus, through their very existence, and the documentary proof seen here, they become that which *has*

come before and the inevitable ruin becomes apparent. It is through this standstill that the images uncover the fantastic of the real.

Notes

1 By "fully working" I mean a method that allowed for an acceptable period of exposure of 2-3 minutes, rather than the excessively long 20 mins that Daguerre dealt with in his experiments before the final Daguerreotype that he announced to the world (see Gernsheim and Gernsheim).

2 An interesting example of such fiction can be found in Ancient Greece, where it is said that a painter could produce photorealistic images, or that a notorious sculptor gave perfect human likeness the shape of stone. Undoubtedly, such anecdotes are of great interest to an inquiry into the nature of the photographic; especially to an inquiry that aims to problematize the visible and the invisible.

3 At this point, it will only be noted that way of seeing is used in a different sense from John Berger's work.

4 The reader is invited to, once again, read the quotation at the beginning of this section from Walter Benjamin's "A Brief History of Photography", where both Benjamin's use of "invention" and his indication that "more than one person had sensed [photography's] approach" acquire a new layer of meaning in this context (*One-way Street* 172).

5 Usually an arrangement of various wooden boards that through realistic painting styles and configuration aimed to represent a particular environment; often, it was the case that a landscape from uncivilised nature would be displayed in a large city (*Reflections* 149).

6 A historically significant partnership that resulted in the first working daguerreotype camera; Nicephore Niepce is acknowledged as the first person to fix an image on paper, some decades before the actual daguerreotype and the pivotal partnership (Gernsheim and Gernsheim 20).

7 Kurt Seligmann, quite interestingly, was a practicing occultist and surrealist, as well as historian of magic.

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