



Sasha Stone, Untitled; after 1932

# Photography

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In the days of cock-a-doodle I went and saw Rome and the Lateran hanging from a silk thread. I saw a man without feet outrunning a swift horse and a sharp, sharp sword cutting a bridge in two.

—The Brothers Grimm, "The Tale of a Cock-a-Doodle"

1

This is what the film diva looks like. She is twenty-four years old, featured on the cover of an illustrated magazine, standing in front of the Hotel Excelsior on the Lido. The date is September. If one were to look through a magnifying glass one could make out the grain, the millions of little dots that constitute the diva, the waves, and the hotel. The picture, however, refers not to the dot matrix but to the living diva on the Lido. Time: the present. The caption calls her demonic: our demonic diva. Still, she does not lack a certain allure. The bangs, the seductive position of the head, and the twelve eyelashes right and left—all these details, diligently recorded by the camera, are in their proper place, a flawless appearance. Everyone recognizes her with delight, since everyone has already seen the original on the screen. It is such a good likeness that she cannot be confused with anyone else, even if she is perhaps only one-twelfth of a dozen Tiller girls.<sup>1</sup> Dreamily she stands in front of the Hotel Excelsior, which basks in her fame—a being of flesh and blood, our demonic diva, twenty-four years old, on the Lido. The date is September.

Is this what *grandmother* looked like? The photograph, more than sixty years old and already a photograph in the modern sense, depicts her as a young girl of twenty-four. Since photographs are likenesses, this one must have been a likeness as well. It was carefully produced in the studio of a court photographer. But were it not for the oral tradition, the image alone would not have sufficed to reconstruct the grandmother. The grandchildren know that in her later years she lived in a narrow little room with a view onto the old part of town and that, to amuse the children, she would make toy soldiers dance on a glass plate;<sup>2</sup> they also know a nasty story about her life, and two confirmed utterances which change a bit from generation to generation. One has to believe the parents—who claim to have gotten it from grandmother herself—that this photograph depicts the very same grandmother about whom one has retained these few details that may also in time be forgotten. Yet eyewitness accounts are unreliable. It might turn out after all that the photograph depicts not the grandmother but a friend who resembled her. None of her contemporaries are still alive. And the question of likeness? The ur-image has long since decayed. But the now-darkened appearance has so little in common with the traits still remembered that the grandchildren submit in amazement to the imperative of encountering in the photograph their fragmentarily recorded ancestor. All right, so it's grandmother; but in reality it's any young girl in 1864. The girl smiles continuously, always the same smile. The smile is arrested yet no longer refers to the life from which it has been taken. Likeness has ceased to be of any help. The smiles of plastic mannequins in beauty parlors are just as rigid and perpetual. This mannequin does not belong to our time; it could be standing with others of its kind in a museum, in a glass case labeled "Traditional Costumes, 1864." There the mannequins are displayed solely for the historical costumes, and the grandmother in the photograph, too, is an archaeological mannequin which serves to illustrate the costumes of the period. So that's how women dressed back then: chignons, cinched waists, crinolines, and Zouave jackets.<sup>3</sup> The grandmother dissolves into fashionably old-fashioned details before the very eyes of the grandchildren. They are amused by the traditional costume, which, following the disappearance of its bearer,

remains alone on the battlefield—an external decoration that has become autonomous. They are irreverent, and today young girls dress differently. They laugh, and at the same time they shudder. For through the ornamentation of the costume from which the grandmother has disappeared, they think they glimpse a moment of time past, a time that passes without return. Although time is not part of the photograph like the smile or the chignon, the photograph itself, so it seems to them, is a representation of time. Were it the photograph alone that endowed these details with duration, they would not at all outlast mere time; rather, time would create images for itself out of them.

## 2

"From the early days of the friendship between Goethe and Karl August."—"Karl August and the 1787 coadjutor election in Erfurt."—"A visit of a Bohemian in Jena and Weimar" (1818).—"Recollections of a Weimar high school student" (1825 to 1830).—"A contemporary account of the Weimar Goethe celebration on November 7, 1825."—"A rediscovered bust of Wieland by Ludwig Klauer."—"Plan for a national monument to Goethe in Weimar."—"The herbarium for these and other investigations is provided by the Goethe Society yearbooks, a series that in principle can never come to an end. It would be superfluous to ridicule the Goethe philology which deposits its specimens in these volumes, all the more so since it is as ephemeral as the items it processes. In contrast, the pseudo-luster of the numerous monumental works on Goethe's stature, being, personality, and so on has hardly begun to be questioned. The principle of Goethe philology is that of *historicist* thinking, which emerged at about the same time as modern photographic technology. On the whole, advocates of such historicist thinking<sup>4</sup> believe they can explain any phenomenon purely in terms of its genesis. That is, they believe in any case that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the course of events in their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum. According to historicism, the complete mirroring of an intratemporal sequence simultaneously contains the meaning of all that

occurred within that time. Thus, if the connecting links of the Erfurt coadjutor election or the recollections of Goethe, such an account would lack were missing in the presentation of Goethe, such an account would lack reality for the historicist. Historicism is concerned with the photography of time. The equivalent of its temporal photography would be a giant film depicting the temporally interconnected events from every vantage point.<sup>5</sup>

## 3

*Memory* encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course. Compared to photography, memory's records are full of gaps. The fact that the grandmother was at one time involved in a nasty story that is recounted time and again because people really do not like to talk about her—this does not mean much from the photographer's perspective. He knows every little wrinkle on her face and has noted every date. Memory does not pay much attention to dates—it skips years or stretches temporal distance. The selection of traits that it assembles must strike the photographer as arbitrary. The selection may have been made this way rather than another because dispositions and purposes required the repression, falsification, and emphasis of certain parts of the object; a virtually endless number of reasons determines the remains to be filtered. No matter which scenes an individual remembers, they all mean something relevant to that person, though he or she might not necessarily know what they mean. An individual retains memories because they are personally significant. Thus, they are organized according to a principle which is essentially different from the organizing principle of photography. Photography grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum; memory images retain what is given only insofar as it has significance. Since what is significant is not reducible to either merely spatial or merely temporal terms, memory images are at odds with photographic representation. From the latter's perspective, memory images appear to be fragments—but only because photography does not encompass the meaning to which they refer and in relation to which they cease to be fragments.

Similarly, from the perspective of memory, photography appears as a jumble that consists partly of garbage.

The meaning of memory images is linked to their truth content. So long as they are embedded in the uncontrolled life of the drives, they are inhabited by a demonic ambiguity; they are opaque, like frosted glass which scarcely a ray of light can penetrate. Their transparency increases to the extent that insights thin out the vegetation of the soul and limit the compulsion of nature. Truth can be found only by a liberated consciousness which assesses the demonic nature of the drives. The traits that consciousness recollects stand in a relationship to what has been perceived as true, the latter being either manifest in these traits or excluded by them. The image in which these traits appear is distinguished from all other memory images, for unlike the latter it preserves not a multitude of opaque recollections but elements that touch upon what has been recognized as true. All memory images are bound to be reduced to this type of image, which may rightly be called the last image, since it alone preserves the unforgettable. The last image of a person is that person's actual *history*. This history omits all characteristics and determinations that do not relate in a significant sense to the truth intended by a liberated consciousness. How a person represents this history does not depend purely on his or her natural constitution or on the pseudo-coherence of his or her individuality; thus, only fragments of these assets are included in his or her history. This history is like a *monogram* that condenses the name into a single graphic figure which is meaningful as an ornament. Eckart's monogram is fidelity.<sup>6</sup> Great historical figures survive in legends that, however naive they may be, strive to preserve their actual history. In authentic fairy tales, the imagination has intuitively deposited typical monograms. In a photograph, a person's history is buried as if under a layer of snow.

## 4

In his description of a Rubens landscape presented to him by Goethe, Eckermann notices to his surprise that the light in the painting comes from two opposing directions, "which is quite contrary to nature."<sup>7</sup>

Goethe responds: "This is how Rubens proves his greatness, and shows to the world that he stands *above* nature with a free spirit, fashioning it according to his higher purposes. The double light is indeed violent, and you could even say that it is contrary to nature. But if it is contrary to nature, I also say that it is *higher* than nature; I say that it is the bold hand of the master, whereby he demonstrates in a brilliant way that art is not entirely subject to natural necessity but rather has laws of its own." A *portrait painter* who submitted entirely to "natural necessity" would at best create photographs. During a particular period, which began with the Renaissance and may now be approaching its end, the "artwork" has indeed been faithful to nature, whose specificity has revealed itself more and more during this period. But by penetrating this nature, the artwork orients itself toward "higher ends." There is cognition in the material of colors and contours; and the greater the artwork, the more it approaches the transparency of the final memory image, in which the features of "history" converge. A man who had his portrait painted by Trübner asked the artist not to forget the wrinkles and folds on his face. Trübner pointed out the window and said, "Across the way, there's a photographer. If you want to have wrinkles and folds, then you'd better hire him—he'll put 'em all in. Me, I paint history."<sup>8</sup> In order for history to present itself, the mere surface coherence offered by photography must be destroyed. For in the artwork the meaning of the object takes on spatial appearance, whereas in photography the spatial appearance of an object is its meaning. The two spatial appearances—the "natural" one and that of the object permeated by cognition—are not identical. By sacrificing the former for the sake of the latter, the artwork also negates the *likeness* achieved by photography. This likeness refers to the look of the object, which does not immediately divulge how it reveals itself to cognition; the artwork, however, conveys nothing but the transparency of the object. In so doing, it resembles a magic mirror which reflects those who consult it not as they appear but rather as they wish to be or as they fundamentally are. The artwork, too, disintegrates over time; but its meaning arises out of its crumbled elements, whereas photography merely stockpiles the elements.

Until well into the second half of the nineteenth century, the practice of photography was often in the hands of former painters. The not yet entirely depersonalized technology of this transition period corresponded to a spatial environment in which traces of meaning could still be trapped. With the increasing independence of the technology and the simultaneous evacuation of meaning from the objects, *artistic photography* loses its justification: it grows not into an artwork but into its imitation. Images of children are Zumbusches,<sup>9</sup> and the godfather of photographic landscape impressions was Monet. These pictorial arrangements—which do not go beyond a skillful emulation of familiar styles—fail to represent the very remnants of nature which, to a certain extent, advanced technology is capable of capturing. Modern painters have composed their images out of photographic fragments in order to highlight the side-by-side existence of reified appearances as they manifest themselves in spatial relations. This artistic intention is diametrically opposed to that of artistic photography. The latter does not explore the object assigned to photographic technology but rather wants to hide the technological essence by means of style. The artistic photographer is a dilettante artist who apes an artistic manner minus its substance, instead of capturing the very lack of substance. Similarly, rhythmic gymnastics wants to incorporate the soul about which it knows nothing. It shares with artistic photography the ambition to lay claim to a higher life in order to elevate an activity which is actually at its most elevated when it finds the object appropriate to its technology. The artistic photographers function like those social forces which are interested in the semblance of the spiritual because they fear the real spirit: it might explode the material base which the spiritual illusion serves to disguise. It would be well worth the effort to expose the close ties between the prevailing social order and artistic photography.

The photograph does not preserve the transparent aspects of an object but instead captures it as a spatial continuum from any one of a number of positions. The last memory image outlasts time because it is unfor-

gettable; the photograph, which neither refers to nor encompasses such a memory image, must be essentially associated with the moment in time at which it came into existence. Referring to the average film whose subject matter is the normal photographable environment, E. A. Dupont remarked in his book on film that "the essence of film is, to some degree, the essence of time."<sup>10</sup> If photography is a *function of the flow of time*, then its substantive meaning will change depending upon whether it belongs to the domain of the present or to some phase of the past.

Current-event photography, which portrays phenomena familiar to *contemporary* consciousness, provides access of a limited sort to the life of the original. In each case it registers an exteriority which, at the time of its reign, is a means of expression as generally intelligible as language. The contemporaneous viewer believes that he or she sees the film diva herself in the photograph, and not just her bangs or the pose of her head. Naturally, the viewer cannot gauge her on the basis of the photograph alone. But luckily the diva numbers among the living, and the cover of the illustrated magazine functions as a reminder of her corporeal reality. This means that present-day photography performs a mediating function: it is an optical sign for the diva, who is meant to be recognized. One may have doubts in the end as to whether her decisive trait is really the demonic. But even the demonic is not so much something conveyed by the photograph as it is the impression of the movers who experience the original on the screen. They recognize it as the representation of the demonic—so be it. The image denounces the demonic not because of, but rather *despite* its likeness. For the time being, the demonic belongs to the still-vacillating memory image of the diva to which the photographic likeness does not refer. But the memory image drawn from the viewing of our celebrated diva breaks through the wall of likeness into the photograph and thereby lends the latter a modicum of transparency.

Once a photograph ages, the immediate reference to the original is no longer possible. The body of a deceased person appears smaller than the living figure. Likewise, an *old* photograph presents itself as the reduction of a contemporaneous one. The old photograph has been emptied of the life whose physical presence overlay its merely spatial

configuration. In inverse proportion to photographs, memory images enlarge themselves into monograms of remembered life. The photograph is the sediment which has settled from the monogram, and from year to year its semiotic value decreases. The truth content of the original is left behind in its history; the photograph captures only the residuum that history has discharged.

If one can no longer encounter the grandmother in the photograph, the image taken from the family album necessarily disintegrates into its particulars. In the case of the diva, one's gaze may wander from her bangs to her demonic quality; from the nothingness of the grandmother, the gaze is thrown back onto the chignons. It is the fashion details that hold the gaze tight. Photography is bound to time in precisely the same way as *fashion*. Since the latter has no significance other than as current human garb, it is translucent when modern and abandoned when old. The tightly corseted dress in the photograph protrudes into our time like a mansion from earlier days that is destined for destruction because the city center has been moved to another part of town. Usually members of the lower class settle in such buildings. It is only the very old traditional dress, a dress which has lost all contact with the present, that can attain the beauty of a ruin. The effect of an outfit which was still worn only recently is *comical*. The grandchildren are amused by the grandmotherly crinoline of 1864, which provokes the thought that it might hide the legs of a modern girl. The recent past which claims to be alive is more outdated than the past that existed long ago and whose meaning has changed. The comic quality of the crinoline results from the powerlessness of its claim. In the photograph, the grandmother's costume is recognized as a cast-off remnant that wants to continue to hold its ground. It dissolves into the sum of its details, like a corpse, yet stands tall as if full of life. Even the landscape and all other concrete objects become costumes in an old photograph. For what is retained in the image are not the features envisaged by a liberated consciousness. The representation captures contexts from which such consciousness has departed—that is, it encompasses orders of existence that have shriveled without wanting to admit it. The more consciousness withdraws from natural bonds, the more nature diminishes. In old etchings

whose fidelity is photographic, the hills of the Rhine look like mountains. As a result of technological development, they have in the meantime been reduced to tiny slopes, and the grandiosity of those aged views seems a bit ridiculous.

Ghosts are simultaneously comical and terrifying. Laughter is not the only response provoked by antiquated photography. It represents what is utterly past, and yet this detritus was once the present. Grandmother was once a person, and to this person belonged the chignon and the corset as well as the high-Renaissance chair with its turned spindles, ballast that did not weigh her down but was just carried along as a matter of course. Now the image wanders ghost-like through the present, like the lady of the haunted castle. Spooky apparitions occur only in places where a terrible deed has been committed. The photograph becomes a ghost because the costumed mannequin was once alive. The image proves that the alien trappings were incorporated into life as accessories. These trappings, whose lack of transparency one experiences in the old photograph, used to be inseparably meshed with the transparent aspects. This terrible association which persists in the photograph evokes a shudder. Such a shudder is evoked in drastic fashion by the pre-World War I films screened in the avant-garde "Studio des Ursulines" in Paris—film images that show how the features stored in the memory image are embedded in a reality which has long since disappeared. Like the photographic image, the playing of an old hit song or the reading of letters written long ago also conjures up anew a disintegrated unity. This ghost-like reality is *unredeemed*. It consists of elements in space whose configuration is so far from necessary that one could just as well imagine a different organization of these elements. Those things once clung to us like our skin, and this is how our property still clings to us today. Nothing of these contains us, and the photograph gathers fragments around a nothing. When the grandmother stood in front of the lens, she was present for one second in the spatial continuum that presented itself to the lens. But it was this aspect and not the grandmother that was eternalized. A shudder runs through the viewer of old photographs. For they make visible not the knowledge of the original but the spatial configuration of a moment; what appears in

the photograph is not the person but the sum of what can be subtracted from him or her. The photograph annihilates the person by portraying him or her, and were person and portrayal to converge, the person would cease to exist. An illustrated newspaper recently put together photographs of famous personalities as children and as grown-ups and published them under the heading "The Faces of Famous People: This Is How They Once Were—and This Is How They Are Today!" Marx as a youth and Marx as leader of the Center party, Hindenburg as a lieutenant and as our Hindenburg. The photographs are set side by side like statistical reports, and one can neither guess the later image from the earlier one nor reconstruct the earlier image from the later. One has to take it on faith that the optical inventory lists belong together. The features of human beings are retained only in their "history."

## 6

The daily papers are illustrating their texts more and more. And what would a magazine be without pictures? The most striking proof of photography's extraordinary validity today is the increase in the number of *illustrated newspapers*. In them one finds assembled everything from the film diva to whatever is within reach of the camera and the audience. Infants are of interest to mothers, and young gentlemen are captivated by the legs of beautiful girls. Beautiful girls like to see sports and stage celebrities standing on gangways of ocean liners, embarking on voyages to distant lands. In distant lands there are battles of conflicting interests. Yet the focus of attention is not on them but on the cities, the natural catastrophes, the cultural heroes, and the politicians. In Geneva, the League of Nations is meeting; it serves as a pretext for showing Mr. Stresemann and Mr. Briand<sup>1</sup> conversing in front of the entrance of the hotel. The new fashions also must be disseminated, or else in the summer the beautiful girls will not know who they are. Fashion beauties attend chic events accompanied by young gentlemen; earthquakes take place in distant lands; Mr. Stresemann is seated on a terrace with potted palms; and for the mothers we have the little tots.

The aim of the illustrated newspapers is the complete reproduction

of the world accessible to the photographic apparatus. They record the spatial impressions of people, conditions, and events from every possible perspective. Their method corresponds to that of the weekly newsreel, which is nothing but a collection of photographs, whereas an authentic film employs photography merely as a means. Never before has an age been so informed about itself, if being informed means having an image of objects that resembles them in a photographic sense. Most of the images in the illustrated magazines are topical photographs, which refer to existing objects. The reproductions are thus basically signs which may remind us of the original object that was supposed to be understood. The demonic diva. In reality, however, the weekly photographic ration does not at all mean to refer to these objects or ur-images. If it were offering itself as an aid to memory, then memory would have to determine the selection. But the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. The phrase "lie together, die together" applies to the multiply reproduced original; rather than coming into view through the reproductions, it tends to disappear in its multiplicity and to live on as art photography. In the illustrated magazines, people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving. The spatial continuum from the camera's perspective dominates the spatial appearance of the perceived object; the resemblance between the image and the object effaces the contours of the object's "history." Never before has a period known so little about itself. In the hands of the ruling society, the invention of illustrated magazines is one of the most powerful means of organizing a strike against understanding. Even the colorful arrangement of the images provides a not insignificant means for successfully implementing such a strike. The *contiguity* of these images systematically excludes their contextual framework available to consciousness. The "image-idea" drives away the idea. The blizzard of photographs betrays an indifference toward what the things mean. It does not have to be this way; but in any case the American illustrated magazines— which the publications of other countries emulate to a large degree—

equate the world with the quintessence of the photographs. This equation is not made without good reason. For the world itself has taken on a "photographic face"; it can be photographed because it strives to be absorbed into the spatial continuum which yields to snapshots. Sometimes it is the fraction of a second required for the exposure of an object that determines whether or not a sportsman will become famous to the point where illustrated magazines commission photographers to give him exposure. The camera can also capture the figures of beautiful girls and young gentlemen. That the world devours them is a sign of the *fear of death*. What the photographs by their sheer accumulation attempt to banish is the recollection of death, which is part and parcel of every memory image. In the illustrated magazines the world has become a photographable present, and the photographed present has been entirely eternalized. Seemingly ripped from the clutch of death, in reality it has succumbed to it.

## 7

The series of pictorial representations of which photography is the last historical stage begins with the *symbol*. The symbol, in turn, arises out of the "natural community," in which man's consciousness was still entirely embedded in nature.

Just as the history of individual words always begins with the sensuous, natural meaning and only progresses to abstract, figurative uses in the later stages of its development, one can observe the same progression from substance and matter to the spiritual and the intellectual in religion, in the development of the human individual and of mankind in general. Likewise the fundamental meaning of the symbols in which the earliest human beings customarily deposited their views of the nature of the world surrounding them is purely physical and material. Symbolism, like language, sat in nature's lap.<sup>12</sup>

This statement, by Bachofen, comes from his study of the rope-twisting Ocnus in which he shows that the spinning and weaving depicted in the image originally referred to the activity of the creative

power of nature. As consciousness becomes more and more aware of itself and in the process the originary "identity of nature and man"<sup>13</sup> dissolves, the meaning of the image becomes increasingly abstract and immaterial. But even if, as Bachofen puts it, the image progresses to the point of designating "the spiritual and the intellectual," the meaning is nevertheless so much a part of the image that it cannot be separated from it. For long stretches of history, imagistic representations have remained symbols. So long as human beings need them, they continue, in practice, to be dependent on natural conditions, a dependence that determines the visible and corporeal expression of consciousness. It is only with the increasing domination of nature that the image loses its symbolic power. Consciousness, which disengages itself from nature and stands against it, is no longer naïvely enveloped in its mythological cocoon: it thinks in concepts which, of course, can still be used in an altogether mythological way. In certain epochs the image retains its power; the symbolic presentation becomes *allegory*. "The latter signifies merely a general concept or an idea which is distinct from it; the former is the sensuous form, the incorporation of the idea itself." This is how old Creuzer defines the difference between the two types of images.<sup>14</sup> At the level of the symbol, what is thought is contained in the image; at the level of allegory, thought maintains and employs the image as if consciousness were hesitating to throw off its cocoon. This schematization is crude. Yet it suffices to illustrate the transformation of representations which is the sign that consciousness has departed from its natural contingency. The more decisively consciousness frees itself from this contingency in the course of the historical process, the more purely does its natural foundation present itself to consciousness. What is meant no longer appears to consciousness in images; rather, this meaning goes toward and through nature. To an ever-increasing degree, European painting during the last few centuries has represented nature stripped of symbolic and allegorical meanings. This certainly does not imply that the human features it depicts are bereft of meaning. Even as recently as the days of the old daguerreotypes, consciousness was so imbricated in nature that the faces bring to mind meanings which cannot be separated from natural life. Since nature changes in exact correspondence with the

particular state of consciousness of a period, the foundation of nature devoid of meaning arises with modern photography. No different from earlier modes of representation, photography, too, is assigned to a particular developmental stage of practical and material life. It is a secretion of the capitalist mode of production. The same mere nature which appears in photography flourishes in the reality of the society produced by this capitalist mode of production. One can certainly imagine a society that has fallen prey to a mute nature which has no meaning no matter how abstract its silence. The contours of such a society emerge in the illustrated journals. Were it to endure, the emancipation of consciousness would result in the eradication of consciousness; the nature that it failed to penetrate would sit down at the very table that consciousness had abandoned. If this society failed to endure, however, then liberated consciousness would be given an incomparable opportunity. Less enmeshed in the natural bonds than ever before, it could prove its power in dealing with them. The turn to photography is the *go-for-broke game of history*.

Although the grandmother has disappeared, the crinoline has nonetheless remained. The totality of all photographs must be understood as the *general inventory* of a nature that cannot be further reduced—as the comprehensive catalogue of all manifestations which present themselves in space, to the extent that they are constructed not out of the monogram of the object but from a natural perspective which the monogram does not capture. Corresponding to this spatial inventory is historicism's temporal inventory. Instead of preserving the "history" that consciousness reads out of the temporal succession of events, historicism records the temporal succession of events whose linkage does not contain the transparency of history. The barren self-presentation of spatial and temporal elements belongs to a social order which regulates itself according to economic laws of nature.

A consciousness caught up in nature is unable to see its own material base. It is the task of photography to disclose this previously



unexamined *foundation of nature*. For the first time in history, photography brings to light the entire natural cocoon; for the first time, the inert world presents itself in its independence from human beings. Photography shows cities in aerial shots, brings crockets and figures down from the Gothic cathedrals. All spatial configurations are incorporated into the central archive in unusual combinations which distance them from human proximity. Once the grandmother's costume has lost its relationship to the present, it will no longer be funny; it will be peculiar, like an ocean-dwelling octopus. One day the diva will lose her demonic quality and her bangs will go the same way as the chignons. This is how the elements crumble, since they are not held together. The photographic archive assembles in effigy the last elements of a nature alienated from meaning.

This warehousing of nature promotes the confrontation of consciousness with nature. Just as consciousness finds itself confronting the unabashedly displayed mechanics of industrial society, it also faces, thanks to photographic technology, the reflection of the reality that has slipped away from it. To have provoked the decisive confrontation in every field: this is precisely the go-for-broke game of the historical process. The images of the stock of nature disintegrated into its elements are offered up to consciousness to deal with as it pleases. Their original order is lost; they no longer cling to the spatial context that linked them with an original out of which the memory image was selected. But if the remnants of nature are not oriented toward the memory image, then the order they assume through the image is necessarily provisional. It is therefore incumbent on consciousness to establish the *provisional status* of all given configurations, and perhaps even to awaken an inkling of the right order of the inventory of nature. In the works of Franz Kafka, a liberated consciousness absolves itself of this responsibility by destroying natural reality and scrambling the fragments. The disorder of the detritus reflected in photography cannot be elucidated more clearly than through the suspension of every habitual relationship among the elements of nature. The capacity to stir up the elements of nature is one of the possibilities of film. This possibility is realized whenever film combines parts and segments to create strange

constructs. If the disarray of the illustrated newspapers is simply confusion, the game that film plays with the pieces of disjointed nature is reminiscent of *dreams* in which the fragments of daily life become jumbled. This game shows that the valid organization of things remains unknown—an organization which would designate the position that the remains of the grandmother and the diva stored in the general inventory will some day have to occupy.

## Two Planes

1. In letters to Kracauer, Walter Benjamin recounts how, in Marseille, the two of them discovered this uncanny square, which Kracauer christened the "Place de l'Observance." See Walter Benjamin, *Briefe an Siegfried Kracauer*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno Archiv (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1987), 33, 44.

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1. A group of dancing girls, trained in military fashion, that was named after the Manchester choreographer John Tiller. Introduced in the late nineteenth century, the troupe was hired in Germany by Eric Charell, who from 1924 to 1931 was the director of Berlin's Großes Schauspielhaus theater and whose revues and operetta productions were the forerunners of today's musicals. See Derek Parker and Julia Parker, *The Natural History of the Chorus Girl* (London: Newton Abbot, 1975).
2. In the autobiographical novel *Georg*, which Kracauer completed in 1934 during his exile in Paris, the main character at one point recalls his childhood delight at "the glass battlefields of former times" filled with tin soldiers. "His grandmother," we learn, "had occasionally set [the soldiers] up on a glass plate and then tapped on the surface from underneath with her finger, in order to bring the ranks into disorder." Kracauer, *Georg*, in *Schriften*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 251.
3. A fashionable woman's jacket from the 1860s, modeled after the uniform of the Zouave, a French colonial troop composed of Berber tribes and Europeans and recruited in Algiers in 1830-1831.
4. When this essay was first published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1927, Kracauer here explicitly named Wilhelm Dilthey as an exemplary advocate of such historicist thinking.
5. Kracauer refers to this passage in the introduction to *History: The Last Things before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), when describing his surprising realization of the continuity between the work he had done on film and his present concern with history: "I realized in a flash the many existing parallels between history and the photographic media, historical reality and camera-reality. Lately I came across my piece on 'Photography' and was completely amazed at noticing that I had compared historicism with photography already in this article of the twenties" (3-4).
6. The German mythological hero, faithful protector, and counselor Eckart warns the Nibelungen at the border of the Rüdigers Mark of the threatening Hunns. Kracauer here plays on the association of Eckart and fidelity as manifest in

Ludwig Tieck's fable "Tannenhäuser and the Faithful Eckart" (1799) and Goethe's text "The Faithful Eckart" (1811).

7. Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854), Goethe's private secretary, in a discussion with Goethe on April 18, 1827, reported in *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1955), 578; translated by John Oxenford as *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret* (London: George Bell, 1874), 248. Compare also the translation by Gisela C. O'Brien, *Conversations with Goethe* (New York: Ungar, 1964).
8. Wilhelm Trübner (1851-1917), a German "naturalist" painter best known for his early, sober, Courbet-inspired "realist" portraits. Following a period in the 1870s during which Trübner produced large historical and mythological scenes, he became a member of the Munich Secession in the 1890s and adopted an Impressionist idiom in which he painted a large corpus of landscapes. For his views on photography, rendered in Bavarian dialect in the original German quotation, compare for example the sections "Die photographische Darstellung" and "Die Grenzen zwischen productiver und reproductiver Thätigkeit," in Wilhelm Trübner, *Die Verwirrung der Kunstbegriffe* (Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt Rütten und Loening, 1900), 44-46.
9. Ludwig von Zumbusch (1861-1927) was a German painter of naïve canvases, portraits, and pastel landscapes.
10. Ewald André Dupont, *Wie ein Film geschrieben wird und wie man ihn verwertet* (Berlin: Reinhold Kühn, 1919), cited in Rudolf Harms, *Philosophie des Films* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1926; facsimile rpt. Zurich: Hans Rohr, 1970), 142. Shortly after its publication, Kracauer reviewed Harms's study in the book review section of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on July 10, 1927 (vol. 60, no. 28): 5.
11. Aristide Briand (1862-1932), foreign minister of France (1925-1932), and Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929), foreign minister of Germany (1923-1929), shared the 1926 Nobel Peace Prize and were instrumental in gaining acceptance of the Kellogg-Briand Pact.
12. Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-1887), "Oknos der Seifflechter" (1923), in *Versuch über die Grabersymbolik der Alten*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4 (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1954), 359; translated as "Oknos the Rope Plaiter" in *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, tr. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 54-55. Known for his punishment in Hades, the mythical Oknos was condemned to twist a straw rope that would be devoured incessantly by an ass.
13. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1845-1846), in *Marx/Engels Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1958), 31; translated as *The German Ideology*, in *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 44.

14. Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858), *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: Carl Wilhelm Leske, 1836-1843; rpt. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1973), 540.

### Travel and Dance

1. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italienische Reise, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler, vol. 11 (Zurich: Artemis, 1950), 7-613; *Italian Journey*, ed. Thomas P. Saine and Jeffrey L. Sammons, trans. Robert R. Heitner (New York: Sulurkamp, 1989).
2. English in original.
3. Reference to "Ein Walzertraum," an operetta in three acts by Felix Doermann and Leopold Jacobson with music by Oskar Straus (1870-1954). The premiere of what would become Straus's most successful operetta took place in Vienna in 1907.
4. Kracauer here introduces two sets of terminological pairs which map onto each other: *Diesseits* ("this side," or, in my translation, "this life here") and *Jenseits* ("that side," "the far side," or, as I have translated it, "the Beyond"); and *Hier* ("the Here") and *das Dort* ("the There"). These, in turn, correspond to the realms of the *Bedingtes* (the "limited" or the "contingent") and the *Unbedingtes* (the "unconditioned" or the "absolute").
5. Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov, *Opravdanie Dobra: Nравственнаа Философия* (Moscow: Tipo-litografiya D.A. Bonch-Bruевич, 1899); translated by Natalie A. Duddington as *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy* (New York: MacMillan, 1918), 164. Besides this volume, which is Solovyov's general system of ethics originally published in 1895-1896, a further selection of the work of this late nineteenth-century Russian poet and philosopher of Christian inspiration is available in English as *A Solovyov Anthology*, ed. S. L. Frank, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: SCM Press, 1950).

### The Mass Ornament

1. A group of militarily trained dancing girls named after the Manchester choreographer John Tillier. Introduced in the late nineteenth century, the troupe was hired in Germany by Eric Charell, who from 1924 to 1931 was the director of Berlin's Großes Schauspielhaus theater and whose revues and operetta productions were the forerunners of today's musicals. See Derek Parker and Julia Parker, *The Natural History of the Chorus Girl* (London: Newton Abbot, 1975); and Fritz Giese, *Girl-kultur* (Munich: Delphin Verlag, 1925).
2. Walther von Stolzing, a young knight in Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*

von Nürnberg (1867), who in Act Three sings the "prize song" which wins him his beloved Eva.

### On Bestsellers and Their Audience

1. Siegfried Kracauer, "Richard Voß: Zwei Menschen," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 75, no. 161 (March 1, 1931), Literaturblatt 7-8, reprinted in *Schriften* 5, pt. 2, 287-294; Friedrich Burschell, "Stefan Zweig's Novellen," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 75, no. 192 (March 15, 1931), Literaturblatt 6; Ephraim Frisch, "Erich Maria Remarque: *Im Westen nichts Neues*," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 75, no. 254 (April 5, 1931), Literaturblatt 7-8; Erich Franzen, "Jack London," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 75, no. 270 (April 12, 1931), Literaturblatt 6; and Siegfried Kracauer, "Bemerkungen zu Frank Thieß," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 75, no. 327 (May 3, 1931), Literaturblatt 22, reprinted in *Schriften* 5, pt. 2, 312-318. All of these texts were republished, together with Kracauer's analysis in the present essay, as an advertising supplement to the *Literaturblatt* in 1931. Combined with facsimiles of sample pages from the book review, letters from book publishers confirming the positive value of advertising in the book review, and an anonymous publisher's defense of the value of paperback editions ("Für das brotschierte Buch: Ein Verleger Spricht"), this sixteen-page leaflet was distributed to potential advertisers in the book industry.
2. See Kracauer's essay "The Biography as an Art Form of the New Bourgeoisie," in this volume.
3. Kracauer here plays on the words *Wünschelrute* ("divining rod") and *Wünsche* ("wishes").
4. A reference to the Berlin publisher Ullstein Verlag, which brought out Remarque's novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* in 1929. The book was translated into English the same year by A. W. Wheen as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Boston: Little, Brown). See Kracauer's review of Lewis Milestone's very popular 1930 film based on the book, "Im Westen nichts Neues": Zum Remarque-Tonfilm," reprinted in *Schriften* 2, 456-459.
5. Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten: Aus dem neuesten Deutschland*, first published in serial form in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1929 and subsequently as a book (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1930); reprinted in *Schriften* 1, 205-304.
6. Kracauer here uses the term *abbauer*—literally, "to deconstruct"—which has a variety of semantic registers: to reduce in number, to discharge, to lay off (fire someone from a job), and so on.
7. Kracauer, "Bemerkungen zu Frank Thieß," in *Schriften* 5, pt. 2, 312. Just over one year later Kracauer also reviewed a volume of Thieß essays and lectures