

**SNAPSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY: A PHATIC, SOCIALLY
CONSTRUCTED, MNEMONIC TECHNOLOGY**



Alistair Joseph Parker BA (Hons), MA

Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA)

Lancaster University

**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Dedications

Dedicated to my wife Irene

Thank you for your love, encouragement, and understanding.

*“Begin at the beginning,” the King said, very gravely, “and go on until you come to the end: then stop.”— Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland**

*“Not to take photographs of one’s children, particularly when small, is a sign of parental indifference.” Susan Sontag, *On Photography**

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work. It has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Alistair Joseph Parker BA (Hons), MA

Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA)

Lancaster University

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Snapshot Photography: A Phatic, Socially Constructed Mnemonic Technology

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Abstract

This practice related research study explores my cognitive response to a biographical snapshot photograph celebrating my first day at school. The experience triggered an exploration of the relationship between snapshot photographs and memory. The finding of a second almost identical snapshot photograph of my son taken twenty years later by me prompted me to question why my father and I should take almost identical snapshots.

I argue that the invention of photography was driven by the desire to capture the images created by the camera obscura by mark-making with the pencil of light as an aid memoir.

I argue that the desire to externalise memory using mnemonic technology is innate with primal origins in parietal art and lithic technologies. The discourse explores the cultural evolution of technology through Jaques Derrida's theory of *originary technicity* and Bernard Stiegler's concept of the cultural evolution of technology by epiphylogenesis and the notion of the externalisation of memory as prosthesis.

I explore the emergence of snapshot photography from the canon of photography through the theories of cultural evolution, technological momentum, and social constructivism, together with psycho-social notions of desire, ritual, performativity and intentionality in the establishment of snapshot photography as a ubiquitous ingrained social practice.

The research is informed by a studio practice element that uses the adventures of Lewis Carroll's, Alice as a conceptual framework to explore a journey of agency, self and auto didactical knowledge acquisition. I discuss the search for an appropriate methodological framework for art practice based research

My practice is a catalyst for enquiry; a project usually starts with an artefact that forms the locus of a question, the search for the answer to those questions, often

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leading epistemically, to unexpected places and relationships. The mode and manner of my enquiry are rhizomatous, pragmatic and serendipitous; the relationship between practice and theory is flexible, one informing the other.

Through practice, I explore the deconstruction and textualisation of the visual metaphor of memory through the rhetorical devices of ekphrasis and memory texts and a visualisation of the nature and *originary technicity* of snapshot photography and an exploration of self and place.

The thesis for this study is founded on the premise that snapshot photography is a socially constructed, phatic, mnemonic mark-making technology with origins in parietal forms of visual expression.

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PREFACE

Of Memory - Why, again, in old age should its grasp of childhood events seem firmest? William James (James, 1890, p.3)

As one grows older, the past becomes increasingly blurred and forgotten and there is a tendency to seek reassurance and comfort from images of the past and the nostalgic memories they evoke. Occasionally the blur is brought into sharp focus when an image conjures a long lost memory out of the ether, as if by magic. At the sight of a familiar place, vivid memories flood the mind, and I am transported back in time. One memory begets another, they feed off each other as the imagination recompiles the past, like flicking through a pile of photographs. The euphoria of the moment is tempered by the realisation that there are things that are not remembered, there are memories that do not appear, there are things that have been forgotten.

William James's quotation was chosen as an epigraph because it embraces the essence of the research that unfolds within these pages. This study is born out of a familiar aspect of growing old, the search for comfort in nostalgia, through pictures and memories of childhood and the past. Sadly, such behaviour is inclined to remind one of the frailties of memory, forgetfulness being a constant bedfellow as years advance and aides' memoir become ever more important.

I was asked when I embarked on this study why I had chosen to undertake a practice

related PhD. At the time I was not really sure, although I think it may have been for all the wrong reasons, the main one being that I could not write. Being mildly dyslexic, my approach to written English is slightly bizarre; *bizarre* is a word I cannot even spell. The prospect of a forty percent reduction in words was an attractive prospect, in itself. However, the outcome was something of a surprise.

In the early days of my studio practice, as an undergraduate, one of my tutors confided; look upon your practice as a journey of personal discovery and think of each piece of work as a step along the way that marks your progress in the search for knowledge.

The writing of this thesis represents a giant; (possibly last) step, along the road of that journey, in terms of both knowledge acquisition and personal discovery. One of the most important discoveries has been the realisation of the role and purpose of practice and the understanding of why I really chose to pursue my research as practice related.

The finding of the 'first day at school' (FDAS) snapshot was a serendipitous event that has proved cathartic. It proved to be the first step along the road to discovering who I really am, and why I am, who I am. I now realise that the photograph represents an important turning point in my life, and is the embodiment of my life both before, and since. It represents the start of my journey through life as an individual and the start of a search for knowledge; I feel the clutching of the book is symbolic.

As a conceptual framework for my practice I have drawn upon Lewis Carroll's adventures of Alice. Carroll, an early adopter of photography wrote his books

around the turn of the nineteenth century, during the heyday of early photography, amid the excitement of the emergence of personal photography and the snapshot. Much has been written about the allegorical and metaphorical meanings of Carroll's adventures with Alice. I am particularly interested in Carroll's references to and philosophical reflections on memory, temporality, the struggle with the vagaries of memory and the implications of dementia. I enjoyed her adventures as a child and I suspect the fact that they were also journeys of discovery rubbed off, ever so slightly. My practice is driven by responding to experiences and events. On this occasion, I was moved to react to the experience of finding the biographical snapshot and the curiosity of my response to it. The enquiry that developed resulted in an epistemic experience that brought together the creation of artefacts and the generation of new knowledge through the transformative performance of writing as action research. The study started as an enquiry into autobiographical memory and the role of the snapshot as a mnemonic device in relation to remembering and forgetting. The study progressed to a search for the primal origins of our desire to remember and to communicate phatically and visually. As I near the end of the journey, I realise that the enquiry has become a performance of agency in search of self. It is my step through the looking glass in search for an understanding of my history, what I have remembered and what I have forgotten. It has been an emotional journey, a search for self through the practice of *Art*, whatever *Art* may be; a truly transformative experience.

1 INTRODUCTION

Of Memory - Why, again, in old age should its grasp of childhood events seem firmest? William James (James, 1890, p.3)

As one grows older, the past becomes increasingly blurred and forgotten and there is a tendency to seek reassurance and comfort from images of the past and the nostalgic memories they evoke. Occasionally the blur is brought into sharp focus when an image conjures a long lost memory out of the ether, as if by magic. At the sight of a familiar place, vivid memories flood the mind, and I am transported back in time. One memory begets another, they feed off each other as the imagination recompiles the past, like flicking through a pile of photographs. The euphoria of the moment is tempered by the realisation that there are things that are not remembered, there are memories that do not appear, there are things that have been forgotten.

William James's quotation was chosen as an epigraph because it embraces the essence of the research that unfolds within these pages. This study is born out of a familiar aspect of growing old, the search for comfort in nostalgia, through pictures and memories of childhood and the past. Sadly, such behaviour is inclined to remind one of the frailties of memory, forgetfulness being a constant bedfellow as years advance and aides' memoir become ever more important.

1.1 Background

In simple terms this research is in the first instance about family photography and the part it plays in our lives. It is about looking at photographs and trying to understand what it is that moves us to make a visual record of family life and the part played by photographs. It is about recognising the banality and ubiquity of the family photograph and why we attach such sentimental value to them.

I was perusing a family photograph album, one my mother had bequeathed to me, when I came across a page of snapshots of me, at all stages of my life, from a babe in arms to family man. One photograph had fallen from the place on the page where it had been fixed. The photograph was a small square, black and white, rather dog-eared snapshot of me as a young child. I am dressed in school uniform, clutching a book under my arm. I am standing in a place I recognised immediately, the path at the gable end of the prefab bungalow¹ where I had lived from the age of three years old.

¹ In March 1944, Winston Churchill announced a Temporary Housing Programme, known officially as the Emergency Factory Made (EFM) housing programme. Passed into law as the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1944. A plan to build 300,000 prefab houses in Britain over the next four years, with a structural lifetime of between 10 and 15 years, just over 150,000 were built. The aluminium Type B2 prefab was produced as four pre-assembled sections which could be transported by lorry. Approximately 1500 were erected in Belle Vale, Liverpool between 1944 and 1947.

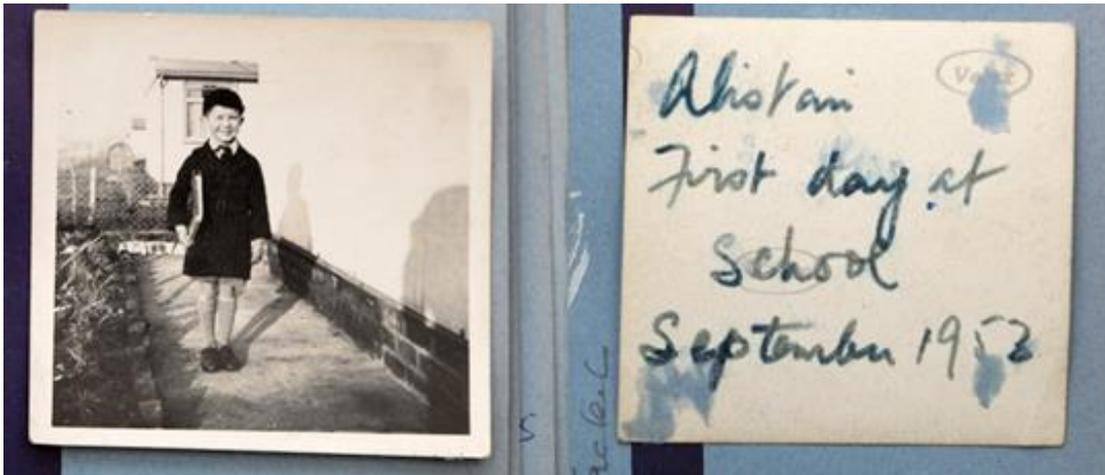


Figure 1 - First Day at School Snapshot and Verso

Vivid memories flooded my mind, I could remember the place, the Prefab, the bricks along the edge of the path, the cap, the gabardine raincoat, and the shoes, but, I could not remember the snapshot having been taken. I could not remember being there or hearing the click of the shutter.

It was a typical snapshot, the subject in the centre with plenty of space around, characteristically technically flawed, the harsh shadow of the photographer intruding into the scene. The shadow is of a burly figure with rolled up shirtsleeves; it could not be anyone other than my father, six foot three inches and sixteen stone, the physique of a policeman. I presume he was taking the snapshot to commemorate my first day at school. Strange it should be him, it would normally be my mother taking the photographs; maybe she was looking after my new baby sister.

On the back of the snapshot, written in my mother's unmistakable handwriting, were the words, *Alistairs first day at school September 1952* or was it a 3, the number looked as though it may have been altered. On the page next to the space from where it had fallen was written, with a slightly less firm hand, almost the same words in capital

letters “ALISTAIRS FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 1953.” I suspect the words had been written some years later, maybe when the album was compiled.

Next to the space on the page of the album, where the snapshot of me had been attached, was another, almost identical snapshot, but in colour, of my son in school uniform, his first day at school. Following my father’s example , I had taken the same snapshot twenty years later.

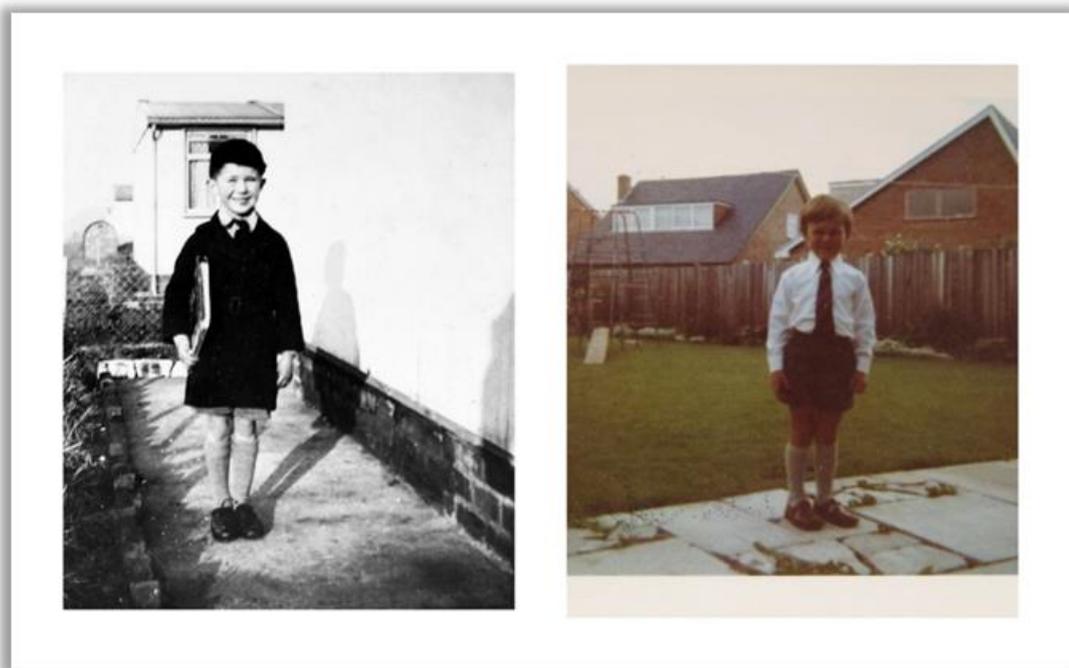


Figure 2 -First Day at School Snapshots 20 years apart

In the respective snapshots, my son and I are both wearing school uniform; we are striking a similar pose, and we are each standing alongside the family home in an awkward unnatural pose. It would seem that the photographs were taken for the same reason, to memorialise, the first day at school and yet they are separated by a generation; an uncanny coincidence or something else.

I took the snapshot of my son without any conscious recollection of the similar

photograph my father had taken. What significance if any can be attached to the temporal repetition of the occasion, the pose, and location? Is it uncanny or is there an explanation? Maybe we should not be surprised, repetition of the occasion, subject matter and the pose are characteristics of the snapshot and the reason we recognise snapshots as snapshots (King, 1984a, p.48). These familiar characteristics are something I shall call *snapshotedness*².

My mothers' family photograph albums and the family photograph archive are a source of inspiration and material for my art practice and are the basis of my research into the social practice of snapshot photography. Historically, my practice is informed an interest in the fragility and the decay of memory; the fear of growing old, a fear of forgetting and the nostalgic comfort of old photographs. I explore the notion of photographs and the part they play in remembering and forgetting. My practice is about excavating the memories buried in the archaeology of family photographs whilst attempting to understand the nature of of snapshot taking as a social practice. In previous studies, I have explored the snapshot in relation to memory and nostalgia (Parker 2012). I am curious to know why these visual reminders of my history, these instants of time are ubiquitous, endlessly repeated in every other family album and a part of the lives of almost everyone in the developed world.

² *Snapshotedness* is a neologism I have created to signify the essence of the snapshot photograph, what it is recognised as the visual and everyday aesthetic characteristics of a snapshot photograph.

In this study I shall continue my research into the relationship between the snapshot and memory whilst expanding my enquiry to explore, in more depth, the nature of snapshot photography as a social practice.

I started the practice element of my research with a search for similar, FDSA snapshots in the public domain; I discovered no shortage of similar images. My most important find was “The Belle Vale Prefabs Project” blog. A website dedicated to collecting memories and photographs from former residents of the Belle Vale Prefab estate (Anon, 2010)³. The blog included an archive of photographs taken by residents of the ‘Belle Vale Prefab Estate’ which was where my photograph had been taken.

The blog photograph archive included numerous snapshots of young children and families taken alongside their Prefab homes; all *quintessential* snapshots. Most were celebratory, typically of children with their first bicycle, wearing fancy dress, in first communion clothes, new babies, and ‘first day at school’ snapshots. The poses were uncannily repetitious and unmistakably snapshots. The archive has recently been moved to a Facebook page ‘Belle Vale Prefabs’ where it continues to be updated with additional material (Anon, 2016a).

What is clear from this experience is the ubiquity of the snapshot and the manner in which they serve to reinforce, provide an addition to, or an alternative for, the textual and oral testimony of memory as a contribution to the collective memory. Where

³ The website has since been hacked and the link is no longer viewable. A Facebook page has been set up as an alternative source: <https://www.facebook.com/bellevalprefabs/>

reflective narrative accompanies the snapshots, the tone reveals strong evidence of nostalgic associations. An example of a comment from the 'The Belle Vale Prefabs Project' Facebook page states, "We were so lucky to have grown up in the prefabs it was a different world, it was like being on your holidays loved it xx" (Anon, 2016a).

Snapshots, generally, remind us of happy times and familiar places. They have the capacity to prompt powerful memories, particularly if autobiographical. They also have the capacity to make us aware of what we have forgotten or cannot remember. Due to the limitations of snapshot technology in the early days of the photographic era, there was very little if any indoor photography; the early snapshot cameras rarely had a flash facility. Shutter speeds were too slow to cope with artificial light, although some cameras had a bulb setting which allowed the shutter to be held open for a longer exposure. Therefore, most snapshots in the Prefab Project archive were taken of outdoor activities.

Examples of snapshots from the archive are shown in **Figure 3**. The sample is typical of the other snapshots in the archive. Even though we have no direct interest in the images they are recognisable as snapshots by their *snapshotedness* and the nature of the subject matter.

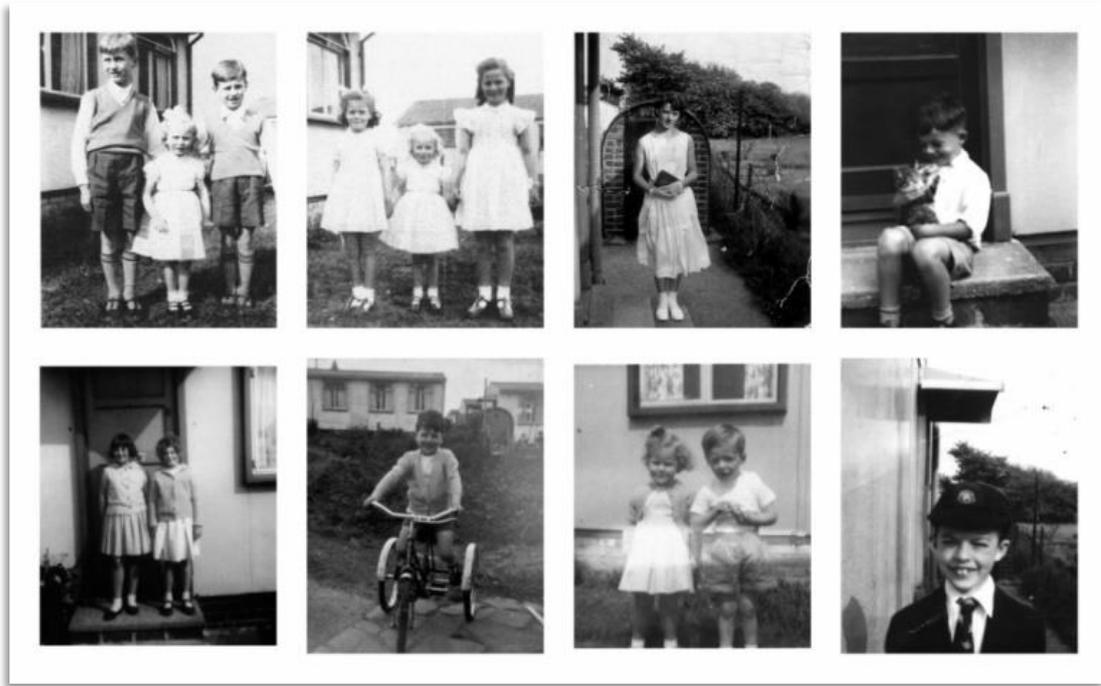


Figure 3 - Selection of Snapshots from Belle Vale Prefabs Project Archive

One particular snapshot moment that sticks in my memory, is the taking of the group snapshot at the end of the annual summer holiday, which was always taken at my paternal grandfather's farm, The Barracks, on the coast of South West Scotland. On the morning of departure, my mother would marshal everyone into an appropriate place and arrange the participants, usually on the gravel outside the front door.

The group would include everyone, the family, the household, any visitors, and the dog. My father described it all as a "right performance." My mother may not have been a photographer in the accepted sense of the word, in that she was not the least technical in her approach. Other than, she knew it had to be sunny, and for the best results, the sun should be shining over her shoulder. We were arranged, ordered to stand up straight, to look at the camera and smile. In turn, she would shuffle backwards and forwards to frame the shot, squint into the viewfinder, whilst shielding it from the sun with her hand, before clicking the shutter and woe betide

anyone who moved, or blinked their eyes. If she were not satisfied, the performance would be repeated, which it inevitably was.



Figure 4 -Typical Holiday Group Snapshot

The snapshot in **Figure 4** is an example of a typical end of the holiday group family photograph. Again we recognise it as a snapshot because of its *snapshotedness*, its technical naivety, lopsided framing and the amputation of the feet. Catherine Zuromskis suggests that we recognise snapshots because of their ingrained familiarity (Zuromskis, 2013).

The image shows evidence of directorial intentionality and performativity. The subjects are clearly arranged, posed and one suspects that they have been ordered to “smile.” This is not a casually taken candid snapshot. There has clearly been cooperation between the subjects and the taker. The image shows the snapshot in its

family album location together with the compiler's legend, which interestingly shows evidence of being updated sometime later. The name of the person, *Sally*, is appended to the legend; she was a lodger and a teacher at the local school and was inevitably cajoled into joining the family group. It is interesting to note that I have a quite vivid recall of that particular holiday. Again the photograph has demonstrated the technical deficiencies that are characteristics of *snapshottedness*, lopsided framing, feet chopped off, directed pose and the obligatory 'smile', what Graham King calls 'a quintessential snapshot' (King, 1984b).

In this study when I refer to snapshots or snapshot photography I am concerned with the product of film-based media and conventional photographic prints, although I may occasionally make reference to post-photographic⁴ digital media versions of the snapshot, I shall make it clear when doing so.

1.2 Conceptualisation

The concept for the practice element of my research hinges on the notion that the research facilitates a didactical journey that uses practice as a means of acquiring new knowledge. As mentioned in the Preface, this study could be conceptualised in terms of Carroll's, Alice adventures in which the creative journey and story are initiated by curiosity - the curiosity of finding a snapshot in a family photograph album and

⁴ The era of photography starting in the 1990's and the start of digital photography. First referred to by W J Mitchell in his book "The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era " (W. J. T. Mitchell, 1994)

wondering why it was taken and why I should take an almost identical version some twenty years later.

The story starts by stepping into a *Looking Glass* or a mirror with a memory,⁵ a photograph. Through the photograph, a small snapshot, I step into the garden of memories, (the family album), from where memories flow and swirl, like the descent into the vortex of the labyrinthine rabbit hole. A simulation of the shamanic visualisations on the cave walls of our Stone Age ancestors. The snapshot unveils some memories vividly, whilst forgetting others. The flickering light on the walls of the cave reveals and obscures the fragments of images, the prosthetic memorials of past events and intentions. Then, as now, Shamanic Svengalis and the institutions of capitalism, manipulate our desires and our unconscious by means of illusion and the exploitation of mythical characters, in a psycho-social phantasmagoria.

Carroll created an ekphrastic illusion of a mediated world in which Alice was presented with numerous conceptual coincidences that can be read as allegories of the visual world of the snapshot. Constant repetition of characters in, two Queens, two toadstools, twin characters, Tweedledum and Tweedledee; “repetition of words and phrases; “Oh the Duchess, the Duchess Oh”; “Do cats eat bats, do cats eat bats” (Carroll, 2008). There are references to shamanistic behaviour or practices in relation to the Caterpillar and his use of mind-altering substances, magic mushrooms. Alice is

⁵ The daguerreotype was known as the mirror with a memory. Phrase coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes (Holmes, 1859).

also taking mind altering substances, a potion that can change her size. Then we have references to memory and the frailties of memory, particularly forgetting, through the motif and behaviour of the White Rabbit. There are constant reminders of memory, remembering and forgetting. There are constant references to the distortion of temporality and the past, present and the future. The allegories of Alice's adventures provide food for thought (Carroll, 1982, p.7).

The allegory of the cave as a dark space decorated with pictures is reflected in Alice's Wonderland adventures when she falls into the rabbit hole and as she tumbles through the darkness she catches glimpses of pictures and other artefacts along the walls of the rabbit hole. The Camera Obscura was, in its originary form a dark room into which images of the outside world were projected onto the walls, again an allegory of the inside of the dark caverns and their ghostly artworks.

Conceptually, cave art represents the origins of visual culture and the starting point for the foundation for any theory that may link the social culture of snapshot photography in an originary context. What evidence is there to support such an argument? Archaeologically, evidence of human agency has been found globally, including manifestations in Europe, South Africa, South America and Borneo. With evidence of organised art activities as old as 100,000 years in Cape area of South Africa (Henshilwood et al., 2011). Derrida, Stiegler referenced the work of palaeontologists Nancy and Andre Leroi-Gourhan to develop arguments that linked lithic technologies and parietal art with contemporary notions of the evolution and purpose of mnemonic-technologies (Bradley, 2011; Leroi-Gourhan, 1993; Nancy, 1994).

Photography came to the world in 1839 with the announcement, in France, of the Daguerreotype process, and a short time later, in England, with the announcement of Henry Fox Talbot's 'Photogenic Drawing' process. Snapshot photography emerged from the general canon of photography towards the end of the nineteenth century through a series of disruptive technological turns and social developments that resulted in the deskilling and commodification of photography. The emergence of simple to use cameras and commercial developing printing services expanded rapidly culminating at the turn of the century with the introduction of very inexpensive, simple to use cameras, sold using capitalist marketing techniques as a commodity rather than a complex, quasi-art medium.

This conceptual framework will be visualised through the studio practice as artefacts and inspiration for the creation of the theoretical framework in which the supporting arguments will be developed.

1.3 Aims and Approach

The study aims to explore the questions raised by the initial confrontation with a biographical snapshot found in my mother's family photograph album, and the memories and questions that experience provoked. And by the discovery of the second, almost identical, FDAS snapshot, which caused me to consider why my father and I should have taken almost identical snapshots of our sons. The events prompt me to question the nature and purpose of snapshot photography as a cross-cultural, ubiquitous social practice.

The studio practice element of this research offers a means of generating original thought and an opportunity to develop links between theory and practice through a

transformational, didactic search for new knowledge, by means of action and reflective research methods, or as Donald Shon describes “doing and thinking” (Schon, 1984).

1.4 Research Questions

- What is it that defines snapshot photography?
- Why did snapshot photography become a ubiquitous social practice?

1.5 Thesis Statement

Snapshot photography is a socially constructed, phatic, mnemonic mark-making technology that fulfils a cultural need to remember and communicate socially.

The Thesis will seek to define snapshot photography as a specific genre within the practice of photography and to establish why snapshot photography became a popular, enduring, global, ingrained social practice.

The contribution to original knowledge this thesis makes is a reconsideration of the ontological, historical and social meaning of the snapshot, which connects it to longer histories of the complex and originary relation between the human and the technological.

The Thesis offers a new perspective on the phenomenon of snapshot photography, by proposing that snapshot photography evolved from the general practice of photography as a socially constructed mnemonic mark-making technology, driven by a primal socio-cultural desire to remember and communicate phatically, through the originary concept of technicity, exteriorisation and the prostheticisation of memory.

2 REVIEW

Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of any expression of existence which can be preserved in a structure analogous to the structure of the text [...] as a re-description [sic] of reality; it helps us to recognize [sic] both who we are and what we might do. (Pellauer, 1979)

2.1 Introduction

The review outlines the contextual and theoretical framework for the research. It starts with a review of the literature and discourse relating to looking at photographs and their metaphorical role as captured memories; moving on to explore the origins of photography, the growth in popular photography and the emergence of snapshot photography. I discuss the notion of photography as a technology and consider the primal origins of visual culture and the theory of *originary technicity*. The research progresses to explore the nature of snapshot photography, the reasons why it became a ubiquitous, ingrained, social practice and why the practice continues to evolve in the post-photographic era.

I was intrigued by the notion of photography as a mark-making technology enabling a link to be made to primal forms of visual representation and primitive forms of mark-making technologies and the subsequent evolutionary pathways that gave us cameras, optics and the science and technology of the scopic regimes that eventually led to the invention of photography.

The birth and history of photography and the contribution of the proto-photographers is considered but is particularly concerned with the originary contribution of Henry Fox-Talbot⁶ and his invention of the mimetic, mnemonic technology of mark-making with light, an alternative to drawing as an aide memoire. The invention he called photogenic drawing that later became known as photography.

The review follows with a consideration of how photography evolved in a social context and how snapshot photography emerged as a specific genre from the greater canon of photography. I consider the influence of entrepreneurial institutionalisation, hyper-capitalism and social construction on the evolution and establishment of snapshot photography as an ingrained social practice.

The exploration led to a consideration of the notions of visual representation in relation to social practice, technological evolution and determinism. Theoretical frameworks ranging from *originary technicity*, through social constructivism (SCOT) to actor theory networking (ATN) were explored in a search for understanding.

There follows a review of the literature and the discourse relating to a general view of how we look at photographs, particularly those in which we have an interest. I was

⁶ A variety of formats of the name of William Henry Fox Talbot have been presented the literature. In a variety of contemporary citation formats the name is frequently presented as Henry Fox-Talbot, with William being omitted and Fox-Talbot hyphenated. However, his preference was for his name to be unhyphenated. These variations can lead to miss filing of references. For the purpose of this thesis I have used the convention Henry Fox-Talbot.

drawn to the seminal sources of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, Annette Kuhn et al. Extending this interest to include the discourse on popular photography, particularly snapshot photography and the sort of photographs we find in family albums, a wallet or a handbag, consulting writers including, Kuhn, Marianne Hirsch and Martha Langford and others.

2.2 A Brief History of Photography - The Birth of the Snapshot

The work of Geoffrey Batchen introduced me to the notion of desire as a driving force in the evolution of photography when he made the assertion in his book *Burning with Desire*, that the proto-photographers were driven to invent photography by a desire to photograph but I was uncertain what was meant by that statement (Batchen, 1999). We know from Fox-Talbot's own words that the invention of photography was driven by his desire to find an alternative to drawing from nature by hand. He was seeking a means of automating mark-making with light so that he may remember what he had seen (Fox-Talbot, 1844a).

Stiegler has written extensively on the topic of desire. In a recent paper, Stiegler offers an interesting update on the notion of desire in relation to mass consumption and narcissism, which I shall discuss in more detail later (Stiegler, 2011b). This study is concerned with understanding the desire to take photographs based on a premise that we take photographs to remember or not to forget and that the snapshot photograph emerged to satisfy a desire to conform and remember. I discuss the role of desire in a libidinal society and how the cultural, the social and the institutional influence the way we see the world

Humankind is conditioned to view the world through an aperture or frame whether this is the opening of a cave, a door or window, or the penumbra of a flickering flame, notions we can extend to include the altar screen the picture frame and the flickering candle (Friedberg, 2009b). When combined with an ocular-centric view of the world it seems inevitable that this primitive desire should be reflected in the technology of the Camera Obscura and ultimately the camera. The *originary technicity* of this recourse to an apparatus with which to view the world is surely the basis of the primitive desire to photograph as described by Batchen, Anne Marsh and others (Batchen, 1999, p.57; Marsh, 2003, p.16).

The popular view of the history of photography locates the Camera Obscura as the foundation stone of the emerging technology of photography, the trigger to finding a way to fix the image of the real in a manner more reliable than the human hand, thus relieving the draughtsman of one of the most taxing of artistic skills, the capturing of reality. However, Jonathan Crary in his book, *Techniques of the Observer*, provides an alternative analysis of the instrument. He argues, "...the Camera Obscura must be understood as part of a larger organisation of representation, cognition, and subjectivity in the 17th and 18th centuries..." Crary examines the Camera Obscura as depicted in the work of scholars of the time such as Descartes, Etienne de Condillac and John Locke. He suggests that the Camera Obscura was a dominant metaphor for human vision as well as a crucial and consistent representation of the relation of a perceiving subject to the external world (Crary, 1992).

The Camera Obscura was seen by Descartes and others as an analogue of the eye (Descartes, 1985, p.166 Vol 1). As Crary relates, Descartes saw the Camera Obscura as

a metaphysical rather than a mechanical eye ((Crary, 1992, pp.47–48). At the risk of being excessively reductionist, for the purposes of this argument, the Camera Obscura was as near to nature as made no difference, and provides an originary concept of indexicality of vision that translates through to the causality of the photographic image.

In ancient Greek culture, sight had long been seen as a metaphor for knowledge. Plato wrote, “the realm of the visible, lit by the Sun was analogous to the realm of the intelligible, lit by the idea of the good”(Plato, 2007). Aristotle saw the relationship between vision and knowledge as a direct one. The form of the object was carried by light and passed through the transparent media of the air and eye, finally imprinting itself onto the receptive intellect, as though on a piece of wax⁷ (Pomian, 1998). The reason for mentioning this view of light mediated by optics as the foundation of imprinting knowledge is because it is a powerful metaphor for the desire to fix permanently the light emanating from an object as an exteriorization of knowledge.

In developing an argument to support the notion that there is something magical about viewing a mediated representation of the real through a small frame, it is interesting to note that Fox-Talbot, as many before him, was enamoured by the framing of the view of a sublime vista. The magic of a visual illusion of the frame and the optical look of the picture created by a lens, I would suggest, foregrounded the

⁷ Imprinting on wax may have been a reference to the Tabular Rasa, a concept for prosthetic memory which is discussed in a later chapter.

magic of viewing the world through snapshot photographs.

The snapshot photograph is a technicity born out of an ocularcentric and a socio-cultural need for ritual and remembering. Don Slater in, *Photography and Natural Vision: The Spectacle of Natural Magic*, suggests that sometimes the simplest or smallest of photographs are the ones that become the most powerful. Snapshots are like that: a button is pushed, a shutter opens and closes, and an image made in a fraction of a second transforms a moment of everyday life into something special, even magical (Slater, 1995, p.218).

The snapshot has been a part of popular culture since George Eastman gave the world the *Kodak* in 1888. The *Kodak* was not only a simple camera; it embodied a whole new purpose for photography. It symbolised a major technological turn and a disruption of established institutional and social practices. The *Kodak* was a technological milestone; it reduced photography from a complex, expensive, highly skilled middlebrow art, practised, mainly by professionals, and informed, wealthy amateurs, into a social practice that required neither skill nor facilities to produce a photograph.

One of George Eastman's greatest attributes was his unshakable confidence in his ability to read the marketplace and the potential market for his products. He was given to significant rhetorical exaggeration when extolling the virtues of his new brand of photography. When describing the virtues of the Brownie camera he wrote that his representatives:

[...] will carry the good word into the utmost regions of the earth; yea, into even the Sunday Schools and Kindergartens, until it shall finally come to pass that children will be taught to develop [photographs] before they learn to walk, and grown-up people—instead of trying word painting—will merely hand out a photograph and language will become obsolete (Collins, 1990, p.99).

Olivier suggests that Eastman wrote these words as a joke but I would suggest that they are a measure of his unshakable belief that snapshot photography as a distinctly separate genre within the canon of photography (Olivier, 2007, p.12). These profound and insightful words, suggest that Eastman considered snapshot photography an important social practice with significant historical and cultural foundations that represented a new way of communicating.

In another moment of rhetorical reductionism, George Eastman makes a comment that provides a clue to our fetishized obsession with remembering the moment. He saw the popular interest in photography as the response to a primitive instinct, a need to record the present so that a moment from the past could be remembered in the future. In an early Kodak trade circular, Eastman wrote, “The impulse to Kodak⁸ goes back to the Stone Age⁹ [sic] and the act of picture making connected to primaeval desires with ties to primitivism through technology.” Marc Oliver, in his paper “George Eastman's Modern Stone-Age Family: Snapshot Photography and the Brownie” reports Eastman as saying, “Photography becomes a universal language, one that recalls the cave paintings of Lascaux more than the oil paintings of the

⁸ ‘to Kodak’ became a generic term an alternative for ‘taking snapshots’ also described as ‘Kodaking’ (Goc, 2014, p.29)

⁹ Kodak trade circular, vol. 16, no. 12 (November 1915), 14.

Louvre" (Olivier, 2007, pp.13–14).

Making a connection between snapshot photography and cave art, Eastman opens up an interesting avenue for further investigation and a link with the contemporary philosophical concepts of *originary technicity*, lithic technologies and notions of exteriorisation and prosthetic memory.

2.3 Originary Technicity - Photography as a Technology

Having considered some of the arguments that relate to the viewing and taking of snapshot photographs and having touched on their relationships with memory and nostalgia, my reading was concerned with discovering more about why we take snapshot photographs and whether there could be an innate¹⁰ need or desire to photograph. What is the history of visual communication and the use of images as mnemonic devices?

I was led by the notion of photography as a technology to consider the writings of Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler and the concept of *originary technicity* in relation to how the technology of photography may have evolved from earlier forms of visual culture. It may be tenuous at this stage to suggest a connection between the snapshot and primitive forms of art but I hope to develop the argument as I progress. Jean-Luc Nancy, Leroi-Gourhan, and Stiegler among others have all contributed to a discourse

¹⁰ The use of the word innate to describe behaviour or imply a genetic predisposition is controversial. My usage of the word is based on that of Derrida and Stiegler (Derrida, 1998; Stiegler, 2011c) The concept is also extensively covered in (Gibson et al., 1994).

that situates primitive forms of mark-making as mnemonic-technologies and *originary technicity*.

Human beings evolve through the passage of their knowledge through cultural exchange, technics being the essence of the evolution of both biotechnical human through the reality of externalisation and the mediation of technology. In pursuing this concept further, it is impossible to ignore the theory of technical determinism despite its conceptualisation by Marshall McLuhan, Kittler and later Bolton and Grusin (McLuhan, 1994; Kittler, 1999; Bolter & Grusin, 1996).

The theoretical framework for this study could in its broadest terms, be seen as, "The human as biomechanical." The human engagement with *technics*¹¹ is a binary that associates media with technology and invokes McLuhan's view of media in terms of the self and agency. Mitchell and Hansen's collection of essays *Critical Terms for Media Studies* provides a useful background source for the theories developed in this review of this area of study (Mitchell & Hansen, 2010, p.xvii).

This primitive desire to capture the reality of the scene would appear to have its origins in the ontological theory of *originary technicity*, in the mind of a variety of thinkers including Martin Heidegger and Derrida and in a more contemporary context, Bernard Stiegler, Jonathan Crary and Arthur Bradley. The idea of technicity has dominated philosophical thinking since Aristotle first attempted to define it

¹¹ Technics: the prosthetic supplementation of the human in "default" of the origin, is the condition of "life that knows." (Mules, 2009)

(Bradley & Armand, 2006, p.9).

In the introduction to the collection of writings, *Technicity*, the editors, Bradley and Louise Armand review and explore the theory and praxis of technicity in contemporary thought. The theory of technicity has grown from the thinking of both Plato and Aristotle and the philosophy of technology. The editors set out to show that the idea of technicity that has dominated philosophy for almost 3000 years, was that *technē* is a prosthesis and based on Aristotle's *ontology* of the technical object and that *technē* is essentially an inert, neutral tool whose status is entirely determined by the use to which it is put by human beings (Aristotle, 350 BCE). The contemporary concept of technicity developed in the *Technicity* essays advances technicity as something that can no longer be seen as just a series of prostheses or technical artefacts [...] but the basic and enabling condition of our life-world (Bradley & Armand, 2006, p.3).

The technological we see through the eyes of French philosopher Stiegler and fellow countryman, palaeontologist Leroi-Gourhan who together co-formulated the basis for a theory of externalisation through the concepts of technics and the use of lithic tools and their use to make other tools. The traceability of a relationship between proto-humans and stone tools gave rise to Stiegler's theory that the human is a prosthetic being.

The suggestion that photography was a technology and therefore capable of evolutionary transformation, may be difficult to conceive when photography is generally perceived as a medium. It was Marc Olivier's reference to the writing of Patrick Maynard, who in his book, *The Engines of Visualisation: Thinking Through*

Photography explores the notion of photography as a technology as well as an expressive medium that pointed me in an important direction (Maynard, 2000; Olivier, 2007). Maynards' suggestion that photography is a mark-making technology enables a link to Fox-Talbot's originary thinking of photography as a means of mark-making with light (Fox-Talbot, 1839). The link, in turn, opens a connection back to the *originary technicity* of visual imagery through mark-making technologies via the scopic regimes of other optical technologies, not least the Camera Obscura, with its ancient origins traceable to at least 400 BCE (Galassi, 1981a; Jay, 1998). The links can be traced further into history and to the origins of humankind and primitive mark-making and visualisation.

Patrick Maynard, while recognising photography as a medium, argues that photography is foremost a technology. A concept he recognises may be unfamiliar, and a distinction that has been generally overlooked in the general discourse on photography. On the first page of the Preface, he accepts that many others have addressed the artistic and social meanings of photography, but that many have forgotten to say what it is. I attempt to address the issue of medium v technology in subsection 6.1.

Maynard's definition of photography as a mark-making technology facilitates a historical connection between photography and other 'mark-marking' technologies. His study draws together sources that include Clifford Hooker, Raymond Williams, Don Ihde, Ursula Franklin, and George Basalla and others (Lukitsh, 1999, p.701; Maynard, 2000).

By considering photography as a technology I am able to explore a theoretical

framework for my arguments that allows me to consider snapshot photography not only as an evolved technology and a genre within the canon of photography. It enables me to argue that snapshot photography is a socially constructed technology. Maynard's reference to mark-making through the agency of light provides a link with Fox-Talbot's originary concept of photography as the "pencil of light", and provides a and further link to the concept of *originary technicity*, Hans Jonas's notion of *Homo Pictor*, parietal art, the evolution of mark making and lithic technologies as a means of externalisation.

It was Bernard Stiegler, building on the work of Derrida, who suggested that technology evolved in a Darwinian-like manner, in response to social needs and pressure, a process he described as *epiphylogenesis* (Bradley, 2011; Stiegler et al., 1998). Stiegler proposes the thesis: "The history of *technics* is the history of humanity." He develops a debate that involves philosophers Leroi-Gourhan, Jean-Luc Nancy, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Derrida, Maurice Blanchot and others. The debate considers an *originary technicity* of the human that can be traced back to the origins of the use of technology by hominids as exemplified by the use of, and the evolution of, lithic tools, mark-making, drawing and later writing, as a way to communicate and remember through the externalisation of the mind, as memory, through visual images.

The evolution of the technology and the social practices associated with it appears to conform to the theory of the social construction of technology (SCOT). Social constructivists argue that technology does not determine human action, but that rather, human action shapes technology. They also argue that the ways a technology

is used cannot be understood without understanding how that technology is embedded in its social context. The evolution of the snapshot as a technology was driven by the desire to consume and an entrepreneurial institutionalisation that employed the principles of actor-network theory (ANT) to develop and manipulate markets (Dudhwala, 2015).

Having opened an argument that photography is part of the history of the evolution of technology and a means of amplifying and externalising the mind as prosthetic memory, my next step is to explore the rationale behind how snapshot photography became a ubiquitous social practice. My notion of the evolution of technology in this context involves an exploration of the commodification of photography and the psycho-social influence of entrepreneurial institutionalisation, and the creation of a capitalist consumer culture through the exploitation of the desire to consume and conform through social ritualization (Munir & Phillips, 2005; Munir, 2005).

In exploring the emergence of snapshot photography from the canon of photography I explore the role of George Eastman and the emergence of the Kodak Corporation as a major influence. Whilst George Eastman was essentially an entrepreneur, he clearly believed he was involved in both technological and social change. He saw snapshot photography as an amalgam of technological determinism and social constructivism or maybe more correctly, social determinism. Social determinism is the product of what Thomas Hughes described as the outcome of the theory of technological momentum, the relationship between technology and society over time, and the modification of society by the introduction of new technologies (Hughes, 1994).

The deterministic nature of the snapshot can usefully be explored through both

technological and social theory. A useful starting point for further consideration of these notions is the paper, “The Birth of the ‘Kodak Moment’: Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Adoption of New Technologies” by Munir and Phillips. They offer an overview of how Kodak managed to transform photography from a highly specialised activity into one that became an integral part of everyday life, while exploring the strategies of institutional entrepreneurs and their effect on the processes of social construction (Munir & Phillips, 2005).

There are those who would warn against the trap of determinism when considering the evolution of social and cultural mediation and technology. The notion of technical determinism is difficult to avoid when you consider that the history of mediation has been significantly influenced by the progress and merging of science and technology. The combination of new knowledge and the latest mechanical developments combine in the presence of the prepared mind to give rise to the technological turns that lead to the creation of “new media” (Mitchell & Hansen, 2010, pp.xv–xvi).

In developing a theoretical framework in which to expand this argument, I am drawn to the work of Stiegler and his thoughts on *originary technicity* and the exteriorisation of memory. By making a connection between snapshot photography and cave art, however outrageous it may have been, Eastman triggered a train of thought in my mind that prompted me to explore the fanciful connection further through the Hans Jonas’s concept of *Homo pictor*, *man the painter*, and the notion that the externalisation of memory and its repetition is not subject to the erosion of the internal memory. There are the writings of Jean-Luc Nancy and Leroi-Gourhan and their philosophical view of primitive mark making and cave art and its relationship

to hominization as the exteriorisation of the human in its tools. The work of these individuals is vital in the development by Stiegler of his concept of epiphylogenesis and the biotechnical evolution of technology (Derrida, 1993; Hildebrandt, 2012; Jonas, 1962; Leroi-Gourhan, 1993; Nancy, 1994; Stiegler, 1998).

2.4 The Snapshot, Desire and Social Construction

The emergence of snapshot photography as a popular social practice has to a great extent been taken for granted, but the reasons why we take snapshots is one of my principal research questions and by implication so is the reason for its continued popularity and technological development. I have already considered the discourse that supports the argument that there is an innate drive to externalise memory as images in relation to the theory of *originary technicity*. In this section, I strive to establish a link to another of Bernard Stiegler's philosophical views of the evolution of technologies, namely, industrialisation and institutionalisation. Arthur Bradley considers how the evolution of real time industries is influenced by the social and cultural impact.

In his book *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida*, Bradley considers Bernard Stiegler's view of capitalism and what Stiegler calls 'hyper-industrialisation'. Bradley's discussion is concerned with the institutionalisation effect of Real-Time industries like film and television, but the principles can just as well be applied to the industry that gave us snapshot photography. Stiegler is concerned by the industrialisation of time, memory and desire by the influences of contemporary capitalism (Bradley, 2011).

Eastman was in at the birth of the capitalist practices, described by Stiegler. I shall

argue that the globalised social practice of snapshot photography owes its ubiquity to what has been described as entrepreneurial institutionalisation and the commodification of desire to consume. Bernard Stiegler's papers "Pharmacology of Desire: Drive-based Capitalism and Libidinal Dis-economy" and Erich Hörl's paper, "Prosthesis of Desire: On Bernard Stiegler's New Critique of Protection" provide an overview of the concept of the desire to consume in a capitalist society and the understanding of desire in general. In a recent paper, Stiegler offers an interesting update on the notion of desire in relation to mass consumption and narcissism - a concept that will be also discussed in relation to social constructivism and the snapshot (Batchen, 1999; Belk et al., 2003; Hörl, 2014; Schroeder, 2015; Stiegler, 2011b).

I am tempted to view Stiegler's arguments in the light of our understanding of parietal art, the marks, drawing, and painting that have been discovered on rocks and the walls of caves that were made approximately forty million years ago and reflect the use of lithic and other mark making technologies. Today we have personal picture-making devices called smartphones that are used to record every facet of our lives as pictures. Although the purpose of parietal art is the subject of significant discourse, there is a broad consensus that the work is of ritualistic significance, playing an important part in the continuity of cultural life (Hyde, 2007, p.253). The associated ritual was thought to be shamanic, part of social renewal and remembering, (Eliade, 1996, p.361). The influences of the capitalist institutional culture on social behaviour can be seen as shamanic when viewed in terms of the control of libidinal desires and psychological manipulation; ostensibly for the greater good of social cohesion, cultural progress and maintenance of the collective memory.

A wide variety of writers have remarked on elements of snapshot photography that they consider contribute to the psycho-social fetishization of the practice. Catherine Zuromskis, Ann Marsh and Sontag describe ritual, repetition and performativity as properties of snapshot photography that compound the influence of the institutions in their appeal to the 'desire to photograph' as Batchen describes it (Batchen, 1999; Marsh, 2003; Sontag, 1979; Zuromskis, 2013).

The apparent simplicity of snapshot photography belies its underlying technical complexity and vulnerability to aesthetic blunders. Snapshot takers generally follow a procedure, established by, example, practice, subliminally acquired knowledge, and the *osmosis* of social convention. A ritual prescriptive performance learned by repetition and imitation, giving snapshot photography the characteristics and appeal of a ritualistic behaviour or performance. I recognise the ritualistic behaviour from the days when I was an altar boy. We performed the ritual by following a strict procedure that was learnt by example and repetition. Later as a wedding photographer, I followed a strict shooting list of poses and situations to ensure conformity. The process was both prescriptive and ritualistic.

A number of references are made to ritual, performance, and performativity in relation to snapshot photography. Barthes makes reference to photography being a performance when he described the pose as a performance that reminded him of

theatre and the *Tableaux Vivant*¹². The use of the term *Tableaux Vivant* could be said to embrace the essence of the snapshot, a moment of a performance frozen in time.

Barthes uses the term in recognition of the performance that accompanies the theatricality of striking the pose that is a feature of the quintessential snapshot. He acknowledges elsewhere the use of the term *Tableaux Vivant* in relation to the still image from a movie, being able to extract the whole diegesis of the film (Barthes, 1993b).

Barthes described photography as theatre, as did Ann Marsh, in her book *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire*. Marsh explores Jaques Lacan's Freudian notion that, "photography preserves the ancient desire to become Other" a totemistic way of explaining the primal desire that links mimesis with the primitive theatre of cave art, a notion consistent with the assertion that, snapshot photography is performative. A variety of writers borrow John Austin's linguistic term *performativity* and repurpose it to describe the gestural intentionality of the performance that is an intrinsic part of participating in the posing and taking of the snapshot by both the photographer and the referent (Austin, 1975; Barthes, 2010; Lacan & Wilden, 1968).

An important contribution to this study is the role played by George Eastman in the popularisation of photography and the invention of the snapshot photography.

¹² Living Picture - (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012)

Eastman was driven by the capitalist desire to simplify Fox-Talbot's technology of mark-making with light so that he could both enjoy the pleasures of photography without the need for the skills and facilities to undertake what was an otherwise complex process and to popularise it. He disrupted photographic technology by simplifying the processes involved in the creation, taking and printing of photographs and in doing so widened its appeal. Through a process of entrepreneurial institutionalisation Eastman promoted this simplified form of photography by exploiting the psycho-social factors that drive the desire, to consume, whilst promoting social conformity, ritual, and performance (Munir & Phillips, 2005, p.1672).

Eastman created a paradigm shift in social behaviour by the application of theories of social constructivism and commodification (Hand, 2012, p.26). The snapshot was conceived and photography was transformed from a gentleman's hobby and a middle-brow art into a universal social practice. In 1888 Eastman replaced the complexities of wet-plates¹³ with the *Kodak*, a camera preloaded with flexible film, sufficient for one hundred exposures, at a cost of twenty-five-dollars. The concept of simplified photography was promoted with the advertising slogan, "You press the button, we do the rest." In 1900, Eastman democratised photography by introducing the "Brownie", a camera marketed to children for one dollar, the snapshot was born

¹³ Wet Plates - The "collodion wet plate process", required the photographic material to be coated, sensitised, exposed and developed within the span of about fifteen minutes, necessitating a portable darkroom for use in the field.

and the Kodak culture became pervasive, ubiquitous and global (Olivier, 2007, p.1). The next hundred years was to see visual culture transformed by mass consumption and a libidinal economy fuelled by real-time technologies and the realisation of Stiegler's notion of the transmission of memories through the transmission of artefacts that encoded our memories as images as marks on a cave wall to ultimately traces on a screen (Stiegler & others, 2008).

This may be an over-simplification of what is an extensive and complex discourse. However, for the purposes of my argument, I feel it will suffice to support my contention that we take snapshot photographs to fulfil a primordial desire, the desire to remember and share our experiences. The ritualised performance is a subliminal aesthetic experience for the both the photographer and the referent (Parker & Sedgwick, 2013). The outcome, a photograph is, once taken, of similar temporality to the formation of a memory, almost subconscious, dismissed until confronted in the future, an image manifesting as a latent memory encoded as traces of the past awaiting cognitive reconstruction.

Linking the humble snapshot back to primal forms of representation, and suggesting that cave art and snapshot photography are a form of prosthetic or exteriorised memory, created with mnemonic mark-making technologies provides some of the scaffolding for the theoretical framework of this study. However, it does not explain why snapshot photography is so compulsive. Is there something about performance or the materiality of the snapshot that is important?

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Considering Methodologies

The complexity of the originary relationship between the human and the technological in relation to snapshot photography as a social practice demands a methodology that can consider not only the theoretical arguments but the phenomenological basis for the enquiry. Snapshot photography as both a technology and as a socio-cultural phenomenon embraces a wide field of research. The practice element of this research is, a form of enquiry, a source of inspiration and a means of visualising concepts: the relationship between practice and theory is flexible, each informs the other. For example the exploration of snapshot archives emphasised the ubiquitous, repetitious performance of snapshot photography whilst prompting consideration of concepts of ritual, intentionality and performativity and in turn the phatic nature of the practice.

The ubiquitous social practice of snapshot photography is a phenomenon that embraces a wide range of concepts from the technological to the material, and touches many aspects of the lived experience. It represents a major ethnographic turn within the evolution of humankind's visual culture. For these reasons the methodology employed in this study is multidisciplinary and draws on a wide and varied range of material from different fields of research.

The theoretical framework endeavours to provide a context for the argument, which addresses the research questions and supports the thesis statement. For example, in terms of practice, the focus of this thesis evolved significantly in the course of the study. The finding of the FDAS snapshot initiated an enquiry into the cognitive response to reading a photograph and the evoking of autobiographical memory. The finding of a second FDAS snapshot questioned the purpose and nature of snapshot photography.

As the enquiry developed topics were discovered and explored in both a serendipitous and logical manner, connections were made and disconnected. For example, the research triggered by the autobiographical cognitive response to the FDAS snapshot, led initially to an exploration of memory using Kuhn's hybrid qualitative analytical method of 'memory texts' as a means of deconstructing images in terms of real and imagined memories (Kuhn, 2010). This led to the consideration of other means of translating the visual, the embodied memories and the imagined, into a narrative. This resulted in the discovery of the rhetorical analytical device of 'ekphrasis'. There followed, an exploration of ekphrastic expression that led to a connection with poetry and the poetics of ekphrasis, a serendipitous development (Heffernan, 2004).

W.J.T Mitchell's notion of ekphrasis as a performance and in turn the performativity of ekphrasis in a contemporary mixed media context proves relevant as an approach to the development of the ekphrasis into a practice artefact, as described in Chapter 4 (Heuvel, 1993; W. J. T. Mitchell, 1994, p.151).

3.2 Choosing a Methodological Framework

The methodology needed to be capable of coping with an enquiry that was rhizomatous,¹⁴ pragmatic and serendipitous (Mumford & Honey, 1992). The enquiry starts with an artefact that forms the locus of a question, the search for the answer to the question, often leading, epistemically, to unexpected places and relationships, as the enquiry unfolds in an evolutionary and often unanticipated manner.

In the course of researching the issue of methodology, the work, *Being with A/r/tography*, was discovered, a collection of essays edited by Stephanie Springgay et al, offering a methodology dedicated to acts of living enquiry through the arts and writing (Springgay et al., 2007). The methodology was initially embraced by scholars who are artists, researchers and teachers or educators (A/R/T) but has since been adopted by a wider range of disciplines that are concerned with living enquiry (Irwin & Cosson, 2004; Irwin, 2013). Although not engaged in education *per se*, I am extending the definition to include - self-educator - an approach to education as both an autotelic¹⁵ and an autodidact.¹⁶ My practice is an embodied performance, a means of acquiring knowledge through practice (Gill, 2008). Although Gill is discussing the

¹⁴ Rhizomatous: Botanical term - a nodular root structure, which when divided, has the capability of producing a new plant from each node, can also be used to describe a non-hierarchical structure. In graph theory, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be" (Garter, 2016). Deleuze described the rhizome as an "image of thought" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

¹⁵ Autotelic: describes people who are internally driven, and as such may exhibit a sense of purpose, curiosity and sense of purpose. This determination is an exclusive difference from being externally driven, where things such as money or fame are the motivating force. Embraces the concept of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991)

¹⁶ Autodidact = A self-educated person.

subject of knowledge as embodied performance in relation to the contemporary notion of interactive technologies, the discussion is relevant to autodidacticism.

The essay entitled “The Rhizomatic Relations of A/r/tography” is particularly relevant (Irwin et al., 2007). The authors discuss Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s definition of the rhizome in a metaphorical context. They represent it as a network or map with a variable starting point but no beginnings or endings. In relation to theory and practice, theory, is no longer an abstract concept the authors suggest, but an embodied living inquiry, a means of theorising through inquiry, a process that involves an ‘evolution of questions’. The inquiries are “emergent, generative, reflexive and responsive” (de Cosson et al., 2007; Garter, 2016).

3.3 The Role of Practice

My practice is driven by my response to experiences and events. On this occasion, I was moved to react to the experience of finding the biographical snapshot and the curiosity of my cognitive response to it. The enquiry that developed resulted in an epistemic experience that brought together creative thought, the conception of artefacts and the generation of new knowledge through the transformative performance of writing as action research.

The practice element of this research is a form of enquiry, a source of inspiration and a means of visualising concepts in relation to theory: the relationship between practice and theory is flexible, each informs the other. For example the exploration of snapshot archives led me to consider what lay behind the ubiquitous, repetition that we associate with snapshot photography. This in turn led me to consider concepts of intentionality and performativity and ritual, from this I developed the notion of

snapshot photography as a phatic gesture and a form of social communication.

4 PRACTICE: SHADOWS ON THE WALL: RHIZOMATOUS THOUGHTS

4.1 Introduction

The story starts in 1949 or was it 52 or 53, whatever the year was that my father took a snapshot of me in my school uniform one sunny day. Some years later my mother lovingly curated the snapshot and stuck it in a family photograph album, on a page along with other snapshots of me, and interestingly, an almost identical snapshot of my son, also in school uniform.

The photographs in this album are not your typical snapshots that were glanced at once and resigned to a shoe box at the back of the wardrobe. They have been lovingly considered and memorialised. Enshrined in these photographs are the cherished memories of the photographer, the compiler and the referents; the texts carefully appended to them are a testimony to this.

Who can imagine the memories that were evoked as my mother sifted through the shoeboxes and envelopes of snapshots and negatives, as she selected and sorted a treasure of simple objects that carry within them emotions and memories? Treasured pieces of paper bearing the facsimile of people, a person, an event, a place; recalling forgotten memories and occasionally despairing as a memory failed to materialise,

having faded into a pastness of forgetting. This was not just a family album but an autobiographical compilation of memories, or as Langford puts it, a work of individual authorship, an album carefully compiled thematically, not chronologically like most photo albums, it was an anthology of my mother's life (Langford, 2006, p.223).

What I have described here is a gallery of memories interwoven by threads of remembering and forgetting with words, names and dates and empty spaces. My mother's memories, my memories and those of others; some memories will be vivid, others less clear, many unclear or forgotten, even with the benefit of the snapshots and the words as an aide memoire.

Family photograph albums and the practice of archiving represent an important thread in the discourse relating to the snapshot photograph and its metaphorical relationship with memory. The archiving of analogue photographs in family albums required a concerted effort on the part of the compiler to arrange and annotate an album particularly in a thematic format.

It is tempting to suggest that finding of two almost identical snapshots, even though they are separated in time by twenty years, in a family photograph album was a coincidence. But that is surely a major characteristic of snapshot photography; they are part of the collective memory that stretches back to the origins of our species. Each new generation wishes to remember the same events and occasions as those

who went before; at least in the photographic era¹⁷. Repetition of intention is a primary characteristic of *snapshottedness*.

Examination of any family photograph album will reveal evidence of repetition of occasions, poses, places and events. Family photographs are repetitious and are not visually innovative, suggests Gillian Rose (Rose, 2010, p.11). Similarly, Chalfen writes, “all family albums are alike [...] they have an overwhelming sense of similarity and redundancy” (Chalfen, 1987, p.47). Batchen considers family albums, “cloyingly sentimental in content and repetitively uncreative as pictures” (Batchen, 2008, p.123). These authors all support the notion that the subject matter of most snapshots is repetitious and unimaginative and that family photograph albums contain remarkably similar photographs, but none really answers the question why this should be.

It is interesting that my mother should have chosen to place the two “first day at school” snapshots next to each other, thus providing evidence to support the conjecture of Rose and others, that snapshots are repetitious and unimaginative. The snapshots my father and I took, would seem follow the perceived traditions of snapshot photography. In placing these two snapshots near to each other, I suspect, my mother’s motives were innocent of any deeper consideration than the obvious

¹⁷ For practical purposes the analogue, film or photographic era extended until the early 1990’s when consumer digital cameras made an appearance. The first digital camera sold was the Fuji DS-X December 1989 in Japan (van Hall, 2015)

visual coincidence and similarity of the photographs.

4.2 Thinking Practice

Having found the two snapshots, what next? My initial interest was in the FDAS biographical snapshot of me and the autobiographical memories it evoked. That was the starting point for the practice element of this study. I do very little planning for my practice, projects develop organically; one idea sparking off another. As mentioned previously the process is rhizomatous and often serendipitous.

Conceptually, this project was like embarking upon a Lewis Carroll adventure. Just as Alice stepped through the Looking Glass, I stepped through my photograph into another world. I was on a journey; both telling and participating in a story. The task was how to visualise the cognitive response of remembering and forgetting, both issues Alice had in her adventures.

I started by writing down as much as I could remember about the memories that were pouring out of the snapshot. As Alice discovered, the curious thing was, the memories were not of the moment the shutter clicked, they were not memories of the occasion but memories about the place and what I could see through the 'Looking Glass' of the snapshot. As I scribbled down the memories, each one led to another. I arranged them as a mind map; this gave me a structure from which to start exploring what was going on, see **Figure 1**: Drawing of Mind Map.

Each element of the snapshot triggered a memory, my cap, the gabardine coat, the light coloured short pants, my shoes, the book under my arm, the coal shed in next door's garden, it was endless. The image was visually deconstructed into its component parts as each element evoked a different memory. The deconstruction

that was taking place in my imagination each visualising the fragments of memory inspired me to write a poem. Although I did not realise it yet this was my introduction to the art of 'ekphrasis.'

But I do not write poetry; that is not quite correct I was not in the habit of writing poetry. Poetry writing, something I felt incapable of was another serendipitous experience. During the research for my Master's thesis I was prompted, for the first time, to write a poem; since when I have written poetry regularly, as the moment inspires me. On this occasion the fragments of memory inspired me. The words and further analysis are presented in Section 4.3.

Narrating the poem prompted the idea for an audiovisual piece. The deconstructed elements of the snapshot were compiled into a short animation and a narration of the poem was added as an audio track. Reflecting on the finished piece I realised what an important part the voice plays in emphasising the autobiographical nature of the work.

In a contextual sense, the relationship between photographs and poetry is a popular trope. Since writing this poem I have discovered that ekphrastic poetry is a popular genre of contemporary poetry. Contextually, I have found few artists who combine the photograph with ekphrasis. Belatedly, I discovered the PhD thesis of Justin Coombes, "Photography, Memory and Ekphrasis," Coombes also found little in the way of literature that focused on the relationship between photographs and ekphrasis. His study was concerned mainly with the history of ekphrasis in contemporary fine art. In his personal practice, he aimed to establish a relationship between photography, text and memory (Coombes, 2012).

Andrew Miller in his book *Poetry, Photography, Ekphrasis: Lyrical Representations of Photographs from the 19th Century to the Present*, offers a contemporary view of ekphrasis. Chapter two, *The Snapshot Elegy*, is of particular interest. Here Miller discusses the role photographs play in three poems by Thomas Hardy, Ivor Gurney and Philip Larkin. Miller is particularly concerned with ekphrasis in the context of elegy and mourning, despite this Miller offers an interesting commentary in relation to Proustian views of both Barthes and Benjamin's referencing of photography and particularly the snapshot (Miller, 2015, p.70).

Interestingly Miller comments on the poetry of Carroll and in particular "Hiawatha's Photographing" a serendipitous discovery with uncanny significance to both my interest in ekphrasis and the subject of photography. The discovery of this poem is again an example of the rhizomatous nature of this enquiry. Not only had I been unaware of the poem before encountering Andrew Miller's book, I was amazed by the similarity between Carroll's poem and a poem I had written about my father taking the FDAS snapshot and which, until this moment, I had not considered including in this thesis. Not that I draw any comparisons between my poetry writing abilities and those of Carroll's (Carroll, 2014). See Appendix 3 - **Poem 2** - First Day at School.

The term ekphrasis has come to mean something different from that implied by its original usage. This poem embraces the contemporary use of the device as a means of expressing the visible, the real, and the imagined.

I am reminded of the work of the artist Tacita Dean, particularly her photo book *Floh*, in which she ironically preserves the notion the ephemeral snapshot as a

representation of analogue photography through photographs found in Flea Markets all over Europe. The book is devoid of words (Ridgewell, 2001). It seems Dean wanted the images to speak for themselves. Snapshots have grammatology of their own, such is the familiarity of their *snapshotedness*, we each append our own narrative to a snapshot even if it is not one with which we are associated. The quotation, 'A picture is a poem without words,' is of uncertain origin but seems an appropriate summary of this piece of work and of snapshots generally.¹⁸ Mark Godfrey offers a critique of Dean's work summing it up with a quotation from Tacita Dean herself, from an interview with the author:

Photography is somehow an anachronism now. It's disappearing while we talk. We are going to lose it soon and we are going to replace it with something that is still images but something very, very different [...] "Photography: to draw in light." It's not that anymore, it's electronic. -Tacita Dean

Deans words are a reminder that photography and the snapshot are part of a continuum of technological evolution and just as the primal 'Selfie', the handprint on the cave wall, the snapshot of its time, was supplanted by the photographic snapshot, so the snapshot has been supplanted by its contemporary equivalent, the smartphone 'Selfie'. That is an enquiry yet to be pursued.

Earlier conceptual and contextual connections were made between Alice's confrontation with the *Looking Glass* and the use of mirror as a metaphor for the photograph. An interesting usage of mirrors in the pre-history of photography was

¹⁸ The quotation is variously attributed to either – Horace (Roman, Latin poet 65 – 8 BCE) or Confucius (Addison & Steele, 1711)

their use as viewing devices. The *Claude Glass* was a small black mirror with a slightly convex surface. The glass was bound in a carrying case and used by artists, travellers and others to view landscapes. The glass both framed and reflected the view at the same time simplifying the colours of the scene to an almost monotone, so creating a picturesque aesthetic. They have been described as pre-photographic lenses. The *Claude Glass* is thought to be named after the seventeenth-century landscape painter Claude Lorrain (Anon, 2016b).

In one of those serendipitous moments, at a late stage of the research, I discovered that Fox-Talbot had made use of the *Claude Glass* as a viewing and framing aid along with the Camera Lucida and the Camera Obscura. Fox-Talbot was a prolific writer of poetry; the first poem, in his first published collection, *Legendary Tales in Verse and Prose* was "The Magic Mirror." The poem includes reflections [sic] on his use of a *Claude Glass* (Talbot, 2011, pp.1–20).

Alice's adventures both through the *Looking-Glass* and in *Wonderland* contain numerous references to memory. In his paper "Memory in the Alice Books", Lionel Morton explores the subject in detail. In Alice's stories memory is often about "a means of possessing and preserving something desired" although memories are not always pleasant and frequently confused, as memories can be. The White Queen is gifted with the ability to remember the past and the future in contrast to the snapshot which remembers the now, the today. The White Queen has a saying that illustrates her temporal dilemma, "Jam tomorrow, jam yesterday - but never *to-day*." In contrast, the Red Queen has an infallible and powerful memory. Alice has problems with memory; she cannot remember poems or her lessons. She is confused by time.

Moreton reminds us that she cannot remember who she is. She cannot remember her past. As she says to the Caterpillar, “I can’t explain myself. I’m afraid, Sir ... because I am not myself you see” (Morton, 1978). Carroll’s interest in memory has been discussed in a variety of contexts from anorexia to dementia and the negative influences of consumer culture (Mavor, 2008). The Mad Hatter exhibits evidence of forgetfulness and dementia, symptoms of suggestive of Mercury poisoning, a problem not uncommon in the millinery industry, and known as “Mad Hatters Disease.

How does my exploration of Alice in relation to the snapshot and the FDAS snapshot” help my enquiry? The British Museum, in March 2016 held a special event, “Alice/Ekphrasis: An evening of poetry inspired by Alice in Wonderland” at which selected poets read poems they had created to celebrate Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland. The museum described the event, thus

An ekphrasis is any work of art inspired or written in response to another work of art. The word is most frequently used about poetry written in response to a painting or a text and perhaps the most celebrated example is John Keats’ *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

Ekphrasis was created to provide a bridge between modern poetry and thought-provoking exhibitions so that members of the public can engage with both poetry and the visual in new and unexpected ways. (British Museum, 2016)

The practical challenge of this study was how to record, translate and visualise the cognitive experience of viewing the original FDAS snapshot in terms of practice. One of the most important ways of deconstructing photographs in relation to memory is by personal testimony. Actors in this area of research include Langford, Hirsch and Kuhn.

Langford’s research with archived family albums and photographs demonstrated

that memories were not embedded or represented in photographs they have to be revived in a performance of remembering to keep them alive. As Langford points out, “photo albums are not intended to inform strangers but to act as mnemonic clues for the people involved at different stages - from taking the photographs to posing for them, to compiling the albums, to showing them to visitors” (Langford, 2001) With albums that are detached from the contexts that gave them an emotional and social significance, the conversations are suspended (Di Bello, 2010). Langford’s methodology is more appropriate for the interrogation of photographs in the absence of interested parties.

Hirsch is concerned by ‘post-memories’, a term she coined when working with the personal testimony of the memories of parents who were survivors of the Holocaust when passing on memories to their children (Hirsch, 1997). For reasons similar to those expressed in respect of Langford’s methodology, Hirsch’s approach to memory analysis is not appropriate for my purpose.

As I have described elsewhere there was Kuhn’s hybrid analytical frameworks of memory works and memory texts used to elicit memories from photographs.

Following Kuhn’s methodology, I created a memory text; a copy of this is available in **Appendix 1 - Memory Text 1** together with a discussion of the process. But being rather formulaic, I felt the technique resulted in significant detail but lacked spontaneity. The text was that of an observer rather than a participant, not the effect I was looking for.

It was from these ideas that I discovered the rhetorical device of **ekphrasis** developed by the ancient Greeks for the description of a work of art often in an oral manner.

Ekphrasis was undertaken with the intention of better understanding the work of art. My intention, in this case, would be to better understand the photograph and my cognitive response to it as prosthetic memory.

I experimented with the idea of an ekphrasis. This resulted in a more spontaneous and imaginative response to the photograph. A copy of the text is shown in

Appendix 2 – Performative Ekphrasis. The ekphrastic narrative was more like a story, more like Alice stepping into the mirror. It was the story of the experience as well as a reprise of the memories, much more like the actual cognitive experience, that I recall from that first encounter with the snapshot.

There are interesting comparisons to be drawn between the ekphrasis of an image and the image itself, the snapshot. I chose to produce a performative ekphrasis.

Having created my ekphrasis from the photograph as a text I created an oral presentation to camera. The video was then processed and every tenth frame extracted. These frames represented snapshots of the performance; I recompiled the frames into a new video to fit the duration of the audio track.

Having created the video from the ekphrastic snapshots I was inspired to repeat the exercise in reverse using the original FDAS snapshot. The image was dissected or if preferred deconstructed, by isolating the elements I had identified in the poem as triggers for memory: the coal-shed, the house next door, my cap and so on. The poem was narrated, recorded and used as the audio track for an animation of the reconstruction of the snapshot as the memory fragments were remembered and visually reassembled. The poem is called *Fragments of Memory* and the animation is similarly titled – see **Poem 1 - Fragments of Memory.**

An outcome of the exercise was the consideration of the negative space left by the removal of the various elements, as fragments of memory and how, in what manner and in which order to recompiled them, as variations could result in a different interpretation of the embedded memory or memories. I discuss the potential relationship between negative space and aspects of memory in the next section.

As an illustration of how ekphrasis works, Mitchel offers an analogy of the pictures that form in our minds when listening to drama or a story on the radio. He used the example of an American radio show but another source is attributed to the broadcaster Alistair Cooke who reported the words of a seven-year-old school boy who when asked, in the early days of television, which did he prefer radio or television, replied, "radio, because the pictures are better" (William John Thomas Mitchell, 1994; Wasko, 2005).

So far I have not discussed the second 'first day at school' snapshot, the one of my son. It was the finding of this identical snapshot that raised the notion of repetition as a characteristic of snapshot photography. This led a search for other similar snapshots, and the discovery of the Belle Vale Prefab Project photograph archive. As discussed elsewhere, the archive contained many similar snapshots of children posing for various reasons outside Prefabs. From this, it decided to explore the idea of repetition further. A collection of repetitious snapshots was made. The initial intention was to reproduce the snapshots in original size and to display them as an album. For ethical reasons it was decided to anonymise the images. Initially, the subjects were blurred. As an alternative option the subjects were cut out as had been done in the case of the FDAS snapshot. This left a white negative shape, which served

two purposes. The white space emphasised the repetitive nature of the image. The negative space could be considered as an allegory for memory, or as a metaphor for forgetting. Similarly the unaltered images could be considered as a metaphor for remembering. There was also the potential link to the positive and negative aboriginal handprints and stencils. The effect of the negative space is uncanny; the meaning for the viewer is uncertainty. But a link has been forged between primal concept of the snapshot, the handprint and its contemporary manifestation, the snapshot photograph.

In the next section the concept is explored further in visual terms as an installation, the images to be displayed at their original size. There are seventy-three of them - one for each year of my life, snapshots that provoke memories of a place that is remembered, and of occasions, which are familiar but have been forgotten. Each picture is testimony to the social ritual of snapshot photography and, as will be argued later, symbolise the desire to remember and the fear of forgetting.

Another part of the conceptual framework is the Camera Obscura and its originary concept as a dark room. As discussed in detail elsewhere the Camera Obscura in its most primitive form was in use for nearly a thousand years before it became part of the technology that gave rise to the invention of photography. When fitted with a lens the Camera Obscura influenced the way in which the world was seen. It became implicated in the controversy surrounding the *optical look* that crept into early Renaissance art and known as the Hockney–Falco thesis (Hockney, 2001). The thesis posits the hypothesis that around the time of the early Renaissance a realism, described as the *optical look*, became evident in art, and was due to the use of optical

devices including the Camera Obscura, lenses and concave mirrors.

The optical look with rigid adherence to the geometry of perspective and the mediation of the image by technological artefact also intrigued Fox Talbots. This is reflected in his writings about how his use of the Camera Obscura as a viewing device, encouraged him to devise a photographic process, as discussed later.

The originary concept of the Camera Obscura (Dark Room) was intriguing, originally conceived as a full-size room in which the projected image filled all the surfaces. It was used as a drawing aid, an astronomical viewing device, particularly as a means of viewing solar activity, also a source of phantasmagoria. Ann Marsh describes the Camera Obscura as the theatre of desire: a theatrical space in which the surreal cinematic effect of the moving world is captured, where time is stopped and converted into a memory of the moment. Marsh recognises Barthes notion of photography as 'primitive theatre' in which both the photographer and the referent are engaged in a performance of picture making. "It is the being-there in the moment the shutter snaps that convinces us that the subject/object is real," Marsh suggests, our desire is a recreation of the real (Marsh, 2003, p.20).

To portray the Camera Obscure's history as a viewing device and its originary connection with snapshot photography, I manufactured a primitive facsimile of a portable Camera Obscura device, slightly larger than the equipment used by Fox-Talbot. The camera is used in an installation that conceptualises Fox-Talbot's experience of viewing through a Camera Obscura by using the equipment to view an enlarged version of the FDAS snapshot (100cm sq). The viewer sees the snapshot as an image visualised on a ground glass screen of the Camera Obscura. See **Figure 14** -

View of Camera Obscura Screen. In a crude manner the viewer becomes aware of the effect of technological mediation of the original image. Not the realistic representation of the truth we expect of even a snapshot photograph. The image is inverted, not very sharp, with a pronounced vignette from the simple lens, quite unlike the reality of the scene being viewed more like old faded memories of the distant past.

I experimented with the notion of the projected image from a Camera Obscura as the *originary technicity* of photography. I planned to represent this notion by projecting an image of the outside onto the inside of a room.

Practice also explores the concept of the photographic camera evolving from the technology of the Camera Obscura in a contemporary context with the construction of a Camera Obscura that utilises a smartphone as a metaphor for the transition to a photographic technology, see **Figure 15: - iCamera Obscura**.

I further explore the originary role of the Camera Obscura as a framing and mediation device, a reflection on Henry Fox Talbot's seminal moment of inspiration for the pencil of light with the mock-up of a Camera Obscura. See the visualisation for an exhibition installation - Figure 13 - Mock-up of Exhibition with Custom built Camera Obscura (proof of concept only)

Reflecting on the earlier reference to Alice and her various adventures it is interesting

to note that the original books were published after the invention of photography and around the time the new medium was enjoying rising popularity as a middle-class pastime. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in 1865 and her *Looking Glass* exploits in 1871. Dodgson¹⁹ was an avid and well-known photographer; he was a user of the complex wet collodion process and made his own albumin prints.

4.3 Fragments of Memory – Negative Spaces

When I looked at the small square black and white snapshot of me standing alongside the Prefab in my school uniform with my book under my arm and the shadows cast on the wall, my mind was flooded with memories. I saw the snapshot as a collection of memories the ones I could see in the picture; next door's coal shed, we had one as well; the neighbour's Prefab, he delivered coal for a living; the bricks along the edge of the path, my father had carefully arranged in a herringbone pattern around the whole garden; the shadows on the wall, of him and me. Each piece was cut from the photograph as a separate memory and reassembled them as a poem – "Fragments of memory."

¹⁹ Lewis Carroll aka Charles Lutwidge Dodgson

Poem 1 - Fragments of Memory

Standing still
A special day
The place I know
The path beside the house
The coal shed
The house next door
Me, my face, my hands
My legs, my shoes
My book, my cap
The gabardine raincoat
Keeps me warm and dry
Me, ready for school
The path, the bricks along the edge
The shadows, heavy on the wall
Me, my dad, together
I remember the place
But not the day

Video URL on YouTube - <https://youtu.be/NktfXbRdWas>



Figure 5 - Deconstructed FDAS snapshot for animation

We know that memories are stored as fragments; it is only when they are recalled that we try to reassemble them to reflect the original memory (Linton, 1988, p.50). But occasionally, when we remember not all the fragments are found and the memory is incomplete. In the installation version the short video runs in a loop, the soundtrack is sonorous and sombre and shows the snapshot being recompiled from the

fragments of memory as a memory.

The poem is a reflection of how I responded to the snapshot and the sequence in which the memories appeared, the coal shed and the house next door I finish with just a negative space where I was standing. What connotation can be placed on this negative space? Can it be considered as absence? The negative space is reminiscent of the hand shape stencils on the walls of the Chauvet and other caves. The handprints are present in both positive and significantly negative forms.

Hand stencilling is still practiced by contemporary Australian Aboriginals where both positive and negative shapes occur (McDonald & Clayton, 2016, p.11). Positive shapes are described as prints and negative shapes as stencils. Negative stencils tend to be found in larger numbers at most sites. It is generally considered that stencilling is part of a planned ritual act rather than a random activity. Often a stencil will be associated with a feature on the cave wall, a raised or depressed area being common presentations. Locations vary from the convenient to the virtually inaccessible. There does not appear to be any established understanding of the significance for the choice of either a print or stencil or an understanding of their individual symbolism. It is believed that in some locations the stencil form was created by blowing diluted pigment, sucked up from a large mollusc shell and blown out through a hollow avian leg bone. Recreations of the process recognised that whistling noises were made by the process of blowing and light-headedness induced, may have some mystical and or magical connotation but that is speculation. Significant research in this area has been undertaken by a team from Durham University, department of Archaeology led by Professor Paul Pettitt (Pettitt et al., 2016; Pike et al., 2012). From a contextual stand

point the handprint is the oldest recognised symbol and its occurrence spans millennia, hand imagery is a connection that links the past with the present (Powell, 1997, pp.516–533)

4.4 Memory - Maps, Texts and Ekphrasis

The response to memory has been discussed earlier in the chapter. Here I concentrate upon how those nebulous thoughts were condensed into a number of visualisations.

As stated in the previous section the FDAS snapshot prompted a vivid recall of the place where the snapshot was taken and of related memories but I could not remember the photograph being taken. The flow of memories that emanated from the biographical snapshot were captured in a memory diary in the style of a “mind map” to collate fragments of memory as visual and textual references capturing the thoughts in a tangible form.

Secondly, I was looking for a means of visualising the process of reflective thinking and memory generation. Of the various methods available for this process I chose to explore in the first instance Kuhn’s concept of memory texts. These techniques convert the latent memories triggered by sight of the snapshot into a combination of narrative and images for a performative ekphrasis and for further consideration.

It is my intention, as an artist, to consider the manner in which these narratives may relate to autobiographical memory and to the performative act of seeing, remembering and forgetting. A memory narrative was created using Kuhn’s analytical technique of ‘Memory Texts’ used to generate memories from, what she describes as a performance of memory (Kuhn, 2010; Kuhn, 2007; McAllister & Kuhn, 2006).

As the practice project progresses I am increasingly aware of the importance of the album in what I want to say. I am struck by the importance of the words in the album and their relationship to photographs. How does one convey both the ontology and the phenomenology of this personal archive, a compilation of remembering, forgetting and imagination combining the visual with the textual? Just as the original compilation was an act of ekphrasis. A performative ekphrasis seems like the perfect medium for the purpose.

4.5 Repetition: The Handprints on the Wall

I am starting to think of snapshots and memory in terms of their possible primal ancestry and the first snapshots, the parietal handprints found on the walls and ceilings of Palaeolithic caves. Not only could these forty-thousand-year-old handprints be seen as allegorical manifestations of the snapshot or even the contemporary form of the snapshot the “Selfie” but they come in both positive and negative forms and often appear in profusion, they could be seen as allegorical representations of remembering and forgetting and the repetition we associate with snapshots (Fichnová et al., 2015). But most of all they predict the repetitious nature of the snapshot and the endless repletion of snapshot motifs by each generation of snapshot photographers.

The proposition is supported by the image of forty-thousand-year-old parietal handprints from the walls of a cave in South America, but they could have just as easily been handprints on the walls of caves from anywhere in the world from Europe to Borneo. The family album of their day the cave walls inspired the thoughts that developed around the many repetitious snapshots I discovered in the Belle Vale

Prefab Project archive.



Figure 6 -Human Handprints ~40K years old Cuevas de las Manos upon Rio Pinturas, Argentina.

Having collected quite a number of very similar snapshots I was concerned about the ethics of using them as part of a public exhibition installation, so I set about anonymising the images by removing the human elements. This left a recognisable negative space. First I was inspired by how this emphasised the notion of repetition and elements of the snapshot such as pose, technical flaws such as amputation of feet. But the negative spaces unexpectedly triggered off a train of thought that made a connection between the negative space and the idea of forgotten memories; again one of those serendipitous moments of rhizomatous thinking. To conceptualise the allegorical relationship of the multiple handprints with snapshots and the notion of

the positive and the negative spaces as remembering and forgetting the snapshots are visualised as a spread of images over the a wall, the wall representing both the cave wall and the pages of a photograph album.

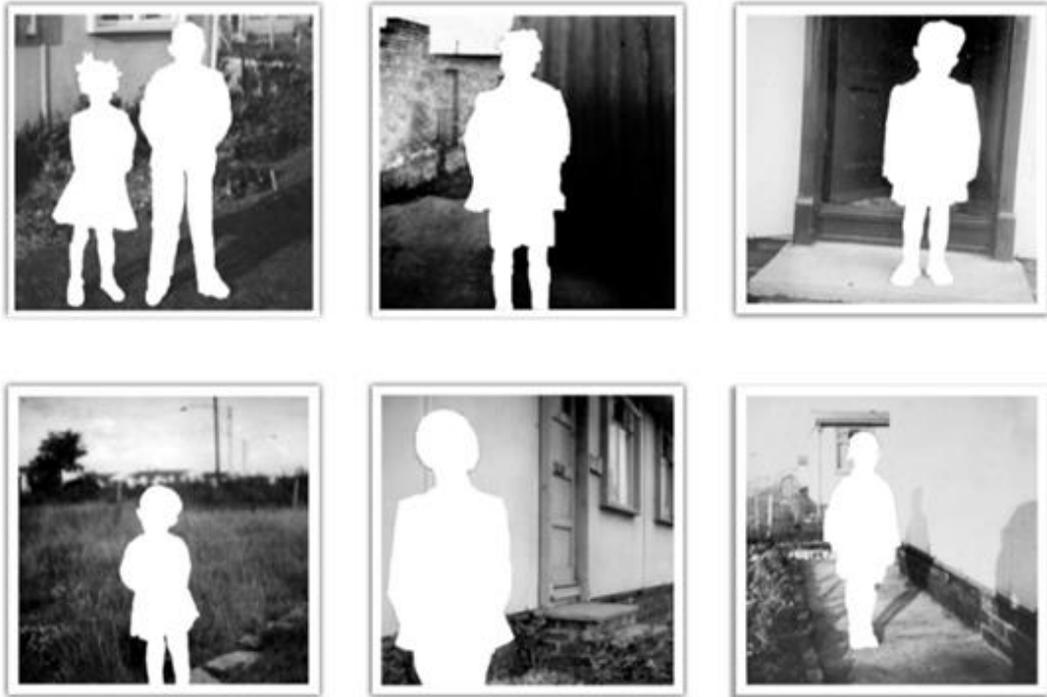


Figure 7 - Snapshots - Negative Space Cut-outs - Examples



Figure 8 - Display of Snapshots and Negative Cut-outs.

5 A BRIEF HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In the previous chapter, I have explored the idea that memories can be preserved and temporalized by the use of primitive mark-making technologies. It was argued that photography is a mark-making technology, and the notion was introduced that the snapshot could be considered the quintessential prosthetic memory as a socially constructed technology.

It is important to consider the history of photography in this study, to understand how evolutionary influences paved the way for the coming together of science, technology, social circumstances and the culture of *originary technicity* in a constructed determinism that allowed the prepared mind to crystallize the new multifactorial composite of photography.

The paradox of photography's birth has exercised a number of writers who have sort to unravel the conundrum of why photography emerged when it did. The science and technologies that eventually coalesced to become photography had been in existence or known about for many years before their eventual amalgamation.

Helmut Gernsheim in *The Origins of Photography* describes the invention of photography as "the greatest mystery in history," given the various developments that had been made and documented during the 17th and 18th centuries, " why

[then] was the fixation of images created with light not seen earlier" (Gernsheim, 1983, p.6). "Why 1939", asks Batchen? "We asked not who discovered photography but at what moment in history did the discursive *desire to photograph* emerge" (Batchen, 1999, p.24).

Batchen reminds us that it was Derrida who suggested that historians rather than debating the philosophical question "what is photography" should ask the question "where and when did photography begin" (Batchen, 2002, p.3)? In trying to answer Derrida's question Batchen considers Foucault's discursive approach to history by seeking clues to the answer through asking further questions.

At what moment in history did the discursive desire to photograph emerge and begin to manifest itself insistently? At what moment did photography shift from an occasional, isolated, individual fantasy, to a demonstrably widespread, social imperative? When, in other words, did evidence of the desire to photograph begin to appear with sufficient regularity and internal consistency to be described, in Foucault's terms as a discursive practice?(Batchen, 1999, p.53)

It was Louis Pasteur 1822 – 1895 who said, "[...]chance favours only the prepared mind." Minds such as those of Fox-Talbot and John Fredrick William Herschel who were concurrently working on similar versions of a chemical process for both visualising and fixing images created with light on paper.

Batchen advises that at the time of the public announcement of a viable photographic process, there were at least twenty proto-photographers working towards the invention of a photographic process. The principal participants on this journey of discovery were, Thomas Wedgwood, the son of the potter Josiah Wedgwood who was experimenting with a photographic process as early as 1790 in collaboration with James Watt and Humphrey Davey, Nicéphore Niépce, a French inventor and lithographer, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, the French artist and physicist, in

addition to Englishman Fox-Talbot, polymath, mathematician, microscopist and amateur artist and Fox-Talbot's close friend John Herschel, English polymath, mathematician, astronomer, chemist, inventor and botanist (Batchen, 1999).

5.1 1839 and all that

Batchen describes the discovery of photography as an originary event in what is otherwise a rather poorly reported mishmash of events and accidents that were brought into focus on 7th January 1839, the date on which the invention of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's Daguerreotype process was announced to the world. The technology of mark-making with light, that would be called photography, was born; a technology that would prove to be, one of the most culturally significant inventions.

In contextual terms, photography emerged from the unification of the science and technology of the enlightenment²⁰. Photography materialised as the industrial revolution was booming and numerous other *real-time* technologies or as Charlie Gere refers to them, systems, were emerging, the steam locomotive²¹, telegraphy²², the fax (facsimile) machine²³, the typewriter, the phonograph²⁴, an international postal system and the introduction of Roland Hills 'Penny Post'. The term 'real-time

²⁰ Enlightenment: the period in the history of western thought and culture, stretching roughly from the mid-decades of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century.

²¹ Stephenson's Rocket 1829, was considered the prototype for modern steam locomotives.

²² The invention and patenting of the electric telegraph is attributed to Samuel Morse in 1837.

²³ Alexander Bain is credited with inventing the first technology to send an image over a wire using an experimental fax machine between 1843 and 1846.

²⁴ Experiments began around 1807 with Edison patenting his version in 1877.

systems' refers to the information, telecommunication and (multi) media technologies that have come to play an increasingly important part in our lives, at least in the so-called 'developed' countries (Gere, 2006, p.1).

The intellectual landscape was ripe for a major technological turn to occur. The innovation of photography is seen by some as the logical progression of the growing practice of representation in Western art, the history of which goes back to the Renaissance. In aesthetic terms, photography is the culmination of a search for the ultimate medium, for a representative realism (Batchen, 1999).

As observed by Perter Galassi and often overlooked in the discourse on the history of photography, is the important part played by the *originary technologies* of optics and chemistry (Galassi, 1981a). Photography represents the eventual emergence of a viable amalgam of existing technologies which had hitherto been disconnected. The photochemical properties of silver salts, asphalt, and certain natural resins substances were known in the eighteenth century.

The earliest known reference to allude to a photographic process is attributed to Charles-François Tiphaigne de la Roche in a passage from the novel *Giphantie*:

You know, that rays of light reflected from different bodies form pictures, paint the image reflected on all polished surfaces, for example, on the retina of the eye, on water, and on glass...coat a piece of canvas with this matter, and place it in front of the object to be taken. The first effect of this cloth is similar to that of a mirror, but by means of its viscous nature the prepared canvas...retains a facsimile of the image...The canvas is then removed and deposited in a dark place. An hour later the impression is dry, and you have a picture (Tiphaigne de La Roche, 1760)

Galassi identified the increasing popularity of the Camera Obscura and the proliferation of other mechanical aids to drawing together with the search for methods of pictorial reproduction, such as the work of Thomas Wedgwood and

Humphry Davy who experimented with “photographic” processes around 1790. They were seeking a means of reproducing the repetitive fine patterns and motifs used in the decoration of pottery and porcelain, currently drawn by hand. It is known that they were aware of the work of Swedish pharmaceutical chemist Carl Wilhelm Scheele, and Jean Senebier, a Swiss pastor, and botanist who had both recognised the darkening properties of silver chloride in the early 1700’s. In the 1720’s German physicist and medical professor Johann Heinrich Schulze developed a party trick of using stencils to produce the names of friends by the darkening of a mixture of chalk and silver chloride in a glass bottle.

Galassi recognises rather than being the product of a flash of inspiration, photography was the product of shared traditions and aspirations, social and artistic as well as scientific (Galassi, 1981b, p.12). The Enlightenment was a time of the proliferation and sharing of scientific knowledge often for frivolous and entertaining purposes.

The principals of the Camera Obscura had been known for millennia and at this time was a popular optical accessory in a wide range of contexts, not least as a personal portable viewing device among the wealthy and technically curious. I shall expand on its role in the emergence of photography in the next section.

As an example of networking and collaboration that contributed to the dissemination of knowledge at this time is portrayed in Joseph Wright of Derby’s painting “A

Philosopher Giving a Lecture at the Orrery", it was heralded as an example of the influence of the Enlightenment on visual depiction and of the Freemasonry²⁵ of those involved, Abram Fox wrote:

The provincial English painter Joseph Wright of Derby became the unofficial artist of the Enlightenment, depicting scientists and philosophers in ways previously reserved for Biblical heroes and Greek gods (Fox, 2016).



Figure 9 – A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery by Joseph Wright of Derby ca 1766 - Derby Museum and Art Gallery

The work of Joseph Wright of Derby and his Orrery painting, in particular,

²⁵ I use the word Freemasonry to convey the organised nature of the relationship of many intellectuals and like-minded people and the sharing of common beliefs and principles signified by their association through the Lunar Society, a dinner club based in Birmingham (Wenban-Smith, 2016).

symbolises changes that were taking place. Not only does the painting have an uncanny photo-realistic visuality, those depicted in the painting were members of the Lunar Society of Birmingham, an informal learned society of industrialists, philosophers, and intellectuals who met between 1765 and 1813. It included attendees with both direct and indirect associations with the proto-photography movement, including, James Watt, Mathew Bolton., Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood, and Thomas Wedgwood; there were direct and indirect links to Humphry Davy, David Brewster, Fox-Talbot and other early experimenters, as Batchen identifies in *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Batchen, 1999, p.228).

Some of these contacts are identified as early as 1790, in a letter from James Watt to Thomas Wedgwood; “Dear Sir, I thank you for your instructions as to the Silver Pictures, about which, when at home, I will make some experiments [...].” One of the predominant unifying interests between the British proto-photographers was an interest in optics, including microscopes, the astronomical telescopes and optical drawing aids such as the Camera Lucida and the Camera Obscura (Batchen, 1993, pp.172–183).

The development of a photographic process was something of a paradox. Delacroix may have seen it as a replacement for painting but those involved in its advance, despite having a variety of artistic aspirations, saw the fixing of an image created by using a Camera Obscura, as the practical solution to a practical problem of mimesis, there appears to be little consideration of the aesthetic potential of the process as an art medium. Even Daguerre, who was possibly the most prolific artist of the proto-

photographers, was looking for a mimetic reproduction process. To understand the nature of this paradox one only has to consider the reasons why the various proto-photographers were interested in inventing photography. The simple answer would be that most, if not all, were looking for a way to automate the process of drawing as a means of copying, with the possible exception of Fox-Talbot who was searching not only for a mimetic technology but a means of remembering what he had seen.

5.2 William Henry Fox-Talbot

My interest in the immediate history of photography's birth lies with Fox-Talbot.

Fox-Talbot was a true polymath; his intellectual curiosity engaged him in the fields of Mathematics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Botany, Philosophy, Philology, Egyptology, the Classics and Art History, he was also a Member of Parliament. He published four books and twenty-seven scholarly articles on a wide variety of subjects. His interest in optics and microscopes led him to create the first polarising microscope.

Fox-Talbot was a frequent visitor to Europe where he presented talks and attended conferences. In October 1833, on one of his many visits to Italy, he meticulously documented his visit in his Journal and Diary with copious notes and sketches. On this occasion, he marvelled at the sublime view of Lake Como from the balcony of his hotel. As was his usual practice he endeavoured to capture the view with a sketch. To compensate for his limitations as an artist he was using a drawing aid called a

Camera Lucida²⁶, an instrument designed by his good friend William Hyde Wollaston. However, the instrument was frustrating to use. If accidentally moved it was almost impossible to reposition. In frustration Fox-Talbot reverted to another drawing aid; his portable Camera Obscura²⁷, which he had used on many previous occasions and which he felt revealed a much more pleasing and almost magical image of the view upon its screen. Fox-Talbot wrote in his diary:

In October 1833, I was amusing myself on the lovely shores of the Lake of Como in Italy, taking sketches with a Camera Lucida, or rather, I should say, attempting to make them; but with the smallest possible amount of success [...] After various fruitless attempts I laid aside the instrument and came to the conclusion that its use required a previous knowledge of drawing which unfortunately I did not possess. I then thought of trying again a method which I had tried many years before.

[I] reflected on the inimitable beauty of the pictures of nature's painting which the glass lens of the Camera Obscura throws upon the paper in its focus - fairy pictures, creations of a moment, and destined as rapidly to fade away [...] It was during these thoughts that the idea occurred to me [...] how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably and remain fixed upon the paper!(Fox-Talbot, 1844a)

Fox-Talbot's recourse to the use of a Camera Obscura, and the visionary words of that final sentence proved prophetic; paving the way for the invention of the

²⁶ A *Camera Lucida* is an optical device used as a drawing aid by artists. The *Camera Lucida* performs an optical superimposition of the subject being viewed upon the surface upon which the artist is drawing. The artist sees both scene and drawing surface simultaneously, as in a photographic double exposure. The *Camera Lucida* was patented in 1807 by William Hyde Wollaston

²⁷ The *Camera Obscura* (Latin; *camera* for "vaulted chamber/room", *obscura* for "dark", together "darkened chamber/room") is an optical device that projects an image of its surroundings on a screen, directly or via a 45 deg. mirror. They are used as a drawing aid, for scientific and astronomical observations and for entertainment. Early versions were large fixed devices and used pinholes, later lenses were used. Fox-Talbot used a portable device. The earliest reference to the Camera Obscura is in the writings of the Chinese philosopher Mozi 407 – 390 BCE.

technology we now call photography.

The diary entry documents the *originary* conception a new technology, what Fox-Talbot would initially call, *Drawing with the Pencil of Light*, later *Photogenic Drawing* and finally, the *Calotype*. A technology for mark-making with light had been born.

The framing and *optical look*, the mediation of the view, provided by the Camera Obscura is an aspect of the aesthetic of photograph that is frequently overlooked in the discourse on representation, although there is reference to the Camera Obscura as a metaphor for cognitive or perceptual mediation in other areas of discourse (Shomali, 2010, p.54; Crary, 1992, p.5). In many of its applications the aesthetics of the mediation imparted by the Camera Obscura that inspired Fox-Talbot, the vignette, the altered contrast, would have been considered technical artefact in some photographic circles, rather than aesthetic mediation. The history tells us that the search for technical perfection was one of the principal drivers of photographic technology in the pursuit technical flawlessness and absolute verisimilitude. The effort to remove any obvious technically induced artefact from the process new no bounds. In contrast one of the defining links between snapshot photography and its primitive primal technical origins is the unconscious acceptance of both technical and operator induced faults and indiscretions. The technical mediation and induced faults of the snapshot image contributing to the notion of the snapshot aesthetic (Szarkowski, 2007).

It is clear from his writings that Fox-Talbot's primary drive was to invent a means of drawing or mark-making with light. He was originally looking for a means of recording what could be seen for future reference, a mimetic technology. It is also

clear from his writings that his interest in visual references was so that he could share the enjoyment of his experiences with others in a visual form. What he succeeded in inventing was a mnemonic-mark making technology that used light to make marks that could be fixed.

5.3 The Camera Obscura

The design of the Camera Obscura used by Fox-Talbot in his early experiments had remained unchanged for over two hundred years since Johann Kepler replaced the pinhole with a lens, other than to have become portable (Lefèvre, 2007, p.59). The early seventeenth century was a period of considerable interest in and experimentation with optics. In 1604 the mathematician Johannes Kepler described the science of the Camera Obscura and coined the name at the same time he replaced the pinhole with a lens (Shapiro, 2008). Helmut Gernsheim in *A Concise History of Photography* describes the transition at this time of the Camera Obscura from a room size structure large enough to accommodate a man, to portable handheld devices. Gernsheim informs us that, "the earliest reflex camera was described and illustrated by Johann Christoph Sturm, professor of mathematics at Altdorf, Switzerland, in 1676." He describes the flurry of activity taking place throughout Europe to miniaturise the Camera Obscura.

The Camera Obscura had been used not only as a drawing aid but as an optical viewing device for centuries.

With the improvements in the quality and size of lenses in the early seventeenth century, there followed the development of handheld portable devices. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Camera Obscura became a fashionable

accessory for those who participated in the new pastime of *tourism*, particularly those taking the *Grand Tour*²⁸. The Camera Obscura was used not only as a drawing aid for sketching the spectacular landscapes and historic architecture but crucially, as an aesthetic viewing/framing device.

The act of [en]framing a view was considered to be a novel way of mediating the viewing experience. The act embraced an aesthetic that emanated from the combination of optical mediation and isolation of the scene from its surroundings by the use of a frame. This was surely a precursor to and acknowledgement of an aspect of snapshot photography that would ensure its popularity, by imparting the act of viewing the mundane, with the everyday aesthetic. The aesthetic of the frame and the role of the Camera Obscura as a framing and mediating device do not seem to have been widely explored as an aesthetic concept. Anna Friedberg discusses the aesthetic of the window in relation to framing in a metaphorical context from painting to architecture (Friedberg, 2009a; Friedberg, 2009b)

The Camera Obscura was generally accepted as a device used to translate the phenomenal space of vision onto the virtual plane of representation. In his treatise on painting, the fifteenth-century architect, sculptor, painter, and theorist Leon Battista Alberti described painting as the construction of an image that resembles a window

²⁸ **The Grand Tour** was the traditional trip of Europe undertaken by mainly upper-class European young men of means, or those of more humble origin who could find a sponsor. The custom flourished from about 1660 until the advent of large-scale rail transport in the 1840s.

(Alberti, 1972). The canvas is a frame that delineates the area of vision and concentrates the gaze. William Uricchio observes:

“Alberti's metaphor of the window bears consideration in relation to the camera obscura as a device used to translate the phenomenal space of vision onto the virtual plane of representation” (Friedberg, 2009b, p.88; Uricchio, 1999).

Anne Marsh sees the Camera Obscura as a social apparatus, a theatrical space that captures a vision of the real, linking with Barthes idea of the gaze in photography as a psychic theatricalization a *primitive theatre*, a kind of *Tableaux Vivant* (Marsh, 2003, p.96). There can be little doubt that the Camera Obscura paved the way to many of the scopic regimes that dominate contemporary visual culture.

The instrument offered a vision of the world that was isolated by framing and optical mediation, colours and contrast were subtly modified, and vistas were confined by the phenomenon of vignetting, both in terms of darkening and often blurring or aberration. There was also the element of movement, the clouds, the branches of trees, people and things, also the uncanny transposition from the real into the miniaturised moving elements on a flat screen. It is hard to imagine in these days of cinema and video the cognitive impact of such phantasmagoria. The optical illusion of the Camera Obscura paved the way for a new way of seeing, optical technology including microscopes and telescopes introduced the phenomenon of the aperture as a means of visualisation and a way of seeing what had previously been invisible to the naked eye. Optics and the phenomenon of framing, transformation and the way in which we interpreted the real and our perception of the world, whilst introducing the notion of prosthesis (Stafford et al., 2001, p.313).

So excited was Fox-Talbot at the prospect of utilising the Camera Obscura to imprint

or fix images, he wrote copious notes, recording his thoughts, lest he should forget before returning to England, the ideas that were flooding his mind. He wrote in his diary:

...lest the thoughts should escape me between that time and my return to England, I made careful note of it in writing, and also of such experiments as I thought would be most likely to realize it, if it were possible. And since, according to chemical writers [sic], the nitrate of silver is a substance particularly sensitive to the action of light, I resolve to make a trial of it, in the first instance, whenever occasion permitted on my return to England (Schaaf, 1992, p.37)

It is important to remember these excited words when we later consider the ritualistic socio-cultural practice that personal snapshot photography was to become.

In the spring of 1834, Fox-Talbot started his experimentation with various silver salts. During this time, he worked closely with this friend and fellow scientist, the astronomer, John Herschel who was also experimenting with a photographic process in relation to astronomy.

For his initial experiments Talbot used leaves and lace pressed against the sensitised paper to create his *negative* images, Talbot called the resulting negatives *sciagraphs* – drawings of shadows - a term devised, by Herschel. The silhouette-like images would now be described as *photograms* (see earlier reference to Wedgwood). The results encouraged him to progress to using a Camera Obscura to focus the view from his window upon the sensitised paper. However, the sensitivity of the process was poor, Talbot writes, “exposure is extended to as long as two hours”, the effect on the paper was not strong enough to exhibit a satisfactory picture of the building as had been hoped. “The outline of the roof and the chimneys, et cetera, against the sky was marked enough, but the details of the architecture feeble and parts of the shade were left at the blank or nearly so.” Here is Talbot’s description of his experiment: –

... I constructed [a Camera Obscura] out of a large box, the image being thrown upon one end of it by a good object-glass fixed at the opposite end. The apparatus being armed with a sensitive paper was taken out in a summer afternoon and placed about one hundred yards from a building favourably illuminated by the sun. An hour or so afterwards I opened the box and I found depicted upon the paper a very distinct representation of the building, with the exception of those parts of it which lay in the shade.

A little experience in this branch of the art showed me that with a smaller Camera Obscura the effect would be produced in a smaller time. Accordingly, I had several small boxes made, in which I fixed lenses of shorter focus, and with these, I obtained very perfect, but extremely small pictures [...] (Fox-Talbot, 1844a).

In these early days, it would seem that Fox-Talbot's principal interest was in the science and technology of his process and the use of his *photogenic drawing* as an alternative to manual sketching. The subjects he recorded were expedient, and he appears, at this time, to have been unconcerned by any aesthetic potential of the new technology as a medium; although he later wrote about the aesthetic of his process in his *Pencils of Nature* series of books, but this was not until eighteen forty-four (Fox-Talbot, 1844a). Although later, Fox-Talbot recognised the new technology as an art medium with potential as an aesthetic medium as did other photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron who found the soft textured images created by the Calotype process suited her soft focus artistic approach to photography (Gernsheim, 1948). The Camera Obscura was the *avant-la-lettre* of photography, as it anticipated the advent of the photographic camera, Michael John Gorman wrote,

The history of early modern techniques of optical projection is frequently told as a prelude to the history of chemical photography and projective technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The camera obscura was photography's *avant-la-lettre*, as the magic lantern anticipated the slide and film projectors (Gorman, 2007, p.31).

Gernsheim described Johann Zahn's²⁹ reflex Camera Obscura, described in 1685, as the prototypes of the nineteenth-century box and reflex camera (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1955). Gorman speculated that Zahn's cameras as an example of the evolution of technology could be seen as, "ready and waiting for photography," technologies to be, "cannibalised, hacked and patched," their use subverted from that, intended by their designers (Gorman, 2007, p.31).

5.4 The Race for Photography

It is difficult to imagine that the proto-photographers were unaware of each other's work in view of the perception of Freemasonry that existed between scientists, intellectuals, and industrialists at this time, academies, societies, dinner clubs, coffee houses and other formal and informal gatherings, see earlier reference to Joseph Wright's painting of the *Orrery*. Yet, it seems Fox-Talbot was taken unawares by the unexpected announcement of his French rival Daguerre's³⁰, Daguerreotype process (Lomas, 2004). The proclamation was made by François Arago a minister in the French Government, at a joint meeting of the French Academy of Sciences and the

²⁹ Johann Zahn was the seventeenth-century German author of *Oculus Artificialis Teledioptricus Sive Telescopium* (Zahn, 1685). He is also credited with first camera obscura that was small and portable enough to be practical for photography in 1685 (Burns, 1999).

³⁰ Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (French) 18 November 1787 – 10 July 1851) was an artist and photographer, recognized for his invention of the daguerreotype process of photography, in partnership with Nicéphore Niépce who died before the process was made public on 7 January 1839

Académie des Beaux-Arts on the 9th January 1839.³¹

Larry Schaaf described Arago's announcement as a "brutal shock." Fox-Talbot was frustrated by the French announcement and by his own dilatoriness, particularly as he had perfected a viable photographic process as early as 1835. Due to commitments as a member of parliament for Cheltenham between 1832 and 1835, and with the distraction of these and other commitments, he had paid little attention to his photographic experimentation since his enthusiastic endeavours following the return from the defining Lake Como interlude. In the years up to 1839 Fox-Talbot had published nearly thirty scientific papers and two books, the last between 1838 and 1839. He did not return to his photographic experiments until late in 1838. Until then work on his *photogenic drawing* process had not been a priority (Schaaf, 1992).

Fox-Talbot had been made aware of Daguerre's invention prior to the official announcement; a letter came from Paris on 9th January 1839 advising that Daguerre had frozen the images of the Camera Obscura. There were no other details of the process. Concerned that Daguerre's process may have been identical to his, Talbot prepared a paper to be presented to the Royal Society, but because of the time of year, and poor levels of daylight, he was unable to prepare any new images to accompany the presentation. However, Michael Faraday displayed images that

³¹ Sir John Herschel is anecdotally credited with coining the term Photography in 1839, but there are those who believe the first use of the word was by the Brazilian proto-photographer, Hércules Florence in 1834.

Talbot had given to him in 1835, at a meeting of the Royal Institution on 25th January 1839. Fox-Talbot presented his paper on 31st January 1839, "Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing of the Process by which Natural Objects may be made to delineate themselves without the aid of the Artist's pencil" to the Royal Society (Fox-Talbot, 1844a).

At the time of the announcement, Talbot's process was still in a crude state, exposure times were very long and the images he produced were prone to fade. But he had demonstrated that his process was quite distinct from that of the Daguerreotype. Fox-Talbot had successfully created negatives using both direct contact and the Camera obscura and from these, he had made positive prints. In so doing he created the negative/positive process, which had the capability of producing multiple positives from one negative. During the next four years, he improved the *Photogenic Drawing* process eventually renaming it as *Calotype Photogenic Drawing*, otherwise the *Calotype* or to his friends, the *Talbotype*. In response to the urges of his mother and close friend Dr David Brewster, Fox-Talbot patented the refined process, a move that was to create more problems than it solved (Schaaf, 1992).

Not only had Fox-Talbot been deprived of the accolade of the inventor of the first photographic process by Daguerre, he ironically deprived his close friend and associate John Herschel, of the opportunity to announce his photographic process. Herschel had also been working on a photographic process similar to Fox-Talbot's and was about to announce his findings to the Royal Society when Fox-Talbot confided his intentions. On discovering Fox-Talbot's intentions Herschel decided not to present his paper in favour of Fox-Talbot.

In a further act of generosity, Herschel provided Fox-Talbot with the answer to the one problem Talbot had failed to fully solve, how to fix the chemical image permanently to prevent it from eventually fading. Herschel had discovered that both the negatives and the prints could be permanently fixed by washing with Sodium Thiosulphate, otherwise known as 'Hypo'. Hypo worked by removing any unwanted residues of light sensitive silver from the paper surface, the emulsion. Fox-Talbot, who was using Potassium Bromide to slow the fading of his images, was initially reluctant to adopt the use of Herschel's modification, only relenting after he realised that 'Hypo' eliminated the fading problem and significantly improved the longevity of his negatives and prints.

Although the Daguerreotype process produced images of superior sharpness and tonal clarity, when compare to the Fox-Talbot's images, the Daguerreotype process was not without problems. It was not reproducible, could only be viewed from a narrow-angle and the image was laterally reversed. Fox-Talbot's process was a negative based system from which multiple positive copies could be readily made.

In an effort to publicise and promote the Calotype as an alternative to the extremely popular and successful Daguerreotype, in 1843, Fox-Talbot provided the finance for his former valet, Nicolaas Henneman, to establish a commercial photographic business in Reading. The business specialised in the mass production of photographic prints in competition with the more common lithographic and engraved prints for inclusion in books and other printed material. It was at this time that Fox-Talbot published details of his process in, *The Pencil of Nature* a series of six books illustrated with original Calotypes, and published between 1844 and 1846

(Fox-Talbot, 1844 Matthew & Harrison, 2004).

In the next fifty years photography develop into a multifarious medium, serving a wide variety of needs; ranging from commerce and science to the phantasmagoria of popular entertainment. At this point that I shall declare that I intend to avoid becoming embroiled in the discourse relating to photography as an art medium unless it is to clarify my arguments in other areas. My concern is with the evolution of photography as both a mimetic and a mnemonic technology, into snapshot photography.

In the next section, I shall consider the emergence of snapshot photography as an identifiable genre within the wider canon of photography and the rise in the popularity of personal photography, the birth of the snapshot and the establishment of a *Kodak Culture*. I shall also consider why the taking snapshots became an ingrained and enduring social practice.

6 THE BIRTH OF SNAPSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I explore the emergence of snapshot photography and its establishment as a distinct genre and a ubiquitous, ingrained social practice.

6.1 What is a Snapshot?

As stated earlier we all recognise a snapshot photograph by the very nature of its *snapshottedness*. In their book *The Snapshot Photograph: The rise of popular photography 1888-1939*, Brian Coe and Paul Gates, discuss the nature of snapshot photography, describing it as:

Photography made with simple cameras, such as the box camera, simply as a record of a person or persons, a place or an event, one made with no artistic pretensions or commercial consideration, it is the intentionality behind the photograph that defines the snapshot (Coe & Gates, 1977).

Reference to intentionality in this definition is interesting as it is not a term normally attributed to snapshot photography, it is, however, a concept I shall expand later in this chapter.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the snapshot as, “[A]n informal photograph taken quickly, typically with a small handheld camera” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012). *The Oxford Companion of Photography* makes an unattributed reference to the use of the term *snapshot* as early as 1850’s, quote-

It first acquired a photographic meaning as early as the 1850s, when the first 'instantaneous' exposures became possible. A writer in 1859 spoke of 'snapping' the camera shutter at the subject (Lenman, 2005).

Most histories of photography attribute the origin of the term *snapshot* to Sir John Herschel. He applied the British hunting term³², "snap-shot", a word used to describe the act of shooting when the gun is aimed in the direction of the target without taking careful aim, to the act of taking a photograph. Herschel was referring to the increasingly common use of handheld cameras, which had either crude viewfinders or often no viewfinder at all. Taking a photograph required the photographer to 'point the camera towards the subject and shoot' (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969). Writing in 1860 in *The Photographic News*, Sir John Herschel referred to 'the possibility of taking a photograph, as it were, by a *snap-shot*, he wrote:-

I take for granted nothing more than the possibility of taking a photograph, as it were, by our snap – shot of securing the picture in the 10th of the second of time; and... Better mechanism is possible - by which a prepared plate may be presented, focused, impressed, displaced, numbered, secure in the dark, and replaced by another within two or three-tenths of a second. (Newhall, 2009, p.130; Herschel, 1860)

Nobody knows whether George Eastman borrowed the word 'snapshot' from Herschel, I can find no documentary evidence to support the speculation. However, it is well known that Eastman was not averse to borrowing other people's ideas without attribution. We may never know if Herschel's speculation had any bearing on the Kodak Corporation's use of the word *snapshot* in an advertising slogan for their new low-cost form of photography. Todd Gustavson, curator of technology at the

³² 1808 P. Hawker *Diary* (1893) I. 11 Almost every pheasant I fired at was a **snap shot** among the high cover (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012).

George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film, is attributed with a reference to a game called “snapshotting”, a form of “tag³³” with cameras, which emerged following the introduction of the small handheld camera, the “Kodak”, in 1888 (Thompson, 2014).

6.2 The Emergence of Snapshot Photography

In this section, I shall consider the purpose of snapshot photography and how entrepreneurial institutionalisation through innovation and creative thinking drove social progress, not only changing the technology of photography but the place of photography in society.

As suggested earlier, the inventors of photography had a very limited view of the potential of photography outside of their immediate area of interest. They seem to have little if any idea of its potential as an aesthetic medium. The proto-photographers appeared to be interested in the use of photography as either a mimetic or a mnemonic technology for copying, recording, or remembering. They were interested in the photograph’s ability to precisely reproduce the detail of the original, often revealing detail otherwise invisible. Photographs were considered indexical and their verisimilitude was respected as being veridical. The daguerreotype was christened the ‘mirror with a memory’, preserving the memory of

³³ Tag: a playground game that involves one or more players chasing other players in an attempt to “tag” or touch them, usually with their hands, in this case by taking an unposed photograph.

the dead in the present. The early photograph was recognised as a means of archiving memories (Holmes, 1859).

It was the entrepreneurs who saw the commercial potential of photography.

Following the announcement of the Daguerreotype process in Paris on the 9th January 1839 and publication of the methodology on 19 August 1839, there was a race to see who could be the first to reproduce the process. Daguerreotype studios rapidly sprang up in Europe, Britain, and North America. The popularity of transatlantic steamship travel was one additional factor that hastened photography's arrival in America. One of the first people to see the commercial potential of the new technology was Alexander J. Wolcott, an American dentist who was also an inventor. He is recorded as making Daguerreotype prints within one month of the process having been announced in Paris. In March 1840, Wolcott opened a "Daguerreotype gallery", a portrait studio, in partnership with John Johnson Sr. On May 8, 1840 Wolcott, with the assistance of Johnson, an instrument maker, received the first American patent for photography (US Patent No. 1582) for their Daguerreotype mirror camera, which did not have a lens³⁴. The camera was based on a concave reflecting mirror built by an associate Mr Henry Fitz, similar to those used for making celestial telescopes. The new camera significantly reduced portrait exposure

³⁴ On May 8, 1840 Alexander Wolcott, with the assistance of John Johnson Sr., received the first American patent for photography (US Patent No. 1582) for their Daguerreotype mirror camera, which did not have a lens. The camera was based on a concave reflecting mirror built by an associate Mr Henry Fitz, similar to those used for making celestial telescopes.

times from thirty minutes in the very early days to around 40 to 50 seconds on a sunny day.

Richard Beard is credited with establishing the first Daguerreotype studio in England. In 1840 he purchased the patent rights giving him a monopoly on the Daguerreotype process in England, Wales, and Scotland. He also collaborated with John Johnson; Beard secured a patent on the new Fitz camera in England, and in 1841 he set about opening a photographic studio in Regents Street, London, and establishing a chain of studios in London and elsewhere by selling licences.

By 1842, Daguerreotype exposure times had been further reduced by the use of a modified chemical mixture known as 'Walcott's Mixture' to coat the plates. Beard also explored the possibility of licencing Fox-Talbot's Calotype process but was unable to agree on terms. Disputes over licencing and patent infringement were to become a major impediment to the wider adoption of the Calotype process particularly in America (Matthew & Harrison, 2004).

In the early years following the birth of photography the technology advanced rapidly particularly in the manufacture of larger, faster lenses with greater light gathering capacity enabling increased shutter speeds and reduced exposure times. The photographic media became more sensitive and the science more sophisticated. Cameras became smaller and lighter, dramatically increasing in their portability, enabling them to be handheld and for photographs to be taken quickly. By the 1880's the improvements in portability became commonplace and the popularity of photography grew significantly.

Novel forms of photographic apparatus began to flood the market including

handheld pocket cameras often referred to as “Detective” cameras because they could be used surreptitiously. The characteristic of these cameras was their compactness, lightness of weight, portability and simplicity of manipulation (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.410).

By the 1880’s the Daguerreotype and the Calotype had been largely displaced by the wet collodion process. A messy complex procedure in which glass plates are coated with light sensitive chemicals, suspended in collodion a plastic-like material made from cellulose and dissolved in alcohol and ether. The mixture was highly inflammable, potentially explosive and toxic. The wet collodion process was popular because of its increased sensitivity to light and the sharpness of the image produced. However, the process added a new level of complexity to photography both in terms of skill and darkroom facilities. Negatives produced by this process were invariably printed onto albumen paper that used egg albumen³⁵ to bind the photographic chemicals to the paper. The albumen silver print became the dominant form of photographic positives from 1855 to the turn of the twentieth century. An article in Kodak’s “Image Journal” article quoted an 1873 report from “The Photographic Times” by John R. Clemons, that the Dresden Albumenising Company, the largest of its type at the time, used sixty thousand eggs a day in the production of photographic printing paper (Solbert, 1955).

³⁵ Albumen is the white of an egg. Albumin is the protein in egg albumen.

The introduction of the “Dry Plate,” otherwise known as gelatine plates, in 1871 marked a major technological turn in photographic technology and the dawn of a new era; although the *cognoscenti* continued to use the wet collodion process. The gelatine plate initially had a slower emulsion speed than the wet collodion plate's currently in use and for this reason were not initially universally popular.

The invention and development of gelatine emulsion technology are usually attributed to British physician and photomicroscopist Richard Leach Maddox (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.327). Maddox had developed the gelatine process mainly because he could not tolerate the smell or anaesthetic properties of the ether used in the wet collodion process. Due to ill health Maddox failed to develop his invention. A number of people took up the idea and made further developments, this included London photographer John Burgess, and another Englishman, Richard Kennett. Gelatine plates were further improved by Charles Harper Bennett, who increased the speed of the gelatine emulsion sufficiently to enable the plates to be used in handheld cameras. The increase in emulsion speed paved the way for the simplification of cameras and photography (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.327).

By the 1880's the USA was booming, fuelled by the industrial revolution that had spread from Europe. With its large population and advanced communications systems, railways, electric telegraph, postal system and steamships, the USA developed a significant photographic industry. The USA was the natural home of the entrepreneur and encouraged by a capitalist commercial culture, developed a burgeoning marketplace, buoyed by a rapid increase in commodification, which included cameras, photographic products and services.

One entrepreneur to take advantage of the climate was the innovative and inventive George Eastman, the son of George Washington Eastman, a former bank clerk and founder of the Rochester Business School. George Eastman Junior was fascinated by photography but frustrated by the complexities of both taking photographs and the subsequent processing and printing. He struggled for three years before deciding that he had to do something to simplify the whole process of taking and processing photographs.

In the late 1870's, Eastman read in a photographic journal about the new dry gelatine plate process being pioneered in England. He started to experiment with making his own gelatine plates. He found the new freedom of not having to make wet plates gave him a new interest in the taking of photographs. Eastman started travelling everywhere with just his camera, tripod and a box of gelatine plates, with no need for a darkroom. His activities attracted the attention of the local photographers who showed significant interest in his dry gelatine plates. Encouraged by the interest, Eastman started manufacturing gelatine plates for sale to local photographers.

The demand for his gelatine plates stimulated Eastman to set about designing an automated system for coating plates on a large scale. In 1879, on the advice of his friends he patented his equipment and process and in 1880 he opened the Eastman Dry Plate Company. In 1881 he was joined by a local businessman, Henry A. Strong, who provided capital to grow the new business. In the next three years, Eastman's business boomed, the success attracted numerous competitors and profits fell. Eastman's shrewd response was to form an association with other manufacturers to consolidate the market and stabilise prices.

By 1883 Eastman was looking for new opportunities. He was attracted to the activities of a small company, William A. Walker, who were experimenting with flexible film as an alternative to glass. Following a period of collaboration, Walker sold his business and joined Eastman. The idea of flexible film was not a new one there had been experimentation in England in the 1850's with such a process but it never went into production. Eastman and Co. also discovered the work of Leon Warnerke³⁶ who in the early 1870's had devised both a flexible roll film and an adapter to fit roll film to plate cameras, which again was not a commercial success because of cost and complexity. Leon Warnerke, anticipating a change in the market wrote,

The modern photographer does not like complicated manipulations. He wants only to obtain a result as good as possible with the least possible trouble... If any good genius should realize [sic] the photographic dream of the modern enthusiast, I think it will be a sort of snuff box with a tiny handle, one revolution of which would produce at once a large photograph already finished, mounted and framed!" The British Journal of Photography 18 Sept 1885, p.602 in (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.422)

Details of Warnerke's invention were published in the British Journal of Photography in 1875 and he was awarded the Royal Photographic Society *Progress Medal* in 1882. Eastman and Walker adapted the principle of Warnerke's design, between them they designed the film and the mechanism for a new roll film system and filed a complex patent to ensure against imitation.

³⁶ Leon Warnerke was a Polish engineer and inventor; his real name was Władysław Małachowski. In addition to his contributions to photography he was a notorious banknote forger (Peres, 2013, p.135; Economist, 2001).

The early versions of the roll film system used a strippable film, a transparent layer of gelatine on a reinforcing paperback, after development and drying the gelatine was stripped from the backing paper. The film and the holder went through extensive testing and modification. By the end of 1884 Eastman and Walker had a viable film, holder and film manufacturing process, fully patented in both Europe and the USA. As they were about to file the patent they became aware of the work of David H Houston who had also been working on a roll film system based on Warnerke's design. Tough negotiating by Eastman resulted in the acquisition of Houston's patents³⁷, for five thousand dollars. In October 1884 Eastman and Walker dissolved their partnership and formed a new company, Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company.

Manufacture of the new roll film adapters for plate cameras was initiated and work began on a series of roll film cameras. There were manufacturing problems with the strippable film, eventually resolve in the autumn of 1885. The new products were welcomed by the photographic industry and received encouraging reports in the British photographic press. Photographers, whilst enthusiastic about the roll film adapter for plate cameras, were less than enamoured with the qualities of the strippable film. The prints from the film were inferior to those from glass plates. Eastman persisted with his marketing campaign, but in the face of growing opposition to the overcomplicated system and the poor print quality, eventually

³⁷ David H Houston, Patent number 248,179 October 11th 1881

conceded that the system was a failure (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1955, p.407).

An unexpected spin-off from the endeavour was the realisation that the expertise acquired in the manufacturing of the film and the continuous coating production lines that had been developed were perfect for the manufacture of printing paper. They quickly realised that this was a new market with enormous growth potential. In addition to manufacturing printing paper, Eastman set up a developing, printing and enlarging service alongside his paper manufacturing operation. Making use of the rapidly expanding and increasingly fast mail service, Eastman's company established an extensive mail order service developing and printing service. By 1887 the operation was turning out up to 6000 prints per day, representing over two-thirds of the company's income (Jenkins, 1975, p.15).

George Eastman's entrepreneurial strengths were not only his ability to recognise new markets and develop them, he had the ability to realise when he had made a mistake and to turn adversity into an opportunity. The roll film camera, despite its obvious conveniences, produced images that were inferior to glass plates. Eastman had misjudged his market; established photographers were scathing of the inferiority of prints made from film compared with glass. Professional and amateur photographers alike were quite satisfied with dry coated glass plates and were reluctant to replace them with what was generally considered to be an inferior, if more convenient, technology (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.323).

George Eastman later said, "The idea gradually dawned on me, that what we were doing was not merely making dry plates, we were starting out to make photography an everyday affair" George Eastman (Collins, 2014). Not to be deterred, rather than

discard the expertise they had acquired in the manufacture of film and roll film backs George Eastman decided to develop, in collaboration with William H. Walker³⁸, a roll film camera that combined both of their new technologies. To sell it, he would create a new business model aimed at a completely new market. The new market were people like himself who were anxious to take up the new pastime of amateur photography but who had neither the skills to operate a complex camera nor the inclination to involve themselves in the time-consuming skills required to developing and printing their own photographs. The commodification of photography was born, facilitated by yet another turn in the technology of photography, the birth of the snapshot.

6.3 The *Kodak*: Just Press the Button...

In December 1887 George Eastman, together with his mother Maria Kilbourn Eastman, devised a name for the new camera he was developing; they created the name KODAK by playing anagrams. His application to the British Patent Office required an explanation of the origin of the word Kodak, Eastman wrote:

Kodak is not a foreign name or word it was constructed by me to serve a definite purpose. It has the following merits as a trademark word:
First - It is short.
Second - It is not capable of mispronunciation.
Third - It does not resemble anything in art and cannot be associated with anything else in the art except Kodak (Kodak Inc, 2010).

³⁸ William H Walker was a camera designer and maker he ran his own business until in 1884 he joined George Eastman as a technical expert and patented the Eastman Walker roll film holder in May 1885 This became the heart of the new "Kodak" camera.

He had until that time referred to his new project as the K camera, K being his favourite letter and the first letter of his mother's maiden name, Kilbourn (Ackerman, 1930, p.76).

In 1888 George Eastman launched a new company, the Kodak Corporation and with it his revolutionary concept of photography, the *Kodak*, the first camera to be marketed to non-photographers.³⁹ The *Kodak* was a hand-held camera and sold for twenty-five dollars, loaded with sufficient film for 100 exposures, the price included developing and printing. When the roll of film had been exposed, the camera was returned to Kodak and exchanged for a replacement preloaded camera. The roll film was developed, printed and returned to the customer.

Eastman's new concept of photography disrupted the accepted conventions of the technology, leading to its commodification, and the birth of a new industry. The simplicity of the new approach to photography was emphasised with the advertising slogan: "You press the button – and we do the rest." The new camera was backed by an extensive marketing campaign aimed at the non-photographer, particularly middle-class women. He chose women to emphasise the simplicity and convenience of his new photography (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, pp.413–414).

The *Kodak* was a simple box with a unique combined rotating lens and shutter made

³⁹ In 1881 a farmer in Cambria, Wisconsin, Peter Houston, invented the first roll film camera. His younger brother David, filed for the patent. David also invented and patented a roll film holder which he licensed and eventually sold to George Eastman (Hammer, 1940, p.xv).

by local optical company Bausch & Lomb; the shutter speed was approximately a 1/25th second. The simple rectilinear fixed focus lens had a small fixed aperture, typically around f8, which required no focusing and gave a reasonable “depth of field.” The new *Kodak* was loaded, not with glass plates but with “film”⁴⁰. The film was paper based with a strippable gelatine emulsion. The first version of the *Kodak* was quickly followed in 1889 by an updated version with an improved shutter and the choice of a new “transparent celluloid film.” The camera was renamed the *Kodak #1*. The film was again sufficient for one hundred circular photographs, each 2.5 inches in diameter. The circular format of the prints was an expedient design decision, to mask any evidence of vignetting⁴¹ caused by the simple lens and/or any damage to the negative caused by the stripping process⁴² (Collins, 1990, p.55).

The advent of the *Kodak* and its improved version, the *Kodak #1* led to a sharp increase in the popularity of personal photography and opened a new market for photographic equipment and services. Such was the success of the *Kodak* the word became a generic term for any camera and *Kodaking* a neologism for taking photographs, later to be replaced with another neologism, snapshotting or snapping.

⁴⁰ The first film was Eastman stripping negative film; initially a collodion emulsion and later a gelatine emulsion on a paper backing that could be removed/stripped during the development process to provide a negative for printing.

⁴¹ In photography and optics, vignetting (French: "vignette") is a reduction of an image's brightness or saturation at the periphery compared to the image centre, more common with simple lenses.

⁴² Early paper roll films had a hardened sensitised layer of gelatine and an adhesive gelatine layer. The hardened layer was “stripped” from the paper backing during development, a very delicate process prone to damaging the negative.

Eastman took responsibility for all the companies marketing and advertising literature. Including the instruction manual, trade literature, and display advertising, he also organised the placement of advertisements in appropriate publications. In June 1888, shortly after the *Kodak* went into production it was awarded the 'invention of the year' award at an annual photographers convention in Minneapolis (Jenkins, 1975, p.14).

The success of the *Kodak* concept was the result of Eastman's entrepreneurial skill in both identifying opportunities and creating new markets for his products. He recognised the potential of the emerging, wealthy, middle class in North America, a product of the booming industrial revolution and commercial capitalist economy. Many of Eastman's potential new customers belong to the European diaspora. Given the rapid proliferation of transport systems, particularly the railways and transatlantic liners, it was becoming increasingly popular for the diaspora to visit their homelands in Europe and elsewhere.

Eastman's marketing message associated photography with travelling and the importance of recording the visit so that it could be remembered forever and shared with family and friends back home. This association made the *Kodak* and its subsequent derivatives an essential travel accessory. The 100 shot capacity of the *Kodak* was intended to satisfy the needs of the new photographers for an extended vacation. Sontag reminds us, "People robbed of their past seem to make the most fervent picture takers at home and abroad" (Sontag, 1979, p.7).

Prior to the introduction of the *Kodak*, a new concept in photography, it was neither common practice nor convenient for non-photographers to own a camera, let alone

carry a one on holiday or whilst travelling. The attraction of the *Kodak* and the upgraded *Kodak #1*⁴³ was its lightweight, compact size and simplicity of use. Through their advertising, Kodak promoted the 'spirit of adventure' encouraging travellers to bring back photographs of exotic people and places.

The growth in railways and steamship services facilitated travel to both America and Europe, travel became increasingly commonplace, the Kodak advertising message promoted *tourism* as opposed to *travelling*. In America, the booming phenomena of vacationing (holidaying) and tourism were stimulated by an increased use of photographs by the tourism industry in the *mass media*, the new home of commercial photography. Photographs were used to identify tourist and vacation locations and to suggest potential photographic opportunities. Tourists were no longer adventurers; they knew where they were going and what they were going to see before they arrived. Kodak encouraged them to take their own version of the popular views that appeared in the newspapers, magazines and advertising posters. Tourists were prompted and encouraged to take photographs by astute marketing and powerful advertising.

Kodak provided roadside signage to direct tourists to viewpoints and places of interest along highways and at tourist and holiday destinations. Kodak erected three thousand signs along American highways announcing "Picture Ahead." The

⁴³ The Kodak #1 was introduced in 1889, 12 months after the original Kodak, with a modified shutter and the option of transparent celluloid film.

associated advertising informed the would-be tourists that there were vistas that, “deserve to be preserved,” by them. Travel and holiday (vacation) photographs were not only *possessions*, they were part of people’s aspiration’s and social status (Kodak Inc, 2010 Munir & Phillips, 2005).

The change from the concept of travel to the concept of tourism paralleled wider changes in society. Many of the social and cultural changes taking place in the late eighteen hundreds were driven by the growth in mass media and commercialisation and with this consumerism. The public understanding of photography was transformed by Kodak’s “educational” marketing and advertising (Eastman Kodak Company, 1922).

Pierre Bourdieu recognised photography as a middle-brow art. Bourdieu marvelled at how rapidly photography diffused, this was, he suggested, due to the “absence of economic and technical obstacles,” Kodak had made photography both affordable and accessible. Bourdieu also recognised that the new personal photography fulfilled a need in that it gratifies a psychological satisfaction, which he suggests may include the Freudian notions of voyeurism, narcissism and exhibitionism (Bourdieu, 1996, pp.14–15).

Kodak identified the psychosocial need that photography satisfied, and exploited it by promoting photography both as a desire and a ritual. The *ritual* of holiday/tourist photography is just one of the most enduring aspects of popular photography. The notion of *possession* was promoted, underpinned by one of Kodak’s earliest advertising slogans, “a holiday without a Kodak is a holiday wasted.” By ritualising the act of photography and emphasising the relationship between the photograph as

a possession and an indicator of social status by embedding photography into an increasing number of existing institutional practices, Kodak created demand and ensured an expanding marketplace, for the new genre of personal photography (Munir & Phillips, 2005, p.1673). The psycho-social influences on snapshot photography are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

As mentioned previously George Eastman wrote most of the copy in company literature himself. To accompany the revolutionary *Kodak*, Eastman produced a booklet to be given away with each camera it was called *The Kodak Primer*, in the preface he wrote:

The march of improvement in any field is always marked by periods of inactivity and then by sudden bursts of energy which revolutionize existing methods sometimes in a day.

For twenty years the art of photography stood still, then a great discovery opened a new channel for improvement, and for the last ten years the art has been in a rapid state of revolution (Collins, 1990, p.59).

The new Kodak approach to photography caught the public imagination. The *craze*, as it was described in 1889, by *The Chicago Tribune*, was a fad that had come to stay.

The demand for film and cameras grew faster than even Eastman had anticipated.

Within two years of releasing the first *Kodak*, the company was struggling to keep up with demand. The taking of photographs had been reduced to a mechanical act, which could be performed by anybody (Collins, 1990, p.60).

George Eastman had, through a process of disruptive innovation and entrepreneurial institutionalisation reinvented photography. Disruptive technologies challenge long-standing and established ways of doing things. In the process, they disrupt social practices and in so doing invoke new technologies. In this case, Eastman replaced a complex technology that required complex processes, expensive equipment and

highly developed skills, with a simple, inexpensive low skill based product.

The camera became a lifestyle accessory and photography changed from a pseudo art form with a minority interest, into a mnemonic technology and a social practice, within the financial reach of almost everyone. In 1888 the *Kodak* and the roll film revolution changed forever the nature of photography. The introduction of the Brownie camera in 1900 gave photography to the world (Collins, 1990, p.65).

6.4 The Brownie: And the Proletarianization of Photography

The experience that led up to the development of the *Kodak* range of cameras, the rejection of roll film by the photographic establishment and the professionals, led to, the founding of a postal and retail photofinishing side to the business. In turn, this resulted in the installation of large-scale mechanised production systems making Eastman, and his partner Walker, realise that given their knowledge of the interrelationship between the technology and the marketplace they were well positioned to exploit a new mass market of aspiring non-photographers (Jenkins, 1975, p.19).

George Eastman continued to develop his business model, as always, he was unafraid of adopting the ideas of others and adapting them to his own needs. He recognised the potential of what had become known as the *Gillette: razor and blades* business model, as one he could adapt. Gillette had disrupted the traditional cut-throat razor market by technical innovation. Instead of sharpening a razor before using it, a very skilled and time-consuming task, Gillet sold pre-sharpened disposable razor blades that could be fixed into a holder, to create a razor, when the blade was blunt it was thrown away and replaced by a new sharp one. The razors

blade holders were sold cheaply and blades and other accessories were sold at a premium on a repeat basis; profit being made on the disposable items (Picker, 2011, p.227). Gillette had also deskilled a complex task, and in doing so moved shaving from the province of the barber's shop into the hands of the consumer. George Eastman did the same with photography; he deskilled and commodified it, calling it snapshot photography. Eastman's new business model would sell cameras cheaply, relying on the revenue from the sales of film and photofinishing services to generate the profit.

Eastman saw the market for the new camera as the next generation of photographers, children, it would be smaller and even simpler than the *Kodak*. The *Brownie*, as it was called, was launched on 8th February 1900; a simple box camera, made of wood, jute board covered in black leatherette and colourfully packaged. The name of the *Brownie*⁴⁴ camera was based on characters made famous by the Canadian writer and illustrator Palmer Cox in a series of illustrated poems and stories about fairy-tale sprites from, taken from Celtic mythology and Scottish folklore. The packaging was decorated with images of Palmer Cox's mythical *Brownie* characters. The advertising and marketing literature featured the characters in a wide range of situations.

When launched, the *Brownie* cost just one dollar, film cost fifteen cents for a celluloid

⁴⁴ The Brownie camera was made for Kodak by the Brownell Manufacturing Company and it was incorrectly believed by many that the camera was named after Frank Brownell the proprietor (Morgan, 2007).

film and ten cents for a paper film, photofinishing (developing & printing), cost forty cents. For the more adventurous, a developing and printing kit was available for seventy-five cents. The camera was designed to operate at f/14 at 1/50th second, giving an acceptable image under good outdoor lighting conditions. It had a simple meniscus lens with an “improved” rotary shutter suitable for “snap-shots”; there was a bulb setting that allowed the shutter to be held open for time exposures. The *Brownie* took six photographs each two and a quarter inches square on 117 size film⁴⁵. There was no viewfinder, just a V-shaped sighting line on the top; a clip-on finder became available as an accessory in August 1900.

It is generally recognised that the introduction of the *Brownie* together with an astute and extensive marketing campaign was responsible for the start of an exponential growth in the popularity of photography and changed the photography market forever. To quote from the Kodak archives:

The small simple box launched a new industry and forever changed the way we communicate [Introducing to the world] Photojournalism. The motion picture industry, Medical x-rays, Satellite imaging, The Internet, [sic] Every technology we use to communicate with pictures can trace its ancestry to that first black box” (Kodak Inc, 2010).

The claims may seem far-fetched even now, but Eastman's aspiring words were prophetic with the benefit of hindsight.

By 1905, over 100,000 *Brownie* cameras had been sold in the USA, adding to the

⁴⁵ 117 size film was made specifically for the early Brownie between 1900 and 1949 (Baker, 2016)

estimated 1.5 million roll film cameras already in circulation. It is estimated that there were ten million amateur photographers in the USA and a further four million in Britain (King, 1984a, p.9). Prior to the arrival of the *Brownie* camera, the new breed of snapshot photographers had previously been excluded from photographic expression because of age, gender, economic status, or lack of skill.

The marketing strategy adopted by Kodak transformed photography from a practice of professionals and skilled informed amateurs of means, into a popular social behaviour (Munir & Phillips, 2005, p.1670). When the camera became a domestic consumer commodity, photography, was adapted to the needs of private production and reception as a phatic technology⁴⁶ (Slater, 1991: 50). The snapshot changed the way people remembered and shared their private and social experiences. The snapshot photograph became a communication device ,a means of archiving the collective memory and a social practice.

To emphasise the simplicity of the Kodak approach to photography Eastman chose to aim the *Brownie* camera at children through women. He believed that if children started taking photographs they would become lifelong Kodak customers; the depiction of women in advertising literature implied simplicity and ease of use. Critical factors in Kodak's successful marketing strategy was the creation of new markets by targeting new users; women, children, and specialist actors such as Boy

⁴⁶ A phatic technology is a technology that serves to establish, develop, and maintain human relationships.

Scouts and military personnel.

Although not accepted as a social theory at the time the Brownie camera was launched upon the world, the Eastman Kodak Corporation marketing strategy exhibited all the characteristics of compliance with Actor Network Theory (ANT), an alignment of factors, circumstances, people and technology to bring about a seismic change in cultural behaviour (Latour, 2005). The snapshot became a socio-technical object, the product of human and non-human agency that elevated it above its technological deterministic simplicity.

The viability of the of the Kodak system of snapshot photography was largely due to the commercial and social infrastructure that existed in the early twentieth century; the network of Post Offices, mail carriers and the existence of manual and mechanical sorting facilities, the internal combustion engine, and the bicycle, all were crucial to Kodak's success and yet postal services were not established with any intention of supporting mass-market image creation (Gómez Cruz & Meyer, 2012, p.210). The forgoing represents a further example of the reality of ANT and other social constructivist influences; topics considered in the next chapter.

Kodak's snapshot photography was born out of a combination of personal artistic frustration, entrepreneurial innovation and the desire to preserve memory. Snapshot photography became established as a unique genre of photography that has continued to evolve from a paper facsimile of an exotic location to the digital banality

of today's Instagram⁴⁷. The evolution of the snapshot continues to embrace the essence of Fox-Talbot's originary desire to visually capture the now with the *pencil of nature* and so preserve and share a memory in the present and the future.

The markets were maximised by stimulating the desire to take photographs, by identifying and signposting photographic opportunities. Access to photography for the layperson was facilitated by simplifying the technology and deskilling the production of the finished photograph. Photography was no longer the exclusive domain of the informed amateur and the professional. Personal photography became a family, and social, rather than an individual activity, photography of *the Other* (Hirsch, 1997, p.83).

6.5 Thoughts On Memory

George Eastman sold the concept of snapshot photography by promoting it as a means of capturing memories. The success of Kodak is punctuated by a series of effective advertising campaigns. The first based on the slogan "You press the button. We do the rest", was later accompanied by a campaign led by the slogan "Let Kodak keep the Story." The choice of words signified the recognition of everyday photography as a new form of language quite separate from the written word. The notion of snapshot photography as a means of telling stories gathered momentum and was reinforced by the suggestion that memory could not be relied upon to

⁴⁷ Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to share pictures and videos, either publicly or privately on the Internet.

preserve one's life stories (West, 2000, p.166). The advertising slogan was supplemented with the following passage,

Memory has a most aggravating way of storing up details for which we do not give a crooked sixpence – and of dropping out of sight forever things that we really want to know – especially dates. (West, 2000, p.166)

It is easy to forget that while the Eastman Kodak Corporation were catering for the *Kodak* and *Brownie* camera markets, they also manufactured a wide range of other cameras including stereoscopic, large format, and a wide variety of folding cameras of various sizes. To support their concern for the frailty of memory, one of the most innovative folding cameras Kodak offered was the *Autographic Kodak*, which not only recorded the visual evidence of an event but offered the facility to append the date and location of the event to the negative immediately the snapshot was taken. The design of the camera allowed a title and date to be appended to the undeveloped film through an openable flap on the back. The *Autographic Kodak* was claimed to compensate for the frailty of memory by supplementing the accuracy of the photographic image with the authenticity of additional information inscribed upon it.

Memory is a conflation between mediated and lived experience, the stuff that nostalgia is made of, the conflation of the truth of the past with the mediated recall in the future (Stewart, 1993, p.23). Even with the evidence of the photograph and the narrative, there seems to be no solution to the dilemma of remembering once the moment has passed all recollection of the event is subject to the frailties of recall. Even the visual image cannot be relied upon as a memory what we see is subject to what we remember, subject to how our imagination recompiles the fragments of

information that are stored in our subconscious. The Kodak advertisements endeavour to reassure us that the combination of written and photographic evidence will be “doubly valuable” by providing an “authentic history.” A later advertisement suggested that when photographing children the inclusion of the date on the print will, “[...] give double value to the picture when time has played sad tricks with memory” (West, 2000, p.173).

6.6 The Snapshot Paradox

The snapshot photograph is ubiquitous, an ephemeral cliché, what distinguishes it from a photograph *per se*, is its *snapshottedness*, something we recognise immediately from our own experience of looking at other snapshots. In the case of the FDAS snapshot, the intrusion of the shadow of the taker into the frame provides evidence of the *snapshottedness* of the image, along with the centralisation of the subject, the space around it and the familiarity of the pose and the occasion.

It is my contention that many of the ontological characteristics of the snapshot as a genre are paradoxical. As referenced earlier, the intentionality of the snapshot belies its causality and apparent unintentionality. There is little difference in intentionality of staging a professional photo shoot and the taking of a snapshot photograph (Schroeder, 2013, p.30). Its very existence implies intentionality. The snapshot would have been taken intentionally, in most cases, intuitively without recourse to instructions. The skills of the typical snapshot taker are acquired by unconscious sublimation, a social milieu that belies the existence instruction leaflet included with the film or by exposure to one of the numerous Kodak leaflets, magazines or instruction manuals that the corporation peppered the marketplace. Instructions that

advised "Make sure the sun is shining and that it is positioned over the shoulder centre the subject in the frame." Most of the technical considerations, such as exposure being taken care of by default through the simple design of the camera.

Possibly the most mystical paradox is that in most households, once the initial euphoria of viewing the latest batch of snapshot prints is over, the envelope and the prints are consigned to the archive. Maybe the odd print is retained and or shared with others. Some may even warrant a place in an album or to be framed and displayed on the sideboard. An odd one, of particular significance, may find its way into a wallet, purse, pocket or some other private place. Don Slater claims that family snapshots rapidly become unimportant to their owners, "at most we look at photographs as a kind of one-off re-living of a recent leisure experience (a quick look at the holiday snaps when they come back from the chemist) – they gradually become invisible" (Slater, 1995, p.141,146).

Notwithstanding their commonplaceness, our relationship with snapshot photographs is complex; on the one hand, they are ephemeral, readily discarded to that place where we put the old photographs to be found when someone dies, at the back of the cupboard, on the other hand, they are considered a cherished possession. Regardless of an apparent indifference to the existence of snapshots, they are amongst our most precious belongings. We know from news reports of disasters, floods, hurricanes, and tsunamis that these mundane artefacts, our snapshots, are the things we most want to preserve on such occasions, they are the possession we miss most when they are gone. Those who have experienced such tragedy, speak of their loss with an emotion normally reserved for the loss of a loved one. The traumatic

effects of losing personal photographs are recorded in the account of a project that took place in Japan following the tsunami of 2011, when thousands of photographs were recovered and restored and returned to their owners in the 'Memory Salvage Project' (Morimoto, 2014; Takahashi, 2014). Photographs, particularly of the snapshot variety, are so commonplace it is easy to take them for granted. Their ubiquity is deceptive, they are part of a social phenomenon that is historically unprecedented and yet almost unquestioned (Batchen, 2008).

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how the snapshot emerged as a unique genre from the canon of photography. A product of entrepreneurial institutionalisation and social construction with a primal *originary technicity*, an antecedence recognised by its inventor George Eastman, albeit somewhat whimsically, but as I shall endeavour to demonstrate elsewhere, a perception with more foundation than he may have imagined.

Building on the *originary technicity* of the primal concept of exteriorisation and of memory as prosthesis, I argue that snapshot photography's ethnographic and sociological associations have strong affinities with its ontological and phenomenological precedence as both a mnemonic and a phatic technology. These concepts I shall explore in more detail in the next chapter.

7 READING THE PHOTOGRAPH

Ultimately — or at the limit — in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes. ‘The necessary condition for an image is sight’ Janouch told Kafka; and Kafka smiled and replied: ‘We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes.’ - Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Barthes, 2010)

It may be a coincidence, but when I started the research for this study I was reading Barthes, *Camera Lucida* and Kuhn’s book *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*. In their respective books, both authors discuss their experience of finding family photographs and uncannily their response to the photograph they found.

Barthes writes of the experience of browsing his mother’s collection of family photographs, following her death and finding the *Winter Gardens* photograph, a particularly relevant piece of writing. Similarly, Kuhn, in her book, explores a situation, not unlike mine. Kuhn discusses finding a photograph of her taken by her father when she was aged about eight, what she calls *girl with the budgie* photograph, very similar to my FDAS snapshot. Kuhn’s photograph also has a note written on the reverse by her mother, referring to the place and occasion the photograph was taken;

Kuhn disputes the correctness of her mother's recollection of where and when the photograph was taken⁴⁸ (Barthes, 2010, p.67 Kuhn, 2002, p.11). Interestingly, Kuhn suggests that any photograph album is almost worthless without the narrative to accompany it. In this way a picture is 'brought to life'. That is only really correct if the narrative is true, which in her case and in mine it was not.

As Batchen notes in the opening essay of his collective works on Barthes, *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes Camera Lucida*, it is almost impossible to write an essay about photography without reference to this work. Given that *Camera Lucida* is, in general terms, about looking at photographs, including family photographs, it does seem like a logical place to start (Batchen, 2009, p.3).

It is considered significant that *Camera Lucida* was written after the death of Barthes mother and shortly before his own death. Barthes' demise under the wheels of a Parisian laundry van at the age of 65 was untimely, whether accidental or premeditated. His grief and mourning at the recent loss of his mother, three years before, is clearly reflected in what proved to be his last work. *Camera Lucida*, a study of the photograph is punctuated by references to death and mortality. Douglas Nickel describes it as "a theory of death in the guise of a critical analysis" (Nickel, 2000, p.232). Barthes described *Camera Lucida* as an "ontological desire to learn, at all costs, what photography was 'in itself'", something I can identify with (Barthes, 2010,

⁴⁸ Family Secrets p11

p.3).

Camera Lucida is a personal, some say the sentimental, view of photographs and part eulogy. The book is comprised of forty-eight sections in two halves. Barthes starts with a considered and wide-ranging contemplation of a selection of vernacular photographs from the literature and is concerned with finding a way of reading photographs. What is curious about the book is Barthes' choice of photographs. He describes them as a random selection of classical photographs but one gets the impression that they have been carefully selected. They span the history of the medium from late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. His choice of subject would also seem to be far from random, the images having something of a snapshot aesthetic or the documentary about them. They are of people, mainly portraits, but no sign of a landscape or anything faintly avant-garde, although there is one architectural study. Barthes choice of photograph avoids the usual preoccupation with photography as art making his writing particularly relevant to a discourse about snapshot photographs. He claims to be concerned with the cultural significance of the photographs, and described the undertaking as an ontological desire to describe the essence of photography; he does this by describing how the images move him. They appear as has been suggested to have been selected for rhetorical convenience (Batchen, 2009, p.11).

In the first half of *Camera Lucida* Barthes is concerned with the deconstruction of his selection of photographs by way of his personal response to them. His desire was, as he states, "to learn at all costs what photography was 'in itself', by what essential feature it was to be distinguished from the community of images" (Barthes, 2010,

p.3). I take this to mean that Barthes was seeking to understand not what the greater arguments were in photography but to understand photography in terms of “ordinary” photographs, a notion that makes more sense of the overall theme of *Camera Lucida* when we move into the second half of the book.

In the second half of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes sorting through his mother’s archive of family photographs. He is searching for a photograph that will remind him of his recently departed mother. There follows an emotional response to the finding of a snapshot of his mother as a young girl (age five) and her older brother (age seven) standing on a bridge in what they called a *Winter Garden*⁴⁹. He describes the photograph in detail, in the style of an *ekphrasis*, noting aspects of his mother that he remembered of her as a woman recognising them in the child he never knew. It is significant that much of this description is drawn from his imagination. Despite the centrality and importance of the photograph, despite the intimate detail of his description, the book does not contain a copy of the photograph (Barthes, 2010). The absence of the photograph has resulted in conspiracy theories, such as, that it was merely a rhetorical device, and that the *Winter Garden* photograph never existed, a ploy to further his argument (Olin, 2002, p.66). The snapshot, Barthes believed, exemplified the essence of the photograph and he would, “hence derive all photography (its `nature`) from the only photograph which assuredly existed for me

⁴⁹ Winter Garden: A form of conservatory.

and to take it somehow as a guide for my last investigation"⁵⁰. Barthes went on to suggest that, "henceforth I must interrogate the evidence of Photography, not from the point of view of pleasure, but in relation to what we romantically call love and death." This particular photograph confirmed a belief that photographs were metaphors for memory, able to evoke, "a sentiment as certain as remembrance" (Barthes, 2010, p.73). The emotion he attributes to Marcel Proust's experience when leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother true face, "whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory." Proust's notion of involuntary memory is central to my study. The famous moment in which Proust is transported back to the place of his childhood by the distinctive and evocative taste of Madeleine⁵¹ and lilac tea, is important to my argument on two counts; it demonstrates the temporal power of an artefact to transport us back in time and to invoke memory not so much of an event but of a time and place (Proust, 2001). This notion is central to my experience of looking at an old family photograph and being reminded not so much of the event depicted in the photograph but a deep sense of self and place.

These observations and sentiments reflect my response to the FDSA snapshot, which is the focus of my research and my argument that photographs are not so much memories in themselves, but triggers for memory in the same way that Proust's

⁵⁰ Could these words be a testimony to his premature death being a deliberate act?

⁵¹ Madeleine: very small sponge cakes with a distinctive shell-like shape from Commercy and Liverdun.

experience with his boots and the madeleine and Barthes analysis of his response to the *Winter Gardens* photograph would imply. My research is concerned with unravelling the reasons for this response and the part that is played by the snapshot photograph.

Barthes' seminal study *Camera Lucida* has been the subject of intense critical analysis by a range of critics including Victor Burgin, Mitchell, Derrida and Sontag. In *Camera Lucida* Barthes considers the snapshot as an object, using the book in the guise of a critical analysis of the photograph, he considers the snapshot as a personal memento, a melancholic reflection on death and mourning, centred on the deconstruction of a photograph of his recently dead mother as a child. Douglas Nickel described it in his paper "Barthes and the Snapshot" as, "...a mediation of the phenomenology of the writers own existence and implied demise" (Nickel, 2000). My view is that this analysis could equally be applied to a fear of the death of memory – dementia or Athazagoraphobia - a morbid fear of forgetting or being forgotten. A consideration of the analysis of the critics listed above and the work of more contemporary writers such as Nickel, I believe, offers a new view of the snapshot photograph, both as an object and part of a cultural practice, which in turn serves to explain the enduring nature of the snapshot as a contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon.

Olin, in *Touching Photographs*, considers the essence of *Camera Lucida*, to be the recognition of the theory of the photograph as an indexical representation of the referent, recognised in Barthes' phrase "that has been", the *noeme* (Olin, 2002). This notion of the indexicality of the photograph was developed in his essay 'The Rhetoric of the Image', where Barthes discussing a photograph of a packet of pasta, observed:

“because the pasta had to be there to be photographed”, and in *Camera Lucida* he states: “Every photograph is a certificate of presence”, or of being present, (Barthes, 1985, p.152; Barthes, 2010, p.87). If the *Winter Garden* photograph is a fiction, Barthes’s notion of indexicality is specious, yet in the context of my biographical snapshot the relationship between the referent, ‘me’, is a self-evident truth, a concept that becomes important when I discuss memory in more depth elsewhere.

In the course of his critical textual deconstruction of photographs, Barthes develops three criteria to qualify his approach to reading the image, the *studium*, the *punctum* and the *noeme*. Barthes sees the creation of photographs as an act of theatre, a performance similar to the *Tableaux Vivant*, flesh and blood reduced to a frozen pose. The linguistic element in Barthes critical analysis that is most relevant to my study, is what he describes as the photographs *noeme* or Barthes refers to as the *what has been* or the *that has been*, the essence of the photograph, the real thing that has been placed before the lens, the “referent” (Barthes, 2010, pp.76, 96). In other words, he is signifying the irrefutable indexicality of the snapshot as a mode of representation of the real.

Two other sources that contribute to my contextual framing are Benjamin’s, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, and Sontag’s, *On Photography*. Benjamin’s influential writing is a brief overview of the impact photography had on the modern age (Sontag, 1979). It is essentially a reflection of the ubiquity of the reproduced image that photography brought to visual representation. In part an intellectual and perceptual downgrading of the value and authenticity what Benjamin referred to as “aura.” It is as much a view of the commodification of photography and the effect

that mass reproduction had on the way images were perceived and what they were for. It was about how photographs influenced the way we lived (Benjamin, 2008a).

Benjamin and the “Optical Unconscious” bring the medium into a social technological context connecting the photograph, the photographer, and the viewer.

Benjamin writes,

No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the *Here and Now*, with which reality has so to speak, seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we looking back may rediscover it (Benjamin, 1985, p.243).

Sontag’s contribution to the conceptualising of my argument is significant, in *On Photography* she offers an insight into the importance of the snapshot photograph as a social phenomenon and the role it played in family life. Her insight helps in understanding the manner in which the snapshot evolved from the toy of the rich to the *lingua franca*⁵² of the proletariat, the snapshot became a family rite, a means of memorialising the everyday events of family life, (Sontag, 1979, p.176).). Both Barthes and Sontag were preoccupied with the notion that the photograph has a peculiar capacity to represent the past in the present, and thus to imply the passing of time in general. Consequently, both Barthes and Sontag argued that all photographs speak of the inevitability of our own death in the future (Barthes, 2010, p.9). Sontag wrote, “Since the photograph is an affirmation that something has been or has

⁵² Lingua franca: a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different (Dant & Gilloch, 2002).

happened, it is a proof of the past. Meaning, that anything that is photographed is immediately turned into something past and undergoes a shift in temporality” (Sontag, 1979, p.71; Barthes, 2010, p.92). This analysis poses a challenge to all commentators on photography, what exactly is photography's relationship to time, and by extension, to reality?

The review so far explores the general definition of snapshot photography and the snapshot in the general discourse on the photograph. I have alluded to the relationship between the snapshot and nostalgia and remembering and forgetting. I shall now consider these tentative threads and expand upon them starting with memory. In my writing the usage of the term snapshot may not always be identified as such the nature of the photographs being discussed is usually implied by the context of the discussion.

7.1 Reading the Photograph

When you look at a photograph of yourself as a child what is the cognitive process involved? Memories are stimulated but what memories and why? Are they memories of the process, of the photograph being taken, the shutter clicking? Are the memories of self of the other people involved or of the place? Are they of the event or occasion, as in the, FDAS snapshot? Or are the memories subjective, that is, not specifically associated with the occasion? The reason for posing these questions is my need to understand my response to viewing the FDAS snapshot.

I could start with the assertion that photography is pure representation, we see nothing in a photograph other than the objects that are photographed. Is this a phenomenological or an ontological assertion? I suspect that it is both. As the

question arises from my experience of viewing a personal photograph it may be reasonable to start with a phenomenological approach. In seeking answers to my questions I have considered the words of a variety of theorists ranging through, André Bazin, Kendall Walton, Barthes, Sontag, Roger Scruton, Walter Benjamin, Hubert Damisch, among others who have explored similar questions.

The starting point for many writers in this area of discourse is the work of André Bazin and Walton although both are considered controversial in their views. Walton draws heavily on Bazin's work in an effort to support his contention that photographs are different to other forms of handmade image such as drawings and paintings, both from a phenomenological point of view (in the way we experience them) and an epistemic point of view (pertaining to knowledge, cognitive). Kendall argues that photographs are transparent, by which he means that in looking at photographs we literally see the subject of the photograph. In his paper "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism", Walton endeavours to explain the realism possessed by photographs. He accepts that photographs are not necessarily more realistic than paintings, and offers a variety of literal and metaphorical examples and arguments to support his proposition that photographs excel because they are "extraordinarily realistic, realistic in a way or to an extent that is beyond the reach of paintings, drawings and other 'handmade' pictures." In doing so he draws heavily on the notion of the photograph as evidence (Walton, 1984). His principal arguments hinge on Bazin's forensic analogy of the photograph being a *trace* and to Bazin's assertion that photographs are so different to other kinds of picture, the photographic image being identical with the object being photographed, to quote

Bazin:

Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation of a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it.

The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint. Wherefore, photography actually contributes something in the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it. (Bazin, 1960)

Bazin, with his reference to the *fingerprint*, is suggesting the image of the photograph have veracity similar or equal to a forensic *trace*. This forensic comparison is also helpful in establishing the relationship between the photograph and memory. It could be seen that memories are traces of our past and just as the credibility of forensic evidence is often questioned so is the credibility of memory, a point I shall return to.

Walton's principal claim is that photography and the invention of the camera offers a "new way of seeing" (Walton, 1984, p.21). He develops a very convoluted argument with a wide range of examples and analogies to support his contention that with the aid of the camera, a mechanical device, we quite literally see our dead relatives when we look at photographs of them. It is my contention that what Walton is trying to illustrate is the power and vividness of the memories that are evoked when we look at photographs with which we have an affinity. This introduces the notion of closeness or proximity which is considered a unique property of the photograph; Pettersson uses the following much-cited quotation of Walton's Browning to open a

discussion on this point. The quotation is from a letter by Elizabeth Barrett Browning⁵³ to Mary Russell Mitford⁵⁴ written in 1845, in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning shares her excitement for her first acquaintance with the daguerreotype.

[I long] to have such a memorial of every being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious ... but the association and the sense of nearness involved in the thing ... the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed forever! It is the very sanctification of portraits I think—and it is not at all monstrous in me to say ... that I would rather have such a memorial of one I dearly loved than the noblest Artist's work ever produced. (Browning & Mitford, 1954 Groth, 2000)

The quotation is important to my argument on two counts. The reference raises the notion of the *nearness of the thing... the fact of the very shadow of the person lying there fixed forever* an important element in the discourse on *photographicness* and closeness.

This reference together with the mention of *memorial* is relevant to the argument yet to be developed regarding the relationship between the photograph and memory.

Browning's sentiment that the likeness and the sense of nearness offered by the photograph (Daguerreotype) are preferable to 'the noblest artists work', is supported by Bazin's statement that "photography had freed the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness" (Bazin, 1960, p.197).

The painter Paul Delaroche, who on seeing his first Daguerreotype is alleged to have said: "from today painting is dead" (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, p.70). Originality in photography, as distinct from originality in painting, lies in the essentially

⁵³ Elizabeth Barrett Browning (6 March 1806 – 29 June 1861) was one of the most prominent poets of the Victorian era.

⁵⁴ Mary Russell Mitford (16 December 1787 – 10 January 1855), was an English author and dramatist.

objective character of photography. Bazin here makes a point of the fact that the lens, the basis of photography, is in French called the "*objectif*," a nuance that is lost in English translation.

For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction, there intervenes only the instrumentality of a non-living agent. For the first time, an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man (Bazin, 1960, p.7).

It is the notion of the nearness that the photograph offers, what Pettersson considers to be the essence of the photograph's phenomenology, its ability to engender a feeling of closeness to the depiction of the subject, a unique property of the photograph in comparison with other forms of depiction. Pettersson goes on to suggest that this phenomenon of proximity and our experience of photographs are recognised under various guises by other theorists. He disputes the claim made by Bazin in his seminal work, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", that this notion of proximity relates to the photograph as object, quote, "the image acts upon us through its origin in being of the model: it is the model", suggesting that Bazin's ontological claim is more reasonably a phenomenological one. Pettersson refers to the research of Stephen Rifkin in his doctoral thesis.⁵⁵ Rifkin undertakes a critical review of the numerous translations of Bazin's work and forms the opinion that Bazin's view of the 'Ontology' of the photographic image, as represented by the principal myths of representation, desire and presence, embodies the search for an understanding of the

⁵⁵ PhD Thesis - Andre Bazin's "Ontology of the Photographic Image": Representation, Desire, and Presence (Rifkin, 2011, p.3)

elusiveness of the idea of indexicality, the snapshots veracity or verisimilitude, a notion I would support (Pettersson, 2011, p.186).

This argument could be extended to include Barthes' ontological view of how the photograph is perceived. In the photograph, Barthes asserts the referent is "not the *optionally* real thing to which the image or sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would no photograph."

Barthes also alludes to the element of pastness as an essential feature of the photograph. In photography, one could never deny that *the thing has been there*, the very essence of the term *noeme* "That-has-been" (Barthes, 2010, p.76). It seems to me, that Pettersson is clumsily rephrasing what Browning and Bazin are suggesting; that is, the realism of the photograph engenders an intimacy with the subject and therefore the object that is the photograph, which is not possible through other forms of representation, particularly drawing and painting. The skill of the photographer is often seen as the ability to extract something from the subject that is otherwise invisible. The gaze, in particular, is often seen as an umbilicus that connects the photographer with the subject and in so doing with the object, which is the photograph. A comment, also attributable to Barthes and his reference to the light, which springs from the photograph, touches him, which he, in turn, offered as the reason the Winter Gardens photograph touched him, it was the gaze emanating from his mother that connected with him (Barthes, 2010, pp.81, 82).

Walton suggests that photography has an immediacy that is not possible with other forms of depiction, using the phenomenological terms, contact, and closeness, again emphasising the relationship between the photograph and proximity. It occurs to me

that the act of browsing a photograph album must have a phenomenological basis. The act of looking at photographs must have a purpose. The question may be answered in part by asking further questions, why do we take the sort of photographs that end up in photograph albums in the first place? There is clearly a compulsive, possibly ritualistic aspect in taking what we call snapshots, but there is clearly more to it than just taking the photograph. What we do with the photograph once it is taken is worthy of consideration. Clearly, we do not put all the photographs that we take into a photograph album. Some photographs may be discarded by destruction or deletion almost immediately, whilst others will be selected for the photograph album or for sharing by posting to social media sites. The remainder will be consigned to that shoebox at the back of the wardrobe or maybe to languish on digital storage media, the Cloud of cyberspace, or in the limbo of the camera's memory card.

It is the conscious act of selection and retention of certain photographs, which is of interest. What purpose do these photographs serve for those who took them, those who appear in them and even those who are disinterested in them? The latter group may reflect the aesthetic value of the snapshot, an issue that should be explored as well in terms of the interested. Returning to the question of proximity or closeness and the photograph referred to by Browning, Bazin, and Walton, what, if anything, may this have to do with Kant's notion of aesthetic beauty, distance, and disinterestedness? (Kant, 1914; Kreitman, 2006). Because we all recognise the *snapshottedness* of the photograph we all have an interest in the snapshot but our relationship to the snapshot dictates our degree of disinterestedness. The use of the

term *snapshotedness* implies that the snapshot is essentially an anaesthetic and it is this that defines disinterestedness. Kreitman describes the notion of disinterestedness in terms of the pleasure derived from the experience.

Roger Scruton's claim that photographs are "fictionally incompetent" (an interesting phrase), a claim based on the assertion that the photograph and its subject have a causal relationship, although I would dispute Scruton's premise that the photograph lacks quality of intentionality (existence) which characterises painting (Scruton, 1981, p.579). I would have thought that the existence of the photograph would imply intentionality. What otherwise was the purpose of pressing the shutter?

It could be said that before the advent of photography, the depiction of reality by hand in the form of painting or drawing, had a phenomenological relationship with photography in terms of intentionality. However, what identifies the relationship between closeness and the photograph as a phenomenological concept is the indexicality of the photograph and the absence of interpretation or mediation that is the hand of man. Pettersson makes no reference to the indexicality of the photograph in his argument (Pettersson, 2011, p.193). I am prepared to concede that in the wider context of photography both analogue and digital; the question of indexicality can be argued. However, in its simplest form, the photograph is considered to be intrinsically indexical, imbued with veracity and verisimilitude (Gunning, 2004, p.40 Sontag, 1979, p.6). Barthes was of the opinion that the human subject can be made less real through the process of being photographed. He states,

Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process 'posing', I instantaneously make another body for myself, transform myself into an image" (Barthes, 2010, p.10).

Pettersson suggests that the phenomenology of a photograph is dependent upon the displaying of detail. If I am to understand why I am looking at the FDAS snapshot and what it is I am seeing, it seems important to understand how we perceive the photograph as an object and as a visual experience. We know that visual perception is mediated by the brain and that the result is prone to illusion and misinterpretation. Modern neuroscience can offer many examples from the relatively simple visual illusion of Richard Gregory⁵⁶ or the baffling case of the “the man who mistook his wife for a hat” highlighted by Oliver Sacks in his book of the same name (Gregory, 2009 Sacks, 2008).

Looking at photographs is a complex process that has both psychoanalytical and philosophical connotations. Looking at images of oneself is quite different to looking at pictures of others. There is the consideration, are you disinterested in the image or not, for example did you take the picture, where you present when it was taken, do you know the person who took it or none of these as in the case of a found image. My response to the FDAS snapshot was initially curiosity, I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of the other photographs which had clearly been specifically selected and arranged. Then there is the question of the memories the image evokes and the ones it does not.

⁵⁶ An example of Gregory’s illusions is the spot the dog optical illusion. The image is meaningless until the shape of a spotted dog emerges from the otherwise random dots that make up the image. Once seen the dog cannot be unseen (Gregory, 2009).

Why do we remember some things and forget others? Why we remember is answered by asking the question: how do we remember? There is of course a neuroscience answer to that question but historically remembering was an art. The rhetorical art of memory utilises a method of remembering based on locating memory in a familiar structure such as the structure of one's home and imprinting the memory in a location by creating a vivid mental picture of what needs to be remembered in a specific location. To remember the memory the rhetor walks mentally through the familiar architectural space until they locate the stored information. The methodologies of 'mnemotechnics' are explained and discussed by David Yates in *The Art of Memory* (Yates, 1992, p.42)

Walton's thesis of transparency in which he suggests we *see* photographs, by which he meant when we look at a photograph of a person or a place that we know, we initially see in our minds eye either person or place and then with a jolt we realise that we are looking at a photograph (Walton, 1984). On reflection, I can identify with this experience. Pettersson argues that we have a similar experience when looking at photorealistic paintings, that is, we initially see a photograph only to realise when the jolt occurs that we are looking at a painting. Pettersson is sceptical about Walton's transparency thesis and the suggestion that this is the idea behind the proximity relationship and the photograph. Pettersson suggests that the thesis is unsustainable because it believes it is unlikely that a viewer would, when looking at a photograph, would see the actual subject, the thing, itself (Pettersson, 2011, p.193).

It is my belief, based on my own experience, that, what Walton means by transparency is the ability of the viewer to ignore the materiality of the photograph

and instead be mentally transported back by means of memory brought about by the object, to perceive within the conscious, the reality of the memories and the experiences, is as vivid as, the creation of subconscious images in dreams.

Pettersson goes on to consider the argument, as did Bazin, that photographs are traces. The acceptability of this argument may depend on how trace is defined. We talk of traces of DNA or fingerprints, both of which require direct contact between the objects involved. A person and a cigarette butt for example. I am not sure it is possible to consider the photograph the result of direct contact between the object and the subject. The semantic argument based on the physics and optics of light could be made. After all, Fox-Talbot suggested that the first photographic image was created by the *pencil of nature* (Fox-Talbot, 1839). The physicality of a photon is no different in physical terms from a pencil or a cigarette butt. Barthes makes a poignant reference to the forensic nature of the *trace* as if a thumbprint, in relation to the indexicality of the photograph and notion of *having been there*. Which he likens to the photograph as a *trace* to an originary being in front of the camera and the person is traced to an originary childhood. This reference is made by Olin in her article, "Touching Photographs: Barthes 'Mistaken' Identification" (Olin, 2002, pp.100, 113).

Tim Dant and Graeme Gilloch, remind us of Benjamin's oblique reference to the *trace* in, "A Small History of Photography" when Benjamin writes of David Octavius Hill's photographic portrait of Mrs Elizabeth Hall, the "Newhaven fishwife" (1843-1847). He refers to the "magical value" of the photograph, which resides not so much in the intentions of the photographer, however talented, but rather in the subject herself, who, "even now is still real." Indeed, the reader of the photograph is attracted to

precisely those fragmentary and contingent irruptions, which escape and confound the photographer's purpose. Benjamin writes:

No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we looking back may.
(Benjamin, 1985, p.243)

The "spark of contingency", marks the image as one that emanated only from a specific time and place, testifying to the reality of a scene as a picture of the past (Dant & Gilloch, 2002, p.9).

Photographs are often spoken of as though they are direct facsimiles of the original object or subject. Whilst this may be so the case of the photogram, the precursor of the optical photograph, it has to be considered that photographs, as generally referred to in theoretical discourse, are mediated by both the optics and the mechanics of the camera and the subsequent photochemical or digital process and of course the actions of the photographer. This mediation may result in a wide range of transformations of the subject before it becomes the object. Compared with the direct visual image, a photograph may show optical distortion, blur due to movement or poor focus, at its worst, the photograph may be unrecognisable when compared with the subject. The phenomenology of the photograph is dependent upon the viewer seeing the photograph as depicting the subject, as opposed to the viewer believing that the photo depicts the subject, to use Richard Wollheim's premise, they 'see' the subject in the photograph, as he describes it "seeing-in" (Wollheim, 1998).

7.2 Critical Reflection

Gillian Rose in her book *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public and the*

Politics of Sentiment, undertook an informal survey of friends, acquaintances and members of a baby and toddlers' group she visited. It was her theory, that mothers mainly took the family snapshots, and it was they who printed them off, compiled them into albums, and annotated them with dates and comments. A similar observation was made by Pierre Bourdieu. He suggested, "significantly the family photograph album has evolved as a predominantly feminine cultural form" (Bourdieu, 1996, p.19). Claire Grey also stated, that "women often take on the role of 'keepers of the past'" (Spence & Holland, 1991, p.107).

The recognition of relationships between photographs and the use of textual comments and captions is a labour of love similar to the way in which digital photographs are arranged online with the use of albums, timelines, captions, comments, keywords and tagging in social media. Both approaches can be seen as a reflection on the use of the snapshot in social culture as surrogate or prosthetic memory and as a form of phatic communication (Goodings & Tucker, 2014 Belk, 2013 Gudmundsdottir, 2014).

The memories stored in either a photo album or in digital storage are analogous to the neurophysiology of memory formation, where memories are, in simplistic terms, stored as a multitude of neural connections. The associated memories in both cases have to be recompiled every time the archive is accessed and in both cases, the reformed memories are subject to change, reinterpretation and error when the memory is recalled (Takeuchi et al., 2013). For this reason, the recall of a memory invoked by a photograph may be incomplete, partial, confused, and hazy or the memory may fail to materialise. Photographs in an album may come loose, be moved

around or even lost. The FDAS photograph, that is the subject of this thesis, had become detached, from its place in the album and disconnected from its textual caption; fortunately, this information had been repeated on the verso of the photograph. There were, however, discrepancies between the two versions of the text. The importance of the relationship between the text and this photograph and the relationship between the text and photographs, in general, will be discussed later. There are other places in the album where the photographs have become detached and are missing, only the legend remaining. Without the photograph, the words make no sense, just as the photographs without the text are open to different reading. It may be possible in some cases to identify the missing photograph from the words and so recompile the memories they evoke.

When I look at the photograph of me, I do not remember the occasion or the participation but I remember the place and in a strange way, I remember the time. Why should I not remember the snapshot being taken? Why should I have such vivid memories of the place where it was taken? I am perplexed by the apparent discrepancy between evidence of the photograph, the writing on the back of the photograph and the certainty of my memory. Surely, my mother would know the date I started school. I am intrigued by the paradox.

My memory is as the observer of a past scene; it is as if the event is unfolding before me. John Sutton describes the experience of remembering, thus,

In some memories, I now see myself in the past scene, with the events playing out as from an observer's perspective. In other cases, I remember the episode as from my original perspective, now inhabiting the same perspective as I did then (Sutton, 2014, p.163).

Sutton suggests that these dual or multiple points of view in autobiographical

memory demonstrate the dynamic constructive nature of recall or remembering. Richard Wollheim described an observation of this nature as experiential or self-centred event memory. Sutton describes an event in which he sees himself age 6 and experiences the event as both a participant and as an onlooker. Wollheim discusses memory as a visuospatial experience, a topic I shall return to later. I raise the topic at this stage because the visuospatial experience is something I shall be exploring in my practice project.

Elizabeth Edwards in “Photographs as Objects of Memory in Material Memory” encapsulates the essence of the sensation of memory where the referent experiences the reality of being remembered and the experience of pastness⁵⁷ that only a photograph can provide. She states,

In their relationship with their referent, their reality effect, and their irreducible pastness, photographs impose themselves on memory. They become a surrogate memory and their silences structure forgetting” (Edwards, 1999, p.222).

It is this sensation of experiencing the past through a photograph and the complexities of remembering and forgetting, provided by the surrogate memory of the photograph; that I wish to capture in my practice and to explore and explain through my writing and research. Because the sense of self and agency is an essential part of this research, my methodology includes an element of performative ekphrasis, as indicated earlier, to convey the personal nature of my relationship with

⁵⁷ Pastness: the subjective quality of something being remembered rather than immediately experienced <almost any popular record ... is apt to be tinged with *pastness* (McMullen, 2014).

the photograph as object, thing and prosthetic memory.

Having considered how we look at and read photographs, particularly snapshot photographs in the next chapter I explore the origins of our relationship with visual culture from a historical point of view and develop an argument to support my premise that the desire to take snapshot photographs is a primal trait; a reflection our evolutionary relationship with technology and our bio-technical⁵⁸ ability to use technology for prosthetic purposes.

⁵⁸ Bio-technical: a term used by German Zoologist V. Franz related to the meaning of progress in living and technical systems through improvement (Franz, 1935)

8 ORIGINARY TECHNICALITY: MEMORY, PROSTHESIS, HOMO PICTOR

'Originary Technicity' – by which is meant the manner in which the human subject is not only the producer and user of technology but is and has always been constituted by technology in turn (Krul, 2012)

8.1 Introduction

A reoccurring theme in this research has been that of the relationship between memory and photography and the metaphorical concept of the snapshot photograph as prosthetic memory.

In this Chapter I explore the complex and originary relationship between the human and the technological and present an argument that the need for snapshot photography has primal origins as a form of exteriorised or prosthetic memory.

This study started with a personal encounter with a snapshot photograph that resulted in the evocation of vivid memories triggered by sight of the snapshot. In Chapter 5 I identified one of the needs that drove Fox-Talbot's desire to photograph was the need to remember and share the memory of the places he visited with others. In Chapter 6 we discovered the rationale behind the success of George Eastman and the Kodak Corporation's marketing strategy was to promote the appeal of their simplified approach to photograph as a way to capture memories. The related advertising copy reinforced this perceived need to remember.

On this basis I explore the concept of memory and the idea of memory as prosthesis. I consider photography as a technology by examining the elements that came together in its conception. Before considering the social history of visual culture and its primal origins and the part it may have played in establishing a genealogical need to exteriorise memory in a graphical form.

I have examined the scholarship relating to *originary technicity*, a concept which Arthur Bradley, in his book *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida*, identifies as primal, suggesting that technology was there from the beginning, as an originating force; evolution he suggests is technical. As Derrida asserts, “life has always been contaminated by *originary technicity*.” In the book, Bradley considers the work of a wide range of explorers of the technical theories surrounding technology and the human. The culmination of his deliberation is a focus on the more recent thinking by modern philosophers such as Derrida and his pupil, Bernard Stiegler in relation to *originary technicity*, *exteriorisation*, *epiphylogenesis* and *prosthetic memory*.

At the risk of being reductive, by invoking the concept of *originary technicity* as the foundation for an exploration of the intricate relationship between the human and technology arguably avoid becoming embroiled in a complex debate about the philosophical basis for the theory. The subject has been addressed by numerous theorists and quite concisely by Federica Frabetti in her paper “Rethinking the Digital Humanities in the Context of Originary Technicity” (Frabetti, 2011).

As I understand it, Derrida's concept of *originary technicity* endeavours to demonstrate what Bradley describes as an “empirico-transcendental” *positum*, that life is

technological and therefore there is both an interaction between life and technology as there is between technology and life. There is a continuum between the organic and the inorganic, the real and the prosthetic that dispels the Aristotelian instrumentalist notion of technology as an inert prosthetic instrument, replacing it with a genealogical framework of *originary technicity* to give us Stiegler's theory of *epiphylogenesis* (Stiegler, 1998, p.2; Bradley, 2011, p.23).

I shall advance an argument that is based on a conceptual framework that links the human with technology as discussed by Stiegler (Stiegler et al., 1998). To invoke Stiegler's views I shall argue that photography is a mark-making technology, an *originary technicity* that is related to the primitive use of lithic technologies and mark-making with the intention of exteriorising memory as prosthesis.

Frabetti reminds us that Stiegler's philosophy of technology is based on the central premise that "the human has always been technological." Stiegler draws on the work of the French palaeontologist Leroi-Gourhan to expand on his concept of the relationship of the human to the making and using of tools (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993).

Stiegler states:

Humans die but their histories remain – this is the big difference between mankind and other life forms. Among these traces, most have in fact not been produced with a view to transmitting memories: a piece of pottery or a tool were not made to transmit any memory but they do so nevertheless, spontaneously. Which is why archaeologists are looking for them: they are often the only witnesses of the most ancient episodes. Other traces are specifically devoted to the transmission of memory, for example, writing, photography, phonography and cinematography. (Stiegler & others, 2008)

In this quotation, Stiegler introduces the notion of mark-making and specifically references photography as a memory trace and a mode of memory transmission.

Timothy Clark helps with the development of the argument by drawing attention to

the conception of technology that has dominated Western thought for almost three thousand years and synthesises it as follows:

The traditional, Aristotelian view is that technology is extrinsic to human nature as a tool which is used to bring about certain ends. Technology is applied science, an instrument of knowledge. The inverse of this conception, now commonly heard, is that the instrument has taken control of its maker, the creation control of its creator [Frankenstein's monster] (Clark, 2000, p.238).

Thus, Frabetti observes, the utilitarian model of technology which is still in use today has its foundations in Aristotelian thought, and as Stiegler maintains, instrumentality⁵⁹ has gained a new importance during the process of the industrialisation of the Western world (Frabetti, 2011, p.4). Clark adds:

The instrumentalists' view of technology aligns it with the traditional views of mimesis and representation – it is essentially an instrument, a mere tool that happens to have been used well or badly (Clark, 2000, p.238).

It is my intention to extrapolate these theories to support my argument that snapshot photography evolved as a specific genre within the canon of photography by considering it as a mark-making mnemonic-technology evolved from the primitive use of lithic technologies by a process of innovation, technological determinism, and social constructivism. I assert that the enduring desire to take snapshots is a fundamental characteristic of *the self* and human agency, and therefore an *originary technicity*.

⁵⁹ I am interpreting instrumentality as the agency of technology.

8.2 Originary Technicity and the Social Construction of Technology

Humankind diverged from their more primitive ancestors through the progress of Darwinian evolution some 100,000 years ago and the start of a socio-cultural evolution mediated by a crude technology, which in turn was influenced by culture and social moulding. Some 50,000 years ago, a major disruption occurred in the evolutionary process. Something happened which triggered, a creative, socio-cultural technological turn.

The importance of aboriginal art and in particular the notion of the handprint, as a visual manifestation of the self, is central to my argument. I believe that the early aboriginal art, like the invention of photography mark the importance of technology in the evolutionary process (Schiffer, 2004; Nancy, 1994; Leroi-Gourhan, 1993). Just as humankind evolved from a single cell through a process of division, mutation and natural selection, in which genes, copy, transform, and combine through mutation and adaptation, there is a school of thought that suggests that technology evolves in a similar manner through memes⁶⁰, ideas, behaviours, skills and social construction and other cultural influences. Memes are copied transformed and combined and the dominant idea of our time is that memes proliferate. It is not just a case of who we are, but how we live and how we create new ideas that evolved from the old ones (Brodie, 2009, pp.1–16)

⁶⁰ The word *meme* originated with Richard Dawkins' 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins used the term to refer to any cultural entity that an observer might consider a replicator.

In his seminal book, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, McLuhan introduces us to the concept of externalism and the notion we are altered by our relationship with technology, he wrote, “we become what we behold [...] we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us” (McLuhan, 1994, p.xi). This notion is not only important from the point of view of the *originary technicity* of primal influences but future ones as well. But it is Bernard Stiegler, Derrida’s pupil who takes this notion a step further with an argument which is more relevant to my enquiry. In an essay, “The Industrial Exteriorization of Memory”, Stiegler discusses what he describes as the externalisation of memory, an evolutionary concept he suggests started some two or three hundred million years ago when human memory is originary exteriorized by our Neanderthal forebears in the form of the lithic (stone) tool, what he describes as a spontaneous memory support (Stiegler, 2010, p.66)⁶¹.

Earlier in this Chapter, I referred to the notion of the meme in cultural and technological evolution. Arthur Bradley in his writings on *originary technicity* also engages in a discourse that considers the analogy between the evolution of life and the evolution of technology. As an example, he refers to the proliferation of new technologies after the Second World War with the emergence of the new sciences of molecular biology, cybernetics, information theory and ultimately our understanding of life. He refers to Francois Jacob’s words “la logique du vivant” (the logic of living),

⁶¹ Recent finds of stone tools identified as being 3.3 million years old suggests that ancestors of *Homo habilis* from 2.4 -2.3 million years ago may not have been first hominid’s to use stone tools

which he concedes goes to the very limit of the analogy or metaphor, `technical`, in technology and the discovery of the rules of what he describes as "reproduction." For example the concept of the extended phenotype, introduced by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene* (Dawkins, 1999).

The concept of the phenotype embraces the essence of *originary technicity*, and the influence of genetics, the phenotype, not only on the evolution of the organism but the technology emanating from the organism. The idea of the phenotype has been generalised by Dawkins in his book, to mean, "all the effects the gene has on the outside world, that may influence its chances of being replicated, can affect the organism in which the gene resides, the environment or other organisms."

8.3 Homo Pictor - The First Snapshot Maker

It is my belief that the origin of the snapshot can be traced back to what Hans Jonas described as *Homo pictor*, man the painter. Following a series of what I believe to be the major technological turns or memes⁶² that shaped the socio-technological evolution of the snapshot photograph. What Stiegler would describe as the process of epiphylogenesis (Stiegler et al., 1998). I shall explore Stiegler's notion of the exteriorisation of memory in some detail in due course.

My argument is based on the tenet that humankind has an innate desire to record self

⁶² A meme is "an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture." A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena. (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012 Dictionaries, 2010)

and place as a means of remembering. A desire reflected in the evolution of mnemonic technologies and their adoption as a part of a social practice of memorialisation. Is my contention that this desire is an evolutionary characteristic or meme, with primal origins, a desire driven and shaped by what Stiegler refers to as a *technical economy of desire* (Stiegler, 2006, p.25). Although the anthropological details of this assertion are still the subject of considerable discourse and differing opinion, there is an expanding body of to support Jonas's proposition that the human characteristic that separates us from the *anima* is the desire to draw, to mark-make (Dexter, 2005; Jonas, 1962, p.203).

It has been argued that the artistic developments in the Upper Palaeolithic⁶³ depict a means of promoting socio-cultural integration and from this an increased consciousness of self and cognitive evolution and awareness of the individual self (Carr & Neitzel, 1995, p.82). An additional indicator of cross-cultural concepts of self can be seen in the awareness of private property. Burial sites from around 100,000 BCE, as well as in more recent graves, have shown the presence of moveable goods such as tools, ornaments, and weapons that were privately owned from Palaeolithic times (Belk, 1984).

Archaeological evidence in the caves of southern Europe suggests that humankind left visible evidence of his existence in the form of marks made on the walls of caves.

⁶³ Palaeolithic: Late Stone Age 50,000 BCE ago or less

Although the details of the age of these marks are still emerging, ochre dots and the outline of handprints seen on the walls of a cave in Southern Spain called El Castillo, are thought to be more than 40,800 years old. These findings are based on work by Alistair Pike, an archaeologist at the University of Bristol (Pike et al., 2012). These cave paintings predate similar paintings discovered in the Chauvet caves of central France, which are believed to be 37,000 years old. There is significant debate as to whether our Neanderthal cousins were capable of producing symbolic art but that is an argument which concerns me less than the question as to why these and many other similar drawings and paintings some are of significant complexity appear to be related to a trait for: self-expression, a link with agency, the sense of self and place, which exists to this day. The reason why humankind made these ancient marks is a matter of some conjecture and significant academic discourse. Whatever the precise reason for these marks what is clear is they represent an originary form of mimesis, a form of cultural expression at a personal level, a *technē* which has continued to evolve through a series of technological turns that now manifests itself in the form of the original snapshot and now the contemporary camera-phone snapshot, the *selfie*.

The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in *Painting in the Grotto* grapples with humankind's move towards agency and expression of the self through the making of marks on the walls of caves, the primal origins of painting and the beginnings of art. Nancy is searching for the reason for these primitive marks. He suggests, "That the "first painter" is drawn to the surface of the cave by the force of resemblance, by the similarity he senses between himself and a strange, external form. What calls him toward art is less the voice of a god and more the wonder of simple, child-like

imitation.” It is true that in many cave paintings the fissures and topography of the walls are incorporated into the art in a form of pareidolia⁶⁴, it could be imagined that seeing the shapes of animals or their faces in the topography of the rock could be a powerful mystical, shamanic experience.

However, in the majority of cave art sites, there is clear evidence of the self in the form of handprints either from pigment smeared on the hand and imprinted on the wall, or by spraying pigment over the hand in a stenciling-like operation, leaving a negative form of the hand. A feature of these handprints is that they are usually supra-positioned over earlier paintings. They are frequently seen in large numbers in large caves where there is little or no other art. Measurements of these aboriginal marks indicate that they are most commonly made by sub-adults, suggesting that they may be related to a special event or occasion such as an initiation(Manhire, 1998). More recent evidence would suggest that many of these handprints were made by women (Snow, 2006). This overt expression of self bears an uncanny similarity to the contemporary sub-adult behaviour of making *selfies* with a camera phone, see later discussion. The similarity of these marks to the contemporary phenomenon of self-expression, tagging,⁶⁵ and graffiti cannot be ignored.

As is often the case in this type of archaeological enquiry, chronology is the subject of

⁶⁴ Pareidolia: A psychological phenomenon in which the mind responds to a stimulus (an image or a sound) by perceiving a familiar pattern where none exists, typically faces.

⁶⁵ Tagging: A stylized signature, normally done in one colour. The simplest and most prevalent type of graffiti, a tag is often done in a colour that contrasts sharply with its background. Writers often tag on or beside pieces other than their own work.

conjecture and debate. There is a suggestion from archaeological research in the Western Cape of Southern Africa that this change in artistic expression indicates a divide between the “fine” art of the earlier hunter-gatherers and the later pastoralists. Various authors suggest that these findings may represent a change in the role of the artist rather than a degeneration in artistic standards (Manhire, 1998). Maybe this change marks a transformation in the relationship with art in general and a move towards self-expression on a wider scale, similar to the changes brought about by the invention of photography and in particular, the commodification of photography and the ubiquitous popularity of snapshot photography.

Humankind diverged from their more primitive ancestors through the progress of Darwinian evolution some 100,000 years ago⁶⁶ and with them, they brought the start of a socio-cultural structure and crude technology, but Nancy would assert no art (see footnote #66). Some 50,000 years ago, a major disruption occurred in the evolutionary process. Something happened which triggered, a creative, technological socio-cultural explosion.

The importance of cave art and in particular, the handprint, to my argument is related to the conviction of many theorists and writers who believe that cave art, like

⁶⁶ The oldest known painting kits, used 100,000 years ago in the stone age, have been unearthed in a cave at Blombos in South Africa.(Henshilwood et al., 2011). This is a recent discovery which opens a discourse that hitherto had generally agreed that although lithic tools were commonplace at this time, painting by Neanderthals at this time had been considered unlikely. Painting was considered to have emerged some 50,000 year later with Homo sapiens.

the invention of photography, is not only disruptive moments in the evolution of Homo sapiens, but cave painting also marks the importance of technology in the evolutionary process. Just as humankind evolved from a single cell through a process of division, mutation and natural selection, in which genes, copy, transform and combine, there is a school of thought that suggests culture evolves in a similar manner through memes⁶⁷, ideas, behaviours and skills. Memes are copied, transformed and combined and the dominant ideas of our time are the memes that proliferate. It is not just a case of who we are it is how we live and how we create new ideas evolved from the old ones (d'Errico et al., 2003).

Henri Bergson was one of the first thinkers to recognise a relationship between evolutionary theory and technology - a framework, which seems to hold up even with the contemporary debate in this area. Paola Marrati discusses Bergson's engagement with evolutionary theory and its relevance to contemporary discourse. Bergson suggested that the human species might have been better characterised as *Homo faber* (man the creator) rather than *Homo sapiens*. He recognised that although both animals and humans used tools, only the humans had the intelligence for technological innovation. They not only created tools but also use them to create and manufacture better tools, thus expanding social, artistic, philosophical and religious horizons. Marrati suggests that Bergson anticipated many of the contemporary

⁶⁷ The word *meme* originated with Richard Dawkins' 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins used the term to refer to any cultural entity that an observer might consider a replicator (Dawkins, 1989).

developments in philosophy and anthropology, namely, the idea that tools and machines open up the possibility of new functions, within and beyond the scope they were originally created for, an observation important in subsequent arguments (Marrati, 2010, p.11). Bergson states:

Above all, it reacts on the nature of the being that constructs it, for in calling on him to exercise a new function, it confers on him, so to speak, a richer organisation, being an artificial organ by which the natural organism is extended (Bergson, 2008, p.141).

Bergson believes that technology supplements biology and in this regard, he belongs to, and anticipates, a line of inquiry developed in France by philosophers, anthropologists and historians of science such as Leroi-Gourhan, Simondon, Derrida and more recently Stiegler and McLuhan (Marrati, 2010, p.10).

In his seminal book, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, McLuhan introduces us to the concept of externalism and the notion that we are altered by our relationship with technology, he wrote, “we become what we behold” that “we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us” (McLuhan, 1994, p.xi). This notion is not only important from the point of view of the originary of primal influences but future ones as well. But it is Bernard Stiegler, Derrida’s pupil who takes this notion a step further with an argument that is more relevant to my enquiry.

In an essay *The Industrial Exteriorization of Memory*, Stiegler discusses what he describes as the externalization of memory, an evolutionary concept, which he suggests started some two or three hundred million years ago when human memory is originarity [sic] exteriorised by our Neanderthal forebears in the form of the lithic (stone) tool, what he describes as a spontaneous memory support (Stiegler, 2006).

A current strand of continental philosophy contends that the human being is

necessarily bound up with an *originary technicity* (Burgin, 1982 Stiegler, 1998 Beardsworth, 1998). Technology, therefore, is to be regarded as constitutive of the extended phenotype of the human animal, a precarious supplement enjoying an *originary* status. History now appears to have reached the perplexing point when it is no longer possible to determine whether technology is an expression of our genes or a sign of nature's cultural conspiracy. The task of the new technologies, we are told, is to unblock the 'obstacle' that human life represents the further evolution of life on earth. In contradistinction to this somewhat evolutionist, anthropocentric even, portrayal of the post-human future, I wish to offer a more complicated conception of our transhuman condition (Bradley, 2011).

It has been argued that the artistic developments in the Upper Palaeolithic (late stone-age 50,000 BCE ago or less) depict a means of promoting socio-cultural integration and from this an increased consciousness of self and cognitive evolution and awareness of the individual self (Carr & Neitzel, 1995, p.82; d'Errico et al., 2003; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967).

The technologies involved include the recognition of burnt wood the product of fire making or possible the result of a naturally occurring fire (lightning strike). The harder material, such as stones, hard clay and mud, dried or baked, and of course pigments such as clay and mud, often bear accidental marks, a foot or handprint or evidence of tool use. It is this recognition of alternative uses for materials which is the essence of creative innovation and the *originary technicity* which underlies this view of socio-technological evolution.

There is significant debate as to whether our Neanderthal cousins were capable of

producing symbolic art but that is an argument which concerns me less than why these and many other similar drawings and paintings, some of the significant complexity, appear to be related to a trait for self-expression, which exists to this day. Whatever the precise reason for these marks, it is clear that they represent an originary form of mimesis and probably mnemonics, a form of cultural expression at a personal level, a *technē* which has continued to evolve through a series of technological turns that are now manifest in the form of the snapshot, and the contemporary selfie. There is a body of opinion that supports the proposition that many manifestations of parietal art were memory related (Whitehouse, 2000, pp.5–12)

One of the most curious manifestations of cave painting is the 'handprint' a strange amalgam of *the self* and *Other*. The handprints may appear singly although more commonly in groups. Jean-Luc Nancy's essay, "Painting in the Grotto", is an analysis of what must be one of the earliest examples of parietal mark-making on rocks and the walls of caves, personal marks that represent *the self*, handprints and marks that depict *Other*, usually images of animals, very occasionally what could be described as human forms, and body parts, often related to fertility (Lewis-Williams, 2004).

Some of the oldest of these marks are those made by the hand of the hand, a positive imprint made by coating the hand with a pigment and applying it to a surface and those of the hand as a negative shape made by spraying pigment from the mouth at the hand placed against a surface, leaving a negative shape of the hand surrounded by sprayed and splattered pigment. These depictions or snapshots of the hand are found in isolation, they can be single prints but are usually multiple iterations often

together with other rock or cave art which may be of animal pictograms, human or abstract forms (Collins, 2008; Pettitt & et al., 2016; Pike et al., 2012).

However, in the majority of cave art sites, there is clear evidence of *the self* in the form of handprints as previously stated (Nancy, 1994, p.69). A feature of these handprints is that they are almost always super-positioned over earlier paintings and they are frequently seen in large numbers in large caves where there is little or no other art. The hand-prints were first thought to be male suggesting that they may be related to a special event or occasion such as an initiation (Manning, 2002). Measurements of these aboriginal marks indicate that they are most commonly (75%) female⁶⁸ (Snow, 2006).

Prints of the hand turn up on a number of occasions in the history of photography and art. Fox-Talbot used a hand as a test object in one of his earliest experiments resulting in a positive print of a hand. No one is certain of the thinking behind the print and there is no certainty it is Fox-Talbot's hand. Never the less, it is a tentative link that spans thirty to forty thousand years of visual culture, back to the parietal handprints. It is uncertain when the print was made but it was one of at least two.

One is documented as having been sent to 'Brewster', presumably Sir David

Brewster, a friend and fellow polymath, based in Scotland in 1841. A version of the

⁶⁸ The first step in the process showed that only 10 percent of the handprints on cave walls in Spain and France were left by adult males. The second step indicates that 15 percent were placed by adolescent males, leaving 75 percent of the handprints female (Snow, 2006).

print appears in the frontispiece of Larry J. Schaaf's book, *Out of the Shadows, Herschel, Talbot and the Invention of Photography* (Schaaf, 1992)

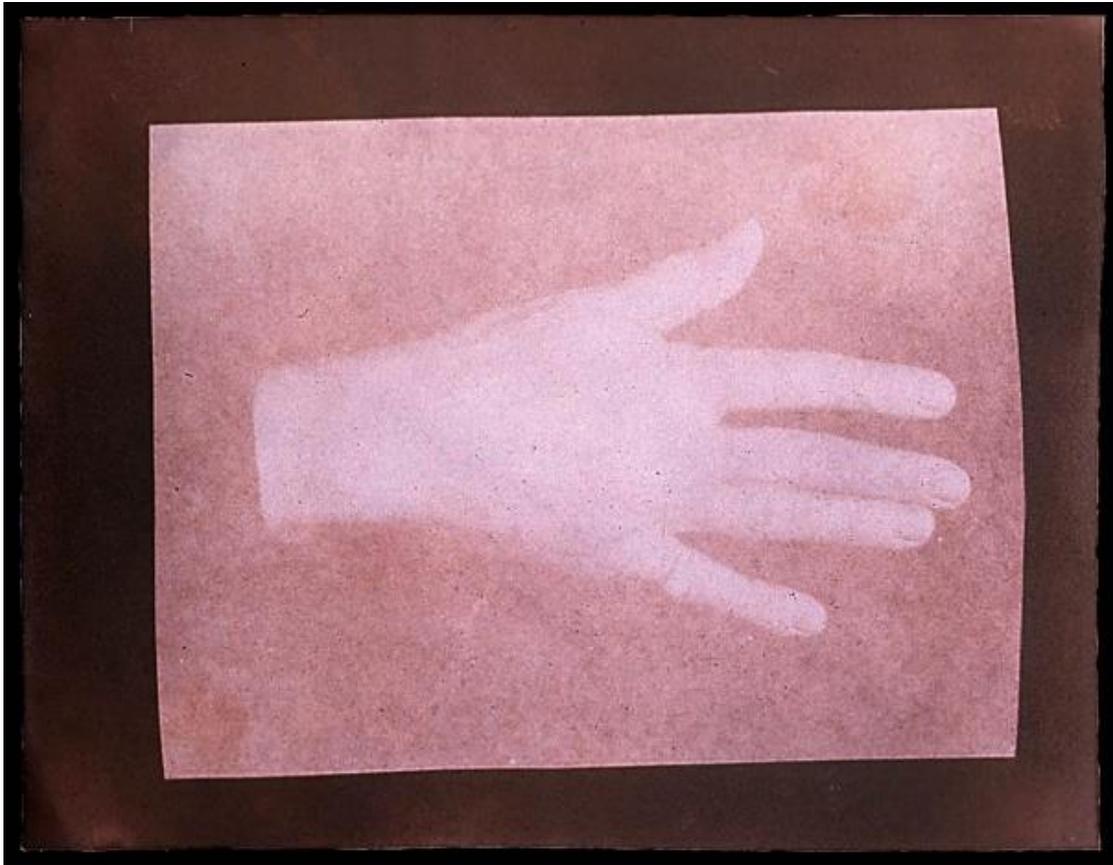


Figure 10 - Photograph of Henry Fox-Talbot's Hand ca 1841

I am intrigued by the handprint mainly because it is one of the clearest primal visual metaphors we have of the self and at the same time an allegory for the snapshot photograph, particularly if we consider the snapshot in terms of the *selfie*. As described earlier I borrowed the negative space of the handprint stencil, as a metaphorical representation of forgetting in my studio practice.

8.4 The Question of Memory

The prosthesis is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body *qua* "human." - Bernard Stiegler *Technics and Time* (Smith & Morra, 2007)

I have endeavoured to establish that the snapshot photograph is the modern iteration

in the evolutionary development of primal mark-making and mimetic mnemonic-technologies, what Stiegler described as *technical prostheticity*, the exteriorisation of consciousness by the use of tools. A temporal *originary technicity* he called epiphylogenesis, by which, through technics, we create time and invent a future for ourselves that is dependent on the acquisition of epiphylogenetic memory passed down from our ancestors (Stiegler, 2011c; Bluemink, 2015).

Howells and Moore in Stiegler and Technics describe Stiegler's concept, thus:

The externalisation of our memory in tools is, for the human, a 'third kind' of memory that is separate from the internal, individually acquired memory of our brain (epigenetic) and the biological evolutionary memory that is inherited from our ancestors (phylogenetic); this Stiegler calls epiphylogenetic memory or epiphylogenesis. We are therefore defined by this process of epiphylogenesis, we are defined by a past that we ourselves, as individuals, have not lived; this past is brought to us through culture which is the amalgamation of the 'technical objects that embody the knowledge of our ancestors, tools that we adopt to transform our environment' (Howells & Moore, 2013).

Although Stiegler's view of the theory of *originary technicity* and prostheticity may help to establish the snapshot photograph as a form of prosthetic memory it does not help us understand the relationship between the referent, the snapshot, and the memory. Stiegler developed the notion of exteriorisation and prosthesis through a reading of Rousseau and Leroi-Gourhan's account of the process of hominization as the exteriorization of the human in its tools and the notion of memory as a supplement.

Alison Landsberg is credited with coining the term *prosthetic memory* to describe the way mass cultural technologies of memory enable individuals to experience as if they were memories, events through which they themselves did not live (Grainge, 2003, p.223). In her book, *Prosthetic Memory: Transformation of American Remembrance in the*

Age of Mass Culture, Landsberg writes, "Defining the concept of prosthetic memory as memories that circulate publicly, that are not organically based, but that are none the less experienced with one's own body by means of a wide range of cultural technologies," Landsberg argues that prosthetic memories, especially those afforded by the cinema, "become part of one's personal archive of experience." Whilst this usage of the term in relation to collective memory is of interest, it is my intention to use the term in relation the "Extended Mind" as personal memory through the medium of the snapshot photograph within a prosthetic culture.

With every tool, man is perfecting his own organs, where the motor or sensory, or is it removing the limits to their functioning [...] Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs, he is truly magnificent; but these organs have not grown on to him, and they still give him trouble at times [...] Future ages will bring with them new and probably unimaginable great advances in this field of civilization and will increase man's likeness to God still more. But in the interests of our investigation, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in this Godlike character.

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Smith & Morra, 2007, p.1)

Contemporary use of the word prosthesis, suggests that it has become something of an all-purpose metaphor for the interactions of body and technology. The Freud quotation is taken from, *The Prosthetic Impulse -From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, a collection of thirteen essays that explore the very nature of the phenomenological, material, embodied and metaphorical prosthesis. The book explores the cyborg singularity of the human and posthuman⁶⁹ merger of flesh and

⁶⁹ In critical theory, the posthuman is a speculative being that represents or seeks to re-conceive the human. The posthuman is roughly synonymous with the "cyborg" of *A Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway (Haraway, 1985).

technology. It is an investigation of the subtle paradox of how the human has been technologized and the technology humanised, notions that are consistent with the view of photography as a technology and as an example of exteriorisation as prosthetic memory (Smith & Morra, 2007).

The word prosthesis originates from the Ancient Greek, meaning addition, application or attachment. In addition to having the meaning of an actual, artificial extension of the body, prosthesis, by means of various media, also has a virtual connotation. McLuhan in, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, considers the double meaning of the prosthetic as media, by offering examples. McLuhan describes the wheel as an extension of the foot; clothing is an extension of the skin and electric technology as an extension of the central nervous system. The notion of the snapshot photograph as an extension of memory is, I feel, consistent with McLuhan's usage of the word (McLuhan, 1994).

In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud looks at the relationship between the body and technology and uses the metaphor of prosthesis to describe this relationship between man and his technology. By the use of technology, man has turned himself from a feeble animal organism into a form of prosthetic God using his auxiliary organs as a form of enhancement or a substitute for something lost (Freud, 2011). Freud wrote:

If I distrust my memory – neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well – I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. In that case, the surface, upon which this note is preserved, the pocket-book or sheet of paper, is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemonic apparatus, which I otherwise carry about with me invisibly. I have only to bear in mind the place where this “memory” has been deposited and I can then “reproduce” it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory. [From - The ‘Mystic Writing-pad] (Freud, 2006, p.207)

In this quotation, Freud alludes to humankind’s long relationship with the prosthetic or as he describes it auxiliary organs whilst at the same time suggesting that there is a debate to be considered as we plunge into the brave new world of the cyborg and the prosthetic. The prosthetic device had a particular immediacy for Freud in that he had to wear a prosthetic insert to form a seal between his mouth and his nasal cavity due to a cancerous lesion in his mouth (Gilman, 1995, p.175).

Critical of the notion of prosthetics, Heidegger views prosthesis as a form of bodily destruction. He argues, “The hand is the essential distinction of man [...] The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand” he further suggests that the typewriter obliterates the hands written mark, the very trace of the body; suggesting that the prosthetic typewriter is mediation between the living hand and the dead typographic word. Just as the camera delineates and mediates the marks of the draughtsman’s pencil by automating the mimesis of reality with the use of the pencil of light.

McLuhan previously suggested, this is a form of amputation “in the sense that, man’s essential distinction, is no longer present” (Heidegger, 1998). This is also a criticism that could be levelled at the snapshot photograph, despite its inherent indexicality as a representation of the real, it is subject to mediation by the camera

both in terms of framing, optical distortion, inadvertent technical faults and the transformation from three to two dimensions (Lefebvre, 2007). In Heideggerian terms, the photograph and the snapshot photograph, in particular, are paradoxical, both prosthesis and a unique mark at the same time, imparting the characteristic traces of mediation, of the camera, equivalent to the unique mark of handwriting, the trace of the technology.

The notion of prosthetic memory, in a contemporary sense, really starts with the concept of new media and the invention of photography. In her book *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity*, Celia Lury considers the power of the photograph and the notion of, “‘seeing photographically’ redefines the relations between consciousness, the body and memories is such as to produce a prosthetic culture.” Lury believes that exposure to photographic images as may be seen in family albums, advertising and the cartoons of superheroes, forms the natural process of self-identity by introducing false memory through the deliberate transformation of the visual message (Lury, 1998). We can certainly recognise the connection between the family photograph album and the notion of prosthesis, but I am not sure about superheroes.

The notion of false memory is subtle and an issue I shall consider elsewhere. When it comes to false memory, it was Benjamin who warned of the power and influence of mass media and advertising imagery, particularly the photograph and other forms of photographic imagery, including film and photojournalism. He predicted the influence of the mimetic effect of the image and the imposition of false memory (Jennings, 2005).

As has been described elsewhere, Stiegler expanded Derrida's notion of supplementation, referring to writing as prosthesis for memory:

"What is exceeded is the essential fallibility of a person's memory that, as living, is mortal; the supplement of writing allows that person to confide the trace of his or her intuitions, which become as a result transmissible, to future generations" (Stiegler, 2001, p.245)

The definition of memory is clearly problematical with nearly twenty dictionary meanings and literary usages alone. This serves to emphasise the lax manner in which the term tends to be used. A useful starting point for any discourse on the subject of memory is a collection of essays edited by Susan Radstone and Bill Schwarz, *Memory Histories, Theories and Debates*. The collection considers the current state of play with regard to *Memory Studies* and provides an excellent introduction to the discipline (Radstone & Schwarz, 2010). The volume reconstructs the work of great philosophers and literary figures over the past two centuries who recasts the concept of memory and brought it into the forefront of modernist and post-modernist imagination.

The fundamental importance of memory in relation to both the self and collective culture was recognised in the ancient world, as was the potential danger of the use of prosthetic memory. For example in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the Egyptian god of writing Theuth (circa 3000 BCE), the scribe who was said to have invented, numbers, arithmetic, geometry, gambling and the sacred writings of the hieroglyph, promotes writing to king Thamus, as an aid to memory and to wisdom. Writing, Theuth argued, will greatly extend our intellectual capacities, as a prosthetic memory. It will free our minds for more productive pursuits. Thamus, however, disagrees: Socrates is reputed to have told a fable, in which the king of Egypt's spurned Theuth's gift of

writing. He characterises writing as a Pharmakon⁷⁰(Derrida, 1981): as both medicine and the poison, suggesting that,

This discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learner's souls because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written character and not remember of themselves. And so the specific which you have discovered is made not to memory but to reminiscence (Plato, [380 BCE] 2007, p.79); (Herrmann & Chaffin, 1988, p.38).

This Socratic view of the dangers of prosthetic memory will prove to be uncannily prophetic. A number of papers are appearing, heralding the changing nature of memory due to an increasing reliance on the use of the Internet and digital media.

Leading researcher Betsy Sparrow describes the phenomenon as *transactive memory*⁷¹ or the *Google effect* based on an idea that there are external memory sources and storage places. Sparrow states, “The social form of information storage is also reflected in the findings that people forget items they think will be available externally [...]” (Sparrow et al., 2011).

One of the major issues to be faced in contemporary memory studies is the question of terminology. *The Stamford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* states that ‘memory labels’ a diverse set of cognitive capacities by which we retain information and reconstruct past experiences, usually for present purposes. Memory is one of the most important

⁷⁰ Derrida writes of the Socratic pharmakon in *Dissemination*. The pharmakon refers to a kind of power hidden in words that allows them to function as both poison and remedy. This power/metaphoric substance - or rather anti-substance - resembles a drug since it suggests a depth while revealing an ever changing surface

⁷¹ A transactive memory system is a mechanism through which groups collectively encode, store, and retrieve knowledge.

ways by which our histories animate our current actions and experiences, and is a key aspect of personal identity (Sutton, 2010). Sutton goes on to say that, although an understanding of memory is likely to be important in making sense of the continuity of the self, of the relation between mind and body and our experience of time, it has all too often been curiously neglected by philosophers.

In her book *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera's eye*, Barbie Zelizer suggests,

There has been a tendency to lump a wide variety of disparate entities under the one heading.

She asks the question,

Is it really appropriate to include individual mental process, myths, memorials, debates about the past, autobiographies and families looking at snapshots and bring them all together under the umbrella of memory" (Zelizer, 1998)?

Professor Astrid Erll, in her book *Memory in Culture*, endeavours to bring together an understanding of memory, one which unites under one roof, such heterogeneous phenomena as neuronal connections, everyday conversations, and tradition. She suggests that seen in this way, memory (to give a preliminary definition) is an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial or social nature which relate past and present, (and future) in socio-cultural contexts.(Erll, 2011, p.7)

In psychology, the situation is no less complex. In simplistic terms, there is a tendency to talk of, sensory memory, short-term memory and long-term memory. We can talk of memory in terms of the individual and the collective. In the individual, we have explicit and implicit memory. Explicit memory includes semantic, episodic and autobiographical. Implicit memory includes procedural, perceptual and priming. In collective memory, we have communicative and cultural memory. In this area of

cognitive neuroscience, the first thing we have to recognise is, despite rapid progress in the area of memory research, there is still a long way to go before we understand exactly how memory works. Such is the rapid progress in this area that the discoveries of yesterday are being overturned by the revelations today.

Given the difficulties of defining how memory works, writers frequently resort to metaphor as they endeavour to understand the complexities of memory. Interestingly it is not always the world of science writing that they tend to turn to the world of literature where even the most erudite of science writers and researchers, frequently draw upon the works of Proust and Virginia Woolf for examples of how memory works, both literally and metaphorically.

History is littered with a trail of metaphorical devices for understanding and explaining memory. In his book, *Metaphors of Memory* Douwe Draaisma, reminds us that Socrates endeavours to explain the notion of memory to a young scholar, "I want you to imagine that our minds container wax block This wax tablet is a gift of *Mnemosyne*, the mother of the Muse's, says Socrates.

[...] whenever we want to remember something we've seen or heard or conceived on or around, we subject the block to the perception of the idea and stamp the impression into it as if it were making marks with signet rings. Remember and know anything imprinted as long as the impression remains in the block: but we forget and do not know anything which is erased or cannot be imprinted (Draaisma, 2000, p.24).

Draaisma reminds us that, "At the time of Plato, waxed tablets and already we've seen for several centuries." Promotion of the wax tablet as a metaphor for memory

gave rise to the notion of the *Tabula Rasa*⁷², a metaphor for the mind arising from the Roman tabula wax tablets used for writing on. Surfaces covered with wax could be written on over and over again, the previous text being erased before the next was written, except partial traces of previous texts often remained with the potential for confusion or miss reading. Freud also borrowed this concept with his metaphor based on the Wunderblock⁷³ or 'Mystic Writing-Pad' (Freud, 1957, p.175). There are numerous other metaphorical references to memory, ranging through, the photograph, a library, a filing cabinet, the digital computer and my favourite, the compost heap (Randall, 2007).

For most people memory is a personal issue, memory is an intrinsic and essential part of our lives, something we are aware of from an early age, more than likely the reference point will be school, where we seem to spend much of our time coping with the vagaries of remembering how to spell particular words or our seven times table. However, it is often at the other end of our lives when we again become aware of our dependence on memory, when memory starts to fail us. It is the prospect of a remedy for failing memory that underpins this thesis as I consider the paradox of the prosthetic memory in the age of the smartphone through the lens of the ubiquitous

⁷² Tabula rasa is a Latin phrase often translated as "blank slate" in English and originates from the Roman tabula used for notes, which can be overwritten and partly obscured or obliterate by heating the wax.

⁷³ The Wunderblock, a child's toy comprised of a wax tablet and a sheet of cellophane. Erased images drawn on the tablet disappear are never fully erased, however, a faint trace from each image is permanently etched on the wax board.

snapshot photograph.

Throughout life, we accumulate memories, metaphorically speaking, in much the same way as we accumulate photographs. Snapshots of time and place that we can access at some time in the future, enabling us to relive the moment, assuming we can find them. We use our snapshots, to trigger links to other sources of memory, often other prosthetic-memory, a diary, a source of reference. As mentioned earlier, today this reference source is most likely to be a search engine such as *Google* or similar search engine on the Internet. It could also be to browse any number of prosthetic memory locations and repositories; from mundane works of reference such as a dictionary, thesaurus, even the more prosaic social network sites (SNS), such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram*.

However, when we refer to a snapshot photograph as prosthetic memory we are looking to recall personal memories, memories that are not discrete they are linked to every other memory in our mind. When triggered they give rise to a narrative, compiled from what we believe to be memories. There is an element of serendipitous story telling about the process as we struggle to remember those things we have forgotten. We substitute imagination and false memories, how can we be sure what we remember is correct? We seek reassurance from our prosthetic memory devices. How reliable are they as a source of memories?

Viewers have come to expect that photographs have only one relationship to time and reality. "We are programmed to think about photographs as representing instants in time..." (Belden-Adams, 2007).

I shall consider the various definitions of memory as I proceed. In broad terms, this thesis will be concerned principally with personal memory, collective memory, and

sociocultural memory, particularly in terms of remembering and forgetting, two processes which are closely interwoven on both an individual and the collective level.

8.5 Memory: Prosthesis

The commodification of the photograph at the turn-of-the-century by George Eastman and his newly formed Kodak Corporation with the introduction of the Brownie camera, backed by a worldwide marketing campaign based on the idea of capturing memories, established photography, in particular the snapshot photograph, as the realisation of the *originary technicity* of externalisation and prosthetic memory (Stiegler, 1998; Bergson, 1903).

Marketing was Kodak's secret weapon; they used to great effect, creating new markets for photography quite separate from the traditional professional, semi-professional and informed amateur market. Kodak targeted selected markets; in 1888 he targeted the wealthy middle class, the European diaspora, with the *Kodak* the first truly commodified camera. In 1900 he launched the *Brownie* targeting families particularly children and woman.

Women were to become not only the family photographer but the family archivist and compiler of the family album. The simplicity of the photographic process was emphasised, with the *Kodak girl* becoming the principal symbol of Kodak advertising, accompanied by snappy slogans such as, "You press the button and we do the rest" and "Save Your Happy Memories with the Kodak." The snapshot photograph became ubiquitous, its honest simplicity, its indexicality, provided the nearest tangible manifestation of prosthetic memory (West, 2000).

Sontag reminds how important photography became in family life, "cameras go with

family life" (Sontag, 1979, p.23). The family album became an essential feature in the drawing room of every middle-class Western family. As Sontag notes, "through photography, each family construct a portrait of itself, a portfolio of images that bears witness to its connectedness" (Sontag, 1979, p.8). Throughout the hundred and fifty, or so, years of the photographs history, the ubiquitous, banal snapshot photograph continues to exist in a variety of formats and media types, undiminished in its verisimilitude. Within the canon of photography, it is the authentic indexicality of the snapshot photograph that ensures its place as a social record and metaphor for memory.

An important aspect of the snapshot photograph is the intentionality to record the moment without consideration for quality or art. Snapshot photography is a means of recording the truth, a means of fixing time and place in space and context. As Michael Clarke observed, "the photograph was a vision of things seen, not imagined" (Clarke, 1997, p.187). Similarly, John Berger observed, "in twentieth-century terms, the photograph record things seen [...] the photographic image has been sanctioned as an analogue of the real." He went on to say, "there are no photographs which can be denied, all photographs have the status of fact" (Berger & Mohr, 1995).

The feature of the snapshot photograph is its portability; the simplicity of the reproductive process allows the creation of pictures of any size, large enough to display in a frame or small enough to be secreted into a wallet or handbag to be used as an aide-memoire, a cherished memory. It is this portability of the snapshot photograph and its facility to aid remembering that leads us to consider the snapshot photograph as prosthetic memory.

Andy Clark and David Chalmers in their paper “The Extended Mind” pose the question “where does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?” Clark and Chalmers consider the reality of Stiegler's concept, the questions of active externalism and extended cognition, considering the example of counting on one's fingers to offload working memory, in the context of a tricky calculation, like a pocket calculator. They go on to consider the portability of the cognitive process and the decoupling from the biological brain. They ask us to think of the analogy of the old image of the engineer with a slide rule hanging from his belt wherever he goes. What if people always carried a pocket calculator or had them implanted? These questions are part of the debate as to whether any extension of the mind has to be coupled or whether it can be decoupled. They consider that coupling with the brain is a more reliable concept (Clark & Chalmers, 1998). They argue by way of an example, stating:

If the resources of my calculator or my Filofax are always there when I need them, then they are coupled with me as reliably as we need in effect they are part of the basic package of cognitive resources that I bring to bear on the everyday world. They go on to argue that these systems cannot be impugned simply on the basis of the danger of discrete damage, loss or malfunction or because of any occasional decoupling: the biological brain is likewise at risk of losing problem-solving capacities through lesion or trauma and occasionally loses them temporarily, in episodes of sleep, intoxication, and emotion, for example. As long as the relevant capacities are generally there when they are required this seems to be coupling enough. (Clark & Chalmers, 1998)

Clark and Chalmers contend that the biological brain has evolved in such a way that it seeks to enhance and compensate for deficiencies in physical and cognitive function by the use of external resources; a reflection on McLuhan's notion of prosthetics, as an extension of the self (McLuhan, 1994, p.7).

In the book *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, there is a contrasting view of prosthetic memory, offered by Alison Lansberg in her

essay: "Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner." Landsberg recalls the 1908 silent film, *The Thieving Hand* in which a wealthy passer-by takes pity on an armless beggar and buys him a prosthetic arm. What he doesn't know however is that the arm once belonged to a prolific thief. The arm remembers its thieving habit and snatches possessions as people walk by. Dismayed the beggar sells the prosthetic arm to a pawn shop. But the arm escapes from the shop and re-attaches itself to the beggar. The beggar is arrested and sent to jail where the arm deserts him and having found its previous criminal owner attaches itself to him. Landsberg describes this as "a prosthetic memory" meaning memory which does not come from the person's lived experience in any strict sense, being an implanted memory (Landsberg, 1995 Blackton, 1908). The analogy serves to demonstrate that memories are not transferable.

Movies have been a favourite medium for rehearsing the notion of the photograph or snapshot as prosthetic memory. The film *Memento* provides an example of the nature of prosthetic memory in action. In her paper, "Does Philosophy Meet Film in Plato's Cave? Or at the Pharmacy? Reflections on Memento", Joanne Faulkner offers a philosophical deconstruction of the film. The film's main character, Leonard Shelby suffers from *Retrograde Amnesia*⁷⁴ the combined outcome of seeing his wife murdered and a head injury. As a result, he cannot recall memory prior to the onset

⁷⁴ **Retrograde amnesia** is a form of amnesia where someone is unable to recall events that occurred before the development of the amnesia, even though they may be able to encode and memorise new things that occur after the onset.

of the condition or form new memory. To cope with the condition he resorts to various form of prosthetic memory. He uses *Polaroid* photographs, *Post-it Notes* and all manner of written notes. Later, when an aide memoire is confirmed as the truth it is converted into a tattoo on his body, as an indelible *aide mémoir*.

Faulkner considers that: Shelby, like Theuth,⁷⁵ places all his faith in his `writing invention`, his system of note taking, that provides him with the order required to act. Faulkner recalls a line from the film in which Shelby says, “You learn to trust your own handwriting.” She suggests his notes are advice past to ones-self from a previous-self: the only person he trusts not to manipulate him. But as King Thamus warns, and as we find later in the film, writing corrupts absolutely, as Shelby’s handwriting cannot protect him, even from himself (Nolan, 2000). My interest in the analogy provided by this movie is in the use of photographs as an *aide memoire* and Shelby’s intuitive understanding that they offer an authentic alternative to original memory, a reflection on the photographs inherent indexicality. The notion of writing combined with images as prosthetic memory in these filmic parodies is analogous to the family snapshot album with its mix of photographs with notations and captions. “I don’t know why a replicant would collect photos – maybe they were like Rachael, [...] they need memories.” These words were uttered by the character of the Bounty Hunter, Dick Deckard, played by Harrison Ford in the Ridley Scott, 1982, cult classic

⁷⁵ Theuth - The God of Writing

film, *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982). The opening quotation and aspects of the narrative from this film providing a useful segue into a classic metaphor that illustrates the notion of snapshot photographs as prosthetic memory.

The film is based on the original book by Philip Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. The story set in 2021, depicts a world in which many life forms have been replaced by replicants, duplications of almost forgotten originals (Dick, 2007; Scott, 1982). The replicants have no personal or cultural memory. In the film, photographs represent one of the last remaining connections with the illusion of memory. The character Rachel believed to be a replicant, carries in her handbag photographs of a “mother and child” which she takes to be presumptive proof of her being the product of a natural human, rather than laboratory birth. “Look,” she said, “here is me with my mother” but Deckard tells her, “not your memories, but someone else’s” a “synthetic memory system, as fraudulent as a faked photo.” Rachel departs disillusioned. Deckard flips through another set of “old photographs” taken from another Android. They contain a mixture of what appear to be original photographs and also photographs taken by Androids of each other. He also peruses his own collection of family photographs spread out before him; some are faded, brown and curly with age and usage. These photographs are believed to be real, true memories of the past, of things that actually happened. Decker’s photographs represent pure nostalgia, they are symbols of a life already lived. Replicants are programmed to collect photographs, any photographs because they need memories in order to believe they are human. They are also fed fake, “real” photographs, made with cameras and lenses.

What do these movies contribute to the argument that snapshots are prosthetic memory? Paul Smart in an analysis of *Memento*, in the context of extended memory, draws the following conclusion; memory is constituent of who we are, as an extension of cognitive representation, helps to make us who we are. Both of these films reveal an aspect of cognitive function in relation to mnemonic technologies that I had not previously considered.

My FDAS photograph prompted vivid recall of the place where the snapshot was taken and of related memories of the time and place but it did not prompt me to remember the snapshot being taken. Why should this be? Is it because the memory is not there to be recovered or is the memory there but cannot be recalled? Is it that photographs only serve as a source of memory if the photograph is of the event? In the case of my photograph, if the photograph had been of my father taking the photograph, would I have remembered the event? To put it another way, we remember what the photograph depicts but not what the photograph is. It is as if we are outside looking in rather than inside looking out. In both of the movies referred to earlier, access to photographs does not guarantee remembering.

In this section, I have explored the notion of the snapshot as a metaphor for memory and a manifestation of Stiegler's concept of exteriorization as prosthetic memory. Whilst it is clear that the snapshot has a mnemonic function as an aide mémoire the snapshot is no more reliable as a metaphor for memory than memory itself. The construction of narratives from the memories trapped in these snapshots imparts snapshots with a similar mythical quality to storytelling. Fragmentation, uncertainty and frailty of memory are something I endeavour to portray in the practice element

of the study.

8.6 The Medium of Photography as Technology

It would serve the purpose of my argument to suggest, as others have done, that photography is a technology, but I feel that some justification for that assertion is required. The question of 'what photography is' has been debated in many contexts.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes the medium of photography to be, "the process or art of producing pictures by means of the chemical action of light on a sensitive film on a base of paper, glass, metal, etc." Photography is frequently referred to as a medium. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines a medium to be, "An intermediate agency, means, instrument or channel. Also, intermediation instrumentality: in phrase by or through the medium of a specific medium." If we compare the definition of painting as a medium it may help. Again, the *Oxford English Dictionary* regards painting as, "the representing of objects or figures by means of colours laid on a surface; the art of so depicting objects" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012).

I believe, from these definitions, it is reasonable to suggest the terms technology and medium, describe two aspects of photography. I would suggest that photography is first a technology; a combination of the mechanical, the optical and the chemical, constituted as a medium when it is used to perform an act of representation or depiction. Photography cannot be a medium without first being a technology.

In his book *The Engine of Visualisation: Thinking Through Photography*, and a paper, "Talbot's Technologies: Photographic Depiction, Detection, and Reproduction", Patrick Maynard presents a case for considering Photography as a Technology

(Maynard, 2000; Maynard, 1989).

The definition of the term technology has changed with time. The etymology of the word is based on the Greek – tec(k)hné (art, craft) and logos (word, speech > tekhnologia > English –ology > technology. The Oxford English Dictionary defines technology as - (n) the application of knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). Not the most helpful of definitions.

In the seventeenth century, the term technology was used to mean a discussion of the applied arts only. By the mid-twentieth century, technology was defined by such phrases as “the means or activity by which man seeks to change or manipulate his environment.” In simple literal terms, technology can be seen as the “development over time of systematic techniques for making and doing things” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). In the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, the entry for Philosophy of Technology states in the first paragraph,

It is largely by technology that contemporary society hangs together. It is hugely important not only as an economic force but also as a cultural force. Indeed during the last two centuries, when it gradually emerged as a discipline, philosophy of technology has mostly been concerned with the impact of technology on society and culture, rather than with technology itself (Franssen et al., 2015).

The connection made between technology and culture is important in my argument that snapshot photography is a social construction of technology. The manner in which the term technology has been defined and described has varied throughout history, tempting though it is to become involved in a more expansive search for a definition of technology; for the purposes of this study, the terms of reference are covered by the definitions quoted above.

An example of the dangers of pursuing the definition further is illustrated in

Maynard's writing in which he is rather convoluted in his establishment of a definition of photography as a technology (Maynard, 2000, pp.3–6). However, for me his most insightful observation was to suggest that photography is in the first instance, a technology for the marking of surfaces, in this case with light. This is a notion which links to my belief in a connection with primitive mark making and is in accordance with Fox-Talbot's originary concept of what he wanted photography to be; a mimetic, mnemonic-technology a means of mark-making with light, confirmed in his journal, "how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably and remain fixed upon the paper with the pencil of light." This desire is reflected in the name he gave to his process, *Photogenic Drawing*. (Fox-Talbot, 1844b)

Establishing photography as a technology enables me to develop an argument to support the contention that snapshot photography is a socially constructed mimetic and mnemonic mark-making technology. It is my contention that the purpose of photography and the desire to photograph is innate, and can be traced back to primal mark making as a form of visual recording, communication, and externalisation.

8.7 Scopic Regimes

The first problem we face in recognising photography as technology is in defining photography. Most definitions of photography overlook the fact that in its first manifestation photography did not involve the use of optics; it was a photochemical

process for differentiating between light and shadow. What the photograph, or rather photogram⁷⁶ recorded was the shadow cast by an object onto a sensitised surface when placed in direct contact⁷⁷. Materials such as leaves, lace, etchings, drawings or even the hand, were used in early experiments.

Although the proto-photographers experimented with the use of optical devices such as the Camera Obscura to create photographic images, initially the materials they used were too insensitive to light to establish an image within unreasonable exposure times. The sensitivity of the photochemistry improved and the experimenters moved on from photograms to the use of optical devices. Initially, adaptations of the Camera Obscura were used, often custom made. Telescopes and microscopes were also used as the optical devices to project an image onto the sensitised materials. The pinhole camera can also be included as a quasi-optical device in this line-up. The first recorded use of a pin-hole⁷⁸ camera was by the Scottish Scientist Sir David Brewster in 1856 (Brewster, 1856, p.137)

When one considers the evolution and progression in the chemistry, optics, apparatus and process that gave us photography, there can be little doubt that they define photography as a technology, a transformation of the scientific into the

⁷⁶ Photogram: a picture produced with photographic materials, but without a camera.

⁷⁷ Thomas Wedgwood and Humphrey Davey pioneered camera less photography, the photogram in the 1790's but failed to devise a means of fixing the image to prevent further darkening on exposure to light. Their work was reported to the Royal Society in 1802.

⁷⁸ Brewster used the hyphenated form of the word pin-hole when he described the instrument in his book *The Stereoscope*.

technological. The creation of new knowledge, the adaptation and improvement of existing technology, the invention of new technologies and the adoption of apparently unrelated knowledge driven by a desire to amplify or augment a natural phenomenon, are all characteristics of what we understand to be technology.

9 THE SNAPSHOT: A PHATIC GESTURE

What started with the exploration of a childhood memory of place and self, the relationship between the snapshot and memory developed into the desire to understand why two people were moved to take similar snapshots of an identical occasion, one separated by the temporality of a generation. Was this a Nietzschean⁷⁹ recurrence, the rebirth of an idea or part of some hackneyed social ritual? What is it about snapshot photography that we find so compelling?

In previous chapters I have argued that snapshot photography is the contemporary manifestation of a primal, evolved, mark making technology to assuage our fear of forgetting by helping us to remember.

In this chapter, I consider the factors that contribute to snapshot photography becoming an ingrained phatic social practice. I consider what it is about snapshot photography that distinguishes it as an identifiable genre of photography. I shall

⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche "eternal recurrence or return" - a concept that the universe and all existence and energy has been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a self-similar form an infinite number of times across infinite time or space (Heidegger, 1984, p.25).

ponder the psycho-social concepts of the desire, ritual, intentionality, performativity, and performance that contribute to the ingrained nature of the phenomenon as a social practice.

George Eastman and the Kodak Corporation recognised the power of the drive behind the primal desire to photograph and the factors that contribute to the fetishization of this desire. It was Marx who recognised the social relationships between commodification and desire, he called it *commodity fetishism* (Marx et al., 2012). Stiegler recognised the integration of photography into the popular psyche as proletarianization. He was concerned by the manner in which remembering *hypomnema*, was being affected by the development of the capitalist mass market. Michel Foucault described *hypomnema* as, a material memory of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation, a form of note. "Current interpreters see in the critique of the hypomnemata in the Phaedrus a critique of writing as a material support for memory" (Foucault, 1984, p.363, 364). New forms of technological communication were developing and Derridas notion of grammatization was being replaced or being grammatized via "cognitive and cultural mnemotechnologies" of which snapshot photography was but one example (Stiegler, 2010, p.32).

Snapshot photography appealed to its new markets because it satisfied the libidinal traits of the consumer psyche, desire, a need for ritual, reinforced by repetition, and the need to perform. These notions are in turn expressed in the performative intentionality of the agency of photographing. They satisfied what Stiegler recognised as the desire to consume (Stiegler, 2011a).

Snapshot photography is seen as a form of phatic communication because, as I shall argue, the snapshot is a performative means of communication from the gesture and performance of its creation to the paradox of its ephemeral triviality, which contrasts with its value as a treasured possession. The analogue snapshot was the precursor to a form of phatic communication that we now recognise as the camera phone or smartphone (Blanco, 2010).

We all recognise the snapshot as a form of visual communication because of its *snapshottedness* just as we recognise the social function of language and conversation. Other than their aesthetic qualities snapshots offer little in the way of information particularly to the disinterested⁸⁰. As Langford noted, families communicate through the snapshot and the family album via the gaze and the recognition of “small signs of intimacy” which can only be unveiled by family members (Langford, 2006, p.231).

9.1 Phatic Communication

In the context of snapshot photography, the linguistic usage and definition of the word phatic is being appropriated because I and others feel it is an apt adaptation of the word to express the manner in which snapshot photographs are involved in social communication. They are a trivial adjunct to social intercourse often replacing talk with visual communication in a sociable manner, a form of visual *chit chat*. They are often used as a form of silent communication, a means of keeping in touch. They

⁸⁰ Disinterested: Usage Kantian (Ginsborg, 2014 Section 2.1)

can be seen as a coded form of communication, only the interested *understanding the joke*.

The topic of the snapshot as a form of phatic communication and expression is explored in Patricia Prieto Blanco's paper, "Family photography as a phatic construction." Blanco discusses snapshot photography, in terms of family photography⁸¹ in its social context and recognises many of the issues discussed in this section.

In the introduction of her paper, she discusses her experience with her grandmother's family photograph archive and recognises that while the production and reception of family or snapshot photography have been the subject of academic discourse, the recognition of either family or snapshot photography as a specific genre of photography has warranted little examination.

Blanco also sees snapshot photography in terms of an intersection of the technological and the socio-cultural. She recognises the ritualised, performative and phatic nature of this branch of photography, characteristics that I explore in detail.

Blanco writes,

⁸¹ The Family Photograph in the form of a print can be seen as a sub-genre of snapshot photography distinguishing it from other forms of snapshot such as slides and digital images, as it requires a specific style of consumption, the Album.

Family photography gains its performative character by means of its phatic function (Malinowski, 1923/1949: 315-7), inscribed in a historical and socio-cultural frame (Hirsch, M. 1997: 10-2). It actuates in the border between naivety and formality, and these *Memory-Pictures* (Keppeler, 1994: 187) create an impression of reliability and authenticity by their ritualised reception. (Blanco, 2010, p.1)

Bronislaw Malinowski's concept of the word *phatic* was formed in relation to defining the function of language where he gave it to mean "a communication use to perform social function rather than to convey an idea" (Malinowski, 1994; Senft, 2009, p.227). Malinowski distinguishes the term from J L Austin's 'phatic act', the performative utterance (Austin, 1975, p.92), and yet it would seem that as with many terms appropriated from linguistics the terminology is often adapted to suit the author's purpose.

It strikes me that the term phatic is a perfect descriptor for the snapshot photograph, which could be considered the exemplary example of a form of social communication, with no other intentional purpose, viz. it is not meant to be art or ethnographic. Similarly, I would suggest that the act of snapshot photography is performative; and in Austin's terms I would suggest that it is a 'phatic act'.

Having prepared the ground for my arguments I shall proceed to draw together the psycho-social elements, which I believe combine to characterise the snapshot and snapshot photography as a complex social practice. I consider the part played by desire, repetition, ritual, performance, intentionality in the constitution of this unique social behaviour.

I mentioned earlier that Batchen believed that Fox-Talbot and his fellow proto-photographers were driven by the desire to photograph, in which case a consideration of the emotion or state of mind we call desire seems like a good place

to start this section of my study. The finer details of this argument may be best left until another occasion. It fits my purpose to consider the snapshot as a form of phatic communication snapshot photography as a phatic act. I shall expand the argument in due course.

9.2 Desire

The term desire is of interest for a number of reasons in relation to photography in general and the snapshot in particular. Batchen wrote a book called *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography*. Chapter 3 has the title *Desire*. Batchen asserts that the invention of photography was driven by the desire to photograph. He quotes from Louis Daguerre letter to his partner Nicéphore Niépce, “ I am burning with desire to see your experiments from nature” (Batchen, 1999, p.11). Batchen suggests that the desire to photograph extended beyond the circle of proto-photographers working towards that end. Desire, he suggests is born in the gap between need and demand. Desire is a product of the time, an emotion that arrived with the dawn of modernity He invokes the thinking of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari to prove his point (Batchen, 1999, p.11).

But it was George Eastman who understood the meaning of desire in relation to photography. Desire linked need and demand, the need for a simple low-cost way to photograph and the demand that was driven by the desire to consume. Desires drove the emerging capitalist industrial economy and created the demand for goods and services and with the power of marketing and advertising, the desire for an aspirational lifestyle, a gap that entrepreneurs like Eastman were only too ready to satisfy. Stiegler wrote, “the concept of desire is the key to understanding the relation

between economics and psychoanalysis [...], that is, technologies and industries developed in order to control the behaviour of consumers" (Stiegler, 2011a, p.150).

As established in the previous chapter a variety of social and technological imperatives not least capitalist commercialisation and entrepreneurial institutionalisation drove the growth of mass markets at the turn of the nineteenth century and emerging mass markets for commodified technologies such as snapshot photography. Marketing became an "instrument of social control" the desire to consume drove other desires, what Deleuze called societies of control, the freedom to do what we want (Deleuze, 1992).

In philosophy the term desire is surrounded by controversy, Tim Schroeder offers a general overview in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* and a more personal view in his book *Three Faces of Desire* (Schroeder, 2015). The book is an extensive survey of both scientific and the commonplace view of desire together with the writers own theory of what desire is. (Schroeder, 2004). In general terms, desire is associated with motivation, pleasure, and reward, what Schroeder describes as the three faces of desire. In philosophical theory, desire combines with motivation, in search of the outcomes of either an action, pleasure, or a mix of both, desire being considered the causal origin of both action and feeling. (Schroeder, 2004). Stiegler discusses the issue of desire in relation to ritual in a paper that explores the influence of the institutions of mass consumption on the creation and manipulation of the proletariat (Stiegler, 2011b).

As noted previously, Batchen identified the desire to photograph as the principal motivation for the proto-photographers to invent photography, but Batchen fails to

expand on his assertion leaving the reader to form their own opinion of how desire shaped the evolution of photography (Batchen, 1999, p.56). Batchen posed the question: “ At what moment in history did the discursive desire to photograph emerge and begin to manifest itself insistently (Batchen, 1999, p.56)? In a paper “The Fire of Desire: A Multisited enquiry into Consumer Passion”, Belk et al identified the psychosocial construct of *consumer desire*, as the motivation behind much of contemporary consumerism. They suggest that little attention has been devoted to what they describe as “passionate and fanciful customer desires” They find that desire is a powerful, embodied emotion that drives the search for otherness and self (Belk et al., 2003). I believe the desire to communicate visually through the mark-making process of the snapshot is stimulated by consumer desire, fuelled by the ritual and embodied performance of snapshot photography that appeals to ego, agency and the desire to externalise memory (Belk et al., 2003, p.326).

To desire is to be in a particular state of mind, to want or need to know, to be in a state of desire leads to certain feelings and actions, in simple terms desire is a matter of having dispositions to act is known as the “action-based theory of desire” and the most widely held theory (Schroeder, 2015). Stiegler referred to desire as our primordial narcissism. He wrote:

In 1955 an advertising agency wrote that what makes North America great “is the creation of needs and desires, the creation of distaste for all that is old and out of fashion” – the promotion of taste thus presupposes that of distaste, which ends up affecting taste as well. All of this appeals to the “unconscious”, notably to overcome difficulties industrialists faced in pushing Americans to buy what their factories produced (Stiegler, 2011b; Packard, 2007).

The commodification of photography at the turn of the century saw the technology transformed from a complex bourgeois - middle brow art, as Pierre Bourdieu

described it, into an affordable commonplace social practice available to those who earned a wage and within the capabilities of anyone, even women and children (sic) (West, 2000). Unlike more demanding activities such as playing a musical instrument, the new photography required little of no training, but its dramatic acceptance on a worldwide basis does not alone explain why snapshot photography became so widely adopted or why the practice has been so enduring (Bourdieu, 1996, p.13)

In an examination of photography and desire, Marsh considers Lacan's psychoanalysis of desire as desire of the Other. It is this she feels that can help to explain why photography is so widespread as an imaging practice. Marsh continues, "The everyday use of photography to create archives of family life (the family album) is a clear example of how the subject being photographed and the photographer inscribe their desire in terms of the Other." Marsh quotes Bourdieu who also asks why photography is such a widespread practice in society; he concludes that it is related to the desire to conform to social norms. Marsh suggests" that Bourdieu's thesis underlines the symbolic structure of the family archive which reinscribes the desire of the Other" (Marsh, 2003, pp.83–85).

9.3 Repetition

In this section, I seek evidence to support my assertion that repetition is a defining characteristic of snapshot photography and a contributor to the psychosocial fetishization of the practice as the fulfilment of an emotional need, an essential aspect of the liminal desire to photograph and the need for ritual (Schroeder, 2008, p.1803).

Lynn Berger in her paper "SNAPSHOTS, or: Visual Culture's Cliché", considered

repetitiveness in form and content to be one of the defining characteristics of snapshot photography. Berger uses cliché as a pejorative term to describe the triteness or banality of the snapshot as repetitive with overused themes. In its original usage cliché was an onomatopoeic word from the French, which describes the repetitive sound made by a printing press. It also refers to a repetitive word cast as one piece of type rather than being made up of individual letters each time it is repeated (Berger, 2011, p.175). Berger's use of the word cliché would seem to be apt from a number of standpoints.

Langford considers repetition to be endemic in the genre. In trying to reconcile the repetitive nature of snapshots Langford also believes there is a link with oral tradition and this is reflected in the photograph album which she suggests is an oral photographic performance. The reason for the repetitive nature of popular visual images is to serve as a mnemonic function reinforcing the transmission of knowledge and stories from generation to generation (Langford, 2001, p.20).

A link can be taken back from here to a view of parietal art that demonstrates widespread evidence of repetition both of the elements portrayed and the manner in which they are portrayed. We have already mentioned the repetitious nature of handprints as a cave art element. There are particularly well-documented drawings that show repetitious iterations, not unlike those seen with drawings used to create animations. An example in the Chauvet Cave in France shows four repetitions of the same drawing of a horse head, each slightly different. Repetition in Cave Art is thought to have an association with shamanic ritual in which repetitive actions and movements are part of the process of entering an altered state – trance (Lewis-

Williams, 2004, p.201; Eliade, 1996, p.4).

Batchen said of snapshot photographs: “predictable, conservative and repetitious in both form and content.” However: “each [snapshot] captures a unique pose, even if that pose obediently repeats [a] million other very similar poses. They all the same, but are all also slightly different from each other.” In asking how to account for the repetitive form and subject of snapshot photographs, Batchen is also of the opinion that it is, a reflection on oral culture, the way of the world before script, is the place of choice to look for answers (Batchen, 2008, p.121, 125).

The social tradition of snapshot photography is reinforced by the repetitive act of taking photographs. We recognise the repetitious banality of the snapshot not only in our own snapshots but in those of friends and family and of snapshots in general.

Ploughing through a friend’s hoard of holiday pictures can be a very boring experience. “Looking at another person’s snapshots, slides, home movies or tapes can indeed be killing: presentations are rarely of short duration, and repetition seems endemic to the genre”, writes Langford (Langford, 2001, p.5), Lynne Berger concurs, “Private pictures are often regarded as the pinnacle of banality” (Berger, 2011, p.176).

Repetition was an obvious link between the two FDAS snapshots that form the basis of this research. They were repetitious of the occasion, subject, pose and location, that is, standing outside of the family home; even the pose and framing were repetitious. Clearly, when I took the photograph of my son there was no conscious intention on my part to repeat the photograph my father took, neither was it intentional to mimic the location. It would appear as though I was complying with a social normalisation of consumer behaviour (Rettie et al., 2011, p.4).

A exploration of public archives reveals a high incidence of FDAS, style, snapshots. A Google search using the search string, “first day at school snapshot images” returned 3,870,000 results. To narrow the search and make it more relevant, I made a specific search for images related to the “Belle Vale prefab estate” where the original FDAS snapshot was taken. The search revealed an archive of snapshot images, , many of which, as discussed earlier, showed a striking resemblance to both of the FDAS snapshots. There was significant repetition of subject, pose and occasion, the visual tropes we typically those of snapshot photographs, showing typical *snapshotedness*.

9.4 Temporality and the Pose

A feature of repetition is temporality; repetition is explored through the temporal notion of duration by evoking Henri Bergson’s conception of duration. Snapshot photography unknowingly mimics the highly controlled world of the professional photographer by stopping the action prior to taking the photograph. This is an aspect of snapshot photography that is unique. Rarely does the snapshot photographer endeavour to consciously stop time by taking a photograph of a moving object unless it is by accident. The photographer learns, often by reference to failure, for a successful snapshot neither the subject nor the camera must move (Bergson, 2013). This historical feature of early photography, the rigid pose, is a principal characteristic of the snapshots.

I early photography exposure times were slow, ultimately dependent upon the size of the image and the quality of the lens in the early period, a whole plate Daguerreotype required 65 seconds exposure under a lightly clouded sky (Gernsheim & Gernsheim, 1969, pp.118, 125). Remaining still for over a minute was

an almost impossible task for many people, particularly children. This limitation demanded strictly formulaic poses usually the subject would sit in a chair with arms and with a head restraint, a barbaric-looking metal device to limit the movement of the head during the exposure. Subjects were instructed to adopt a corpse like facial stare to restrict movement of the mouth or eyes. Many photographers avoided including eyes, the most likely source of movement, by asking the subject to look down at a book or a photograph. Standing poses required suitable props to rest the hands on or to perch on, head restrains were even more of a necessity. This enforced and unnatural need to avoid any movement resulted in unnatural formulaic poses and expressions. This was seen as a major limitation in early photography.

The notion of temporality is also important in characterising the snapshot in relation to memory. A relationship recognised by André Bazin in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." Bazin characterises temporality and photography, emphasising the capacity of photography to preserve the past, as a memory, "enshrouded as it were, in an instant, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, mummified in amber." To take the analogy a step further, Bazin describes mummification in amber, thus:-

Now, for the first time the image of the things is likewise the image of their duration, change mummified as it were. Those categories of resemblance, which determine the species photographic image likewise, then, determine the character of its aesthetic as distinct as that of painting (Bazin, 1960, p.8).

George Eastman sought to eliminate the technicalities of temporality from the photographic process, by creating the snapshot photograph and with it the Kodak culture. A snapshot is a form of deskilled photography that divorced the hitherto, need to understand, the apparently inseparable association, between time and the

photograph. When Eastman introduced his first snapshot camera in 1888, photography was undergoing a detechnicalisation but for most photographers' time was the single most important aspect of photography. From the time of exposure to the critical timing of every step of the developing and printing, the finished photograph; even the time of day was important.

However, for others, the relationship between time and photography was more philosophical. For example, Barthes wrote extensively on the temporality of photography and the photograph. He spoke of the temporal paradox of the photograph as the simultaneous experience of the "this will be" and the "this has been." These terms were based on a reworking of the neologisms *studium* and *punctum* in relation to his experience of contemplating the Andrew Gardner photograph of Lewis Payne, as Payne waited in his cell to be executed. In doing so Barthes coined the word, *noeme*, "that has been" (Barthes, 2010, p.96).

Both Barthes and Sontag were preoccupied with the notion that the photograph has a peculiar capacity to represent the past in the present, and thus to imply the passing of time in general. Consequently, both Barthes and Sontag argued that all photographs speak of the inevitability of our own death in the future (Barthes, 2010, p.96). Sontag wrote, "Since the photograph is an affirmation that something has been or has happened, it is a proof of the past. Meaning, anything that is photographed is immediately turned into something past, and undergoes a shift in temporality" (Sontag, 1979, p.71 Barthes, 2010, p.92). This analysis poses a challenge to all commentators on photography--what exactly is photography's relationship to time, and by extension, to reality?

Temporality is how we perceive the experience, of photography. In photography temporality is expressed as - the time it takes to establish the pose, expose the film, to develop the film, and to make the print from the negative, the realisation of the latent image. Each step is a tranche of time measured as well as experienced. In the final print, the snapshot has a temporality acquired through its timely experience, in turn, temporality changes with time as the snapshot is experienced. Or as Peter Wollen put it, "a device for the stopping of time and preserving fragments of the past like flies in amber (Wollen, 2003, p.76).

In summary: the now, the present, is infinite, a concept which allows transition from the past to the future. Temporality is our experience of time, time is a construct that enables us to both quantify and visualise this transition from the past through the present into the future. This exploration of the temporality of the snapshot, in terms of a narrative, is central to my studio practice.

My practice explores the implied and perceived narrative associated with a particular photograph and the grammar of the snapshot and in so doing deconstructs both the imagery and the textuality of the image, through the medium of a performative *ekphrasis* and the use of Kuhn's concept of 'memory texts' (Kuhn, 2002).

9.5 Ritual

As noted in the previous section, the notion of repetition is closely associated with notions of ritual. In his, book *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction*, Barry Stephenson opens with the statement, "Ritual, like language, tool use, symbolism, and music, is one of the constitutive elements in the mix of what it means to be human."

Stephenson asserts that ritual is primal and has been a persistent and persuasive

influence in the evolutionary process and in the formation of sociality and culture.

Society is ritually based, ritual permeates our social and personal lives and is formative of who we are (Stephenson, 2015, p.1).

Catherine Zuromskis supports the contention that snapshot photography is repetitive and ritualised, quoting Sontag, she writes,

By focusing on the ritual of snap-shooting, Sontag accounts for one of the most striking aspects of snapshot photography: the way that, from one individual to the next, private snapshots look remarkably the same.

And:

Sontag emphasizes the ritual function of the snapshot in certifying familial bonds, but because of her ontological approach, she is far more interested in the qualities she can locate in the medium itself than in the social, cultural, and political influences that construct its use. But images like this testify to the way that ritual photographic culture is *externally* constructed. (Zuromskis, 2009, p.55)

Zuromskis is of the opinion that the snapshot culture we consider natural or inherent is socially and commercially manufactured, a point with which I would concur.

In critical discourse, the concept of ritual in social functionalism⁸² is seen as contentious. Catherine Bell offers an analytical exploration of the social concept of ritual (Bell, 2009). For the purpose of my argument, I feel it is sufficient to draw attention to the recognition of ritual in relation to snapshot photography, as part of a debate involving the ritualization of everyday activities. A wide variety of everyday activities can be described as a ritual, from making a cup of tea to celebrating

⁸² Social functionalism is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. Society is more than the sum of its parts; rather, each part of society is functional for the stability of the whole society. Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim. (Anon, 2015)

Christmas. Jack Goody quotes Robert Bocoock who suggested that almost any activity from brushing teeth to drinking whisky can be defined in terms of ritual. Goody suggests that such analogies are not useful and could go on ad-infinitum – interestingly Bocoock does not include either photography or snapshot photography in his long list of ritual activities, but I think the point is made, that the notion of ritual is not confined to religious and other ceremonial activities it can equally be applied to secular activities such as snapshot photography (Goody, 1977, p.25; Bocoock, 1974, p.15).

Catherine Bell makes it clear in the first chapter of her book, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, that the current critical discourse on the concept of ritual, considers *ritual* in a wide variety of contexts. While photography is not one of them, “ritual theory” can be applied to most areas of social and cultural behaviour, as earlier, suggested (Bell, 2009).

Rituals are highly formalised, with explicit rules that have to be followed. Ritual implies choreography in which the same moves or steps are reinforced by repetition. The performance of ritual is both theatrical and enframing. Rituals may be considered symbolic. Bell gives the example of taking photographs when sightseeing. The taking of a photograph of the Eiffel Tower, the Tower of Pisa or Big Ben are symbolic of tourist snapshots. They are symbolic totems, of the ritual of both the holiday and the act of snapshot photography (Bell, 2009, p.59). As a technology photography is highly prescriptive requiring the photographer to adhere to a procedure if the complexities of the process involved are to coalesce as a photograph. On these grounds alone, photography can be described as a ritual.

Snapshot photography can be seen as a commemorative ritual that fixes temporal events in time by means of a durational image. In the religious context, ritual is an essential part of performance, and repetition is a feature of ritual, actions being repeated as part of the ceremony or event. Repetition is also a feature of secular rituals such as photography both in terms of execution and intention. Moore and Meyerhoff in their book *Secular Ritual*, list repetition, acting or posing and order, as characteristics of the ritual performance of snapshot photography (Moore & Meyerhoff, 1977)

Moore and Meyerhoff identify repetition and order as part of the rhythmic imperative of the biological and physical universe and a link with the perceptual process of the cosmos, elements that could be seen as constitutive and essential in the evolutionary process. Repetition, they imply, is part of cultural construction, of acting, and in the reinforcement of messages, a form of authentication, part of the category of collective behaviour.

Repetition is a behaviour found to be associated with activities such as drama and games, and as noted earlier a feature of shamanistic ritual. Ritual and repetition are inherent aspects of tradition. Repetition is a feature of snapshot photography, a universal characterised by the repetition of the occasions when, photographs are taken; for example, birthdays, holidays, first occasions, as in FDAS snapshot; we see the same pose, same clothes, same occasions, same circumstances, same form, and content (Moore & Meyerhoff, 1977). Such repetition, Bergson would suggest, is a characteristic of habit memory, the manner in which we learn poetry by repetition, although in this situation I am not sure that the purpose of the repetition is learning,

more like a social performance. (Bergson, 1911, p.208).

Ritual is not a spontaneous activity; ritual is a stylised performance. When taking a snapshot, performance starts with posing the subject, this can be initiated by the photographer or by the subject. Subjects become conditioned; they know what performance is required of them by virtue of the repetition. Stephen Bull suggests,

[...] the majority of us receive education in how to pose for and take snapshots from the moment we are born. It is only because this detailed knowledge becomes second nature at an early age that we forget our indoctrination into the culture of snapshot photography making snaps seem simple and naive. They are neither (Bull, 2009, p.81).

Snapshots are rarely if ever spontaneous. Candid photography falls outside the genre of snapshot photography and becomes something else. Performance requires direction and cues – smile, do not blink, chin out, look happy, do something, blow out candles, look at the camera, say cheese, act natural, and stand this way.

Stylisation is a feature of the pose and characterised in the *tableau vivant*, of the durational pose, or freezing the moment. In mainstream photography, this would involve taking the ordinary and the mundane and expressing them in an extraordinary way. In snapshot photography, it is often the opposite. Snapshots are about subliminally preserving the mundane; any style is likely to be introduced inadvertently or accidentally. Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen note, “the purpose of all theatrical performances is to display actions ‘as if’ they were real (Schechner, 1988). As Goffman (1959) has argued, the dramaturgical performances (and productions) of identities, scripts and roles are an integral part of all social life,” a notion I shall discuss fully later (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p.29).

Ritual has a beginning and an end and therefore order. As an example: in the

professional world of photography, wedding photographs are taken to a strict prescription, by following a prearranged shooting list that has an order, a beginning and an end; only then is it possible to ensure that all the required shots are taken. Even reportage style shoots are scripted, despite their candid look, to ensure inclusion of essential poses. The order of wedding photography is something Bourdieu refers to as an example of ritualization (Bourdieu, 1996, pp.20–21). In snapshot photography, *order* is dictated by events. An occasion such as a birthday is ordered by convention: open presents, light the candles, blow out the candles and take the photograph; then singing Happy Birthday.

The notion that repetition and performance are constitutive of ritual, are an important part of my argument. These elements can be seen as influences that have driven the social moulding of technology from the *originary technicity* of parietal art and the lithic technologies of mark-making through to complexities of photography, to the simplicity of snapshot photography (Batchen, 2008, p.124).

Batchen suggests that the ritual of the photograph began as an ideological bourgeois need for self-representation through family photography. The studio photograph, the *carte de visite*⁸³ and later the larger *cabinet card*, replaced, for the emerging middle classes, the traditional painted portrait and a family group (Batchen, 2008, p.124).

Richard Chalfen and Bourdieu contributed significantly to this discourse, Chalfen

⁸³ The *carte de visite* was a small photograph in a cardboard mount, which was patented in Paris, France by photographer André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri in 1854.

takes an anthropological view of the relationship between photography, and family life, identifying the influence of the rise of the “Kodak Culture” in unifying, and spreading the social practice of snapshot (family photography) in the twentieth century (Chalfen, 1987, p.157). Bourdieu discussed the conventionality and the ritualistic nature of family photography. He described it as a ritual of the domestic cult, in which the family is both subject and object (Bourdieu, 1996).

Mette Sandbye, in a recent paper, reopens the theoretical discussion of family photography, particularly with respect to the social role of the family album or archive, as an important reflection of the social ritual of popular photography. Sandbye supports Batchen’s opinion that snapshot photography, particularly where family albums are concerned, has to be interpreted within a cultural theory rather than a photographic framework, something with which I would concur (Sandbye, 2014; Batchen, 2008, p.124).

Family albums were an important facet of the tradition of family photography and of snapshot culture. The creation of an archive was part of the collective unconscious of the remembering and sharing of collective memories. Album creation was promoted by George Eastman as part of the Kodak ethos. “Let Kodak keep the Story” was the slogan for an advertising campaign that ran for a number of years to promote the archiving and captioning of photographs to build an archive, to tell a story and create a community (West, 2000, p.166). The keeping of the family archive was a promoted as a women’s responsibility as testified by many writers (Blanco, 2010; Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Hirsch, 1981; Kuhn, 2002; Rose, 2010).

As suggested in the previous chapter, the act of taking snapshots was reinforced by

Kodak's "educational" marketing and advertising which promoted and reinforced *ritualised* behaviour. An example being the *ritualization* of holiday/tourist photography, where locations, and photo opportunities were identified by advertising. Roadside signage directed tourist to viewpoints and particular geographical locations. Every film packet included the ritual to be followed for a successful photograph, and the envelope the prints were returned in was printed with advice for taking better photographs. Kodak produced a vast number and variety of instructional manuals, booklets and pamphlets aimed a snapshot, amateur and professional photographers.

It is my contention that the intentionality behind the taking of most snapshot photographs is quite clear. We recognise the social conformity in the snapshot subject, the unwritten list of subjects suitable for examination by the family gaze for inclusion in the family archive. We also recognise what must be avoided and remain unseen, the sick or ill, housework and of course the dead. The subject poses, is directed and the photograph was taken. This simple illustration serves to point towards the taking of a snapshot as both intentional and performative. "The family archive is performative" suggests Blanco, "family photography gains its performative character by means of its phatic function" (Blanco, 2010, p.16). As has been noted in this section other factors that contributes to the concept of ritualization, are performance and performativity, I shall explore these concepts in the next section.

9.6 Performance and Performativity

Both Barthes and Marsh describe photography as theatre. In the opening paragraph of her book, *The Darkroom: Photography the Theatre of desire*, Marsh states,

“Photography encapsulates the theatre of desire.” She describes the camera as prosthesis an instrument for creating fantasy. She reminds us that Barthes described the camera as a clock for seeing, (a reference to its wooden construction and the sounds made by the mechanism of the shutter), he described it as a memory machine. Barthes was joined by Benjamin in this metaphorical view of photography as “primitive theatre” where one thing becomes another in a totemistic way (Marsh, 2003, p.13 Barthes, 2010, p.15).

Considering performance and performativity as theoretical concepts, through which to explore the essence of snapshot photography may be venturing into dangerous waters, these are terms normally considered the province of linguistics, ethnography, and social sciences. I am encouraged, however, by others who have appropriated this theoretical framework, to explore the performativity and performance of photography, Derrida, Bourdieu, Paul Jeff, Marsh and Judith Butler to name but a few.

Performativity is a term widely used in relation to gender studies (Butler, 1988).

Derrida is in simple terms concerned with the concept of performativity in relation to the theatricality of speaking as writing, something I shall be exploring in my practice.

Photography is temporal and seen as a time-based practice. The performative act of photography is condensed into the duration of the performed act of taking the photograph. Metaphorically, it is collapsed into the time of the event recorded so that the event and its record become a single utterance. To quote Paul Jeff, “In performed photography, the act of photography is collapsed metaphorically, into the time of the event recorded so that the event and its record can become a single utterance. The

common currency of performed photography is performance, duration, and the document as a creative act, whereby photography meets live art (Jeff, 2006). Jeff's reference to utterance defines and legitimises the use of the word "performative" in relation to photography in the context of Austin's original definition of the word (Austin et al., 1979).

The notion of performance in relation to photography can be considered in relation to performance theory, which originates from a variety of fields, but is most typically associated with the work of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. These two authors drew attention to the performative nature of societies around the world, how events and rituals, as well as daily life, were all governed by a code of performance. (Turner & Schechner, 1988). I shall consider further the performativity of the utterances associated with snapshot photography, for example, the *smile*.

It is my intention to acknowledge "photography as performance" or "performed photography" as described by Marsh in her paper, "The Body and Performative Photography", which is concerned mainly with directorial or staged photography, an example being the work of Cindy Sherman (Marsh, 2014). The common currency of performed photography is performance, duration, and the document as a creative act, in which "photography meets live art" (Jeff, 2006). Jeff's reference to utterance defines and legitimises the use of the word "performative" in relation to photography in the context of Austin's original definition of the word (Austin et al., 1979). Austin is also a link between ritual and performance; even though it may be indirect, it has become linked to performance theory. Performance recognises ritual as a way of expressing action and recognising the intention and aesthetic qualities of

the action (Stephenson, 2015, p.87).

In the philosophy of language and speech acts theory, performative utterances are sentences, which are not only describing a given reality, but also changing the social reality they are describing. Sometimes we use a word because it sounds right regardless of its meaning. 'Performative' is such a word, in Austin's intended context of usage it describes the act of utterance. For example, "You are under arrest" - used in putting someone under arrest (Austin et al., 1979).

Austin considered the performative act as a gesture. Gesture can also be, a visual communication using physical material, an autonomous language, or a supplement to various other languages or a medium. The word "gesture" derives from the Latin word *gestura*, meaning 'bearing,' 'way of carrying' or 'mode of action,' and *gerere*, the infinitive form, which means "to carry, to behave, to take on oneself, to take charge of, to perform or to accomplish." According to The Oxford English Dictionary , gesture, as a noun, signifies "the manner of carrying the body," "grace of manner," "the employment of bodily movement," "position," "posture" or "attitude" and as a verb, "to order the attitudes of movements of [the body, oneself] (Anon, 2002; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012).

9.6.1 Snapshot Photography as Theatre

In the course of exploring the notion of ritual, there has been frequent reference to photography as a performative medium. As mentioned, Marsh supports this assertion with her reference to photography as theatre and the camera as a theatrical device. She argues that photography is a performative and a narrative medium that is intricately connected to the ways in which memory works and how time is perceived

(Marsh, 2003, p.15).

The taking of a snapshot involves the snapshot taker gesturing the camera at the subject, and gazing at the scene, the subject strikes a pose; the photographer directs the pose, stops the action with a command and manipulates the mechanism to take the photograph. Consider the scenario:

On what appears to be a bright early autumnal morning a young boy dressed in school uniform is ushered out of the house to have his photograph taken. Following an unconscious set of rules, his father positions him on the path at the gable end of the house. This is an appropriate place because his father knows to take a good snapshot he has to have the sun shine over his shoulder (Kodak, 1930). The bright sun casts diagonal shadows on the path and the wall of the house, but he ignores the intrusion. He is more concerned with the performance; maybe he was unaware of the intrusion. Did the boy pose like that naturally or was he directed by his father? The boy even has an accessory to hold under his arm, a prized book perhaps. The father positions himself to take the snap; he ensures that there is plenty of space around the subject. He knows how easy it is to chop off the head or the feet. Stand up straight, he commands, hands by your side, feet together, look at me, don't squint, smile, and click.

The above is an imagined script for the performance of taking the FDAS snapshot, a performance that involves both the photographer and the subject and will be recognised by many. The scenario is repeated on a daily basis, the world over, the memorialisation of a commonplace, lived event, a moment in time to be frozen as a memory, a hedge against forgetting. As mentioned earlier, we recognise the scenario because of its *snapshotedness*, the taking of snapshots is ubiquitous, and there can be

few people who have not taken a photograph or who have not been photographed. We recognise the performance because it is well rehearsed and repeated regularly. The performance of taking a photograph can be divided into four acts, the posing, and the framing of the subject, the taking of the photograph and the viewing of the resultant print. All four acts can be performed in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons and with a variety of outcomes.

The instant popularity of snapshot photography could be seen in terms of a performative turn. The term was previously used as a metaphor for theatricality. Performance is now often employed as a heuristic principle to understand human behaviour. The assumption is that all human practices are 'performed' so that any action at whatever moment or location can be seen as a public presentation of the self. Peter Dirksmeier and Ilse Helbrecht suggest that "Performance takes place in the present and it takes place just once. One result of this is that every representation of a performance, be it as text, discussion or film, refers to the past" (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht, 2008). Although they were referring to acting, I feel the statement could be applied to the taking of a photograph, encapsulating the performativity of the snapshot and the act of taking it. Snapshot photography is a technology that has been turned into a personal performance and a social practice. It captures the instant, that temporal paradox that neither existed before nor ever exists again. No two performances are ever the same regardless of their similarity, neither are two snapshots or the memories they embody, ever the same.

9.6.2 The Performance of Looking at Photographs

The notion of performance may be extended to the act of viewing photographs. For

example, take my experience, a photograph is unexpectedly found in a family photograph album, the referent is a child, say five to seven years old, the photograph had been taken by a parent some sixty or so years earlier. The disinterested observer may ask why the photograph was taken. What was the response from the referent, both to the photograph and the experience of finding it? How could we conceptualise and theorise the experience and the response? What other questions does this situation ask?

It has been suggested that looking at photographs is a performance, a social interaction with its own dramaturgical framework. Erving Goffman in a manuscript, "The presentation of self in everyday life", argued that we are a bit like social actors undertaking a theatrical performance. Using the imagery of the theatre, he offers a dramaturgical model in which he describes how mundane everyday activities can become a theatrical performance. Goffman saw a connection between the kinds of acts that people put on in their daily life and theatrical performances. Family and personal photography can be seen to fit Goffman's dramaturgical model. Snapshot photography being generally described a naïve, mundane act, is elevated to the state of extraordinary by the presence of an audience, namely the subject photographed (Goffman, 1959; Goffman, 2005, p.89).

As suggested earlier in this discussion, in the photographic era, the photograph album was part of the ritualised performance that was photography. Although we could include all aspects of personal photography in this discourse we are concerned only with the home-grown family photograph album. The sort of family photograph album that is used to archive photographs generated and acquired by the extended family, friends and the occasional acquaintance.

Looking at a picture is a complex process; James Elkins has illustrated the complexity of this situation through the following example:

Say you're in a museum, looking at a painting that has a number of people in it. There may be up to ten different kinds of looking involved: (1) you, looking at the painting, (2) figures in the painting who look at one another, and (4) figures in the painting who look at objects or stare off into space or have their eyes closed. In addition there is often (5) the museum guard, who may be looking at the back of your head, and (6) the other people in the gallery, who may be looking at you or at the painting. There are imaginary observers, too: (7) the artist, who was once looking at this painting, (8) the models for the figures in the painting, who may once have seen themselves there, and (9) all the other people who have seen the painting. . . . And finally, there are also (10) people have never seen the painting: they may know it only from reproductions . . . or from descriptions. A complementary source of complexity comes from the fact that we never see only one image at a time. (Elkins, 2005)

Looking at photographs has both psychoanalytical and philosophical connotations.

Looking at images of oneself is quite different to looking at pictures of others, then there is the consideration, are you disinterested in the image or not, for example did you take the picture, where you present when it was taken, do you know the person who took it, do you appear in it or none of these, as in the case of a found image.

My response to the FDAS photograph was initially curiosity, I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of the other photographs which had clearly been specifically selected and arranged. As described elsewhere the primary cognitive response to the image was the triggering of a flow of memories, then the realisation that there were obvious things that could not be remembered, the snapshot being taken.

As a young child, perusing family snapshots was a popular pastime, as it seems to be with my grandchildren. Long departed relatives are resurrected, people you never knew come alive as names are put to faces and stories are woven around the images of times past. Moments and memories are relived and the acquaintance made of people you only knew by name. Turning pages of a photo album is a journey into the past that cannot be lived in any other way, an act of theatre in which the scenes change as the pages are turned, the dialogue is prompted by the narrator and the

images enhanced by the imagination and gaze of the viewers and the subliminal presence of the actors. Deborah Chambers in her book *Representing the Family* states:

Viewing albums requires a ritualised oral dialogue of description, storytelling, memory-making, nostalgia and celebration [...] a high level of familiarity is needed for decoding the subject matter of family photograph albums. It presumes distinctive modes of viewing so the family album is embedded in a domestic and private oral tradition. Complex, and often contradictory, meanings encoded by the compiler are lost on non-family members. (Chambers, 2001, p.76)

How often is it that the dramaturge in this act of theatre is a woman and a mother? If we are to believe the advertising copy that drove the growth of the Kodak culture, a large proportion of family photographs will have been taken by women and family photograph albums are most likely to have been compiled by the matriarch of the family. There is a significant discourse on the subject of family albums and the role of women in their compilation. Langford in her book, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photograph Albums*, quotes Jacques Le Goff, who asks “Should we see in this a relic of the feminine function of the conservation of remembrance or on the contrary, a conquest of the group memory by feminism?” (Langford, 2001, p.26; Goff, 1996, pp.89–90). The diligent will compile the album chronologically; updating the archive as each new roll of film is developed and printed and the photographs are reviewed and selected; the remnants being retired to a shoe box or drawer in the sideboard. “Women are keepers of the past”, suggests Clair Grey, They look after the photo albums, birthday books, [...] they write on the backs of the photographs [..]” (Grey, 2000, p.107).

In her book *Doing Family Photography*, Rose discusses family photography as a subgenre of snapshot photography and in particular the role the female in compiling family photograph albums. She offers the general view that family photography is an

essentially female interest and discusses her own experience as a young mother, observing that while both she and her husband take snapshots, it is only she who is concerned with sorting through them, sticking them in albums, and thinking up captions (Rose, 2010, p.1).

Rose raised the dilemma with friends and fellow mothers and discovered she was not the only one concerned with compiling the family album. Rose finds that this female role in family photography has been rather overlooked as an area of critical discourse; particularly in the context of something the people (women with young children) do as a social practice. Rose is concerned that the role of the female in family photography as a social practice has been dismissed by many of the contemporary writers on photography.

As Sontag observed, one of the most compulsory drives for taking snapshot photography is the presence of children in a family, "Cameras go with family life" she stated (Sontag, 1979, p.8). The family photograph album has been the subject of considerable discourse, notable writers include, Langford, Hirsch, Kuhn, Chalfen, Jo Spence and Patricia Holland. Sontag suggest that we construct family albums as part of a group memory – "each family constructs a portrait-chronical of itself – a portable kit of images that bears witnesses to its connectedness" (Sontag, 1979, p.8)

In many households the camera would only appear on special occasions, the roll of film in the camera, good for eight or twelve exposures, when developed will reveal a range of events, possibly spanning many months, Christmas, summer holidays, a christening, the blowing out of birthday candles and maybe an event like the first day at a new school, a year in the life of a family. The ritual performance is repeated over

and over again in households throughout the industrialised World.

Photograph albums resemble graveyards; each photograph a totem headstone memorialising a moment from the past, signifying death if not actual, imminent or at least inevitable. We read them as we would the legend on a memorial, a combination of funereal symbolism and factual and emotional text. In some countries, the photograph may even mimic the effigy displayed on the memorial (French graves often include photographic representations of the departed).

Both Barthes and Benjamin discuss the relationship between the photograph and memory and the experience of looking at photographs. Barthes is seminal on this point given his notions of the *studium*, *punctum* and *noeme* and for Benjamin the *optical unconscious* and *the spark of contingency* ((Dant & Gilloch, 2002, p.2)).

Richard Shusterman discusses photography as a performative act in his paper "Photography as a Performative Process" (Shusterman, 2012). Referring to Benjamin, Shusterman states, photography's powers of mechanical reproduction "transformed the entire nature of art" by shifting art from its original essentially ritualistic use (with its auratic cult value of the authentic original) to an "absolute emphasis on its exhibition value" instead. Moreover, its automatic mechanism of capturing attractive, accurate pictorial images likewise removed the traditional need for skilled artistic hands to create them: "For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into a lens" (Benjamin, 2008b, p.4) This dimension concerns the performative process of making a photograph of a human subject and the sort of artistic performances and aesthetic experiences that

this process involves. Shusterman refers to David Davies book *Art as Performance* in which Davies has argued a far more extreme claim, which is that artworks in general (not just in photography) are not the physical objects with which they are commonly identified but rather the actual performances of artists that create such objects, and that to appreciate those objects properly always requires relating them to the actual performance that (according to this theory) is the work (Davies, 2003; Shusterman, 2012).

As Davies implies performance is an intrinsic aspect of practice and the process of practice is performative, just as is the writing of this thesis and practice to which it relates; very much a part of the methodology that was discussed earlier.

9.7 Intentionality

A defining characteristic of the snapshot is, I believe, the manner in which it is taken. It is not whimsical, it is subconsciously meditated, it is intentional, a notion that is embraced by the term intentionality. The German philosopher Edmund Husserl used the term intentionality to describe the directedness of consciousness.

I introduce the concept of intentionality in an effort to understand and explain my belief that the taking of a snapshot photograph is an embodied experience of intentionality linked to the concept of externality and the primal fear of athazagoraphobia, the fear of forgetting and being forgotten, by the prostheticisation of memory.

It is my contention that there is intentionality in the act of snapshot photography. The photographers desire to take a snapshot is manifest in the conscious externalisation of an intention to link the desire to photograph and the act of photographing.

Intentionality is the translation of a desire into an act. Intentionality implies “directedness” of mind. What the use of the term intentionality implies is that the snapshot photographer, unlike other photographers, appears to take a snapshot without evidence of overt knowledge and yet the intention and evidence of directedness is clear.

Intentionality is a nebulous philosophical concept reintroduced by philosopher and psychologist Franz Brentano, in the sentence:

Every psychical phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or sometimes the mental) inexistence of an object, and what we should like to call, although not quite unambiguously, the reference (Beziehung) to a content, the directedness (Richtung) toward an object [...] (Brentano, 2014).

In Brentano's theory of mind, where the notion of intentionality is closely intertwined with the conception of secondary consciousness and the thesis of the unity of consciousness, he states, “Next to the real, physical object, which is perceived, remembered, thought of, etc., we have a mental, intentional object, towards which the act is actually directed” (Brentano, 2014).

Thus, when I think about taking a snapshot photograph, I am actually thinking of a mental object that is part of my act of thinking, and not about the actual snapshot.

John R Searle discusses intentionality in terms of being both a conscious and unconscious state (Searle, 1983, p.1+151). Searle also states that “Intentionality is that feature of certain mental states and events that consist in their (in a special sense of these words) being directed at, being about, being of, or representing certain other entities and states of affairs” (Searle, 1984, p.4).” To apply this concept to my argument would imply that the taking of a snapshot photograph, whilst a conscious

intentional act, brings into effect unconscious elements of intentionality in the way we intuitively tackle or direct the taking of the snapshot, what Searle describes as directedness.

To avoid becoming embroiled in a complex philosophical debate, for the purposes of my arguments, I define intentionality as directedness; intending to do something, to be directed to some goal or thing, part of a psychological act (Spiegelberg, 2012, pp.36–37). It is my contention that what gives rise to the visual characteristics of the snapshot photograph is a combination of the intentional and the unintentional; a product of the snapshot photographer's intentionality that gives rise to *snapshottedness*, what Szarkowski, when Director of the Museum of Modern Art, called the *snapshot aesthetic*. Szarkowski had recognised that a number of photographers were developing a style of photography that embraced the anaesthetic nativity and technically mediated characteristics of snapshot photography. The street photographer Gary Winogrand in an interview when asked what his response to the phrase "snapshot aesthetic" was, he replied:

The people who use the term don't even know the meaning. They use it to refer to photographs they believe are loosely organized, or casually made, whatever you want to call it. [...] The fact is, when they're talking about snapshots they're talking about the family album picture, which is one of the most precisely made photographs. Everybody's fifteen feet away and smiling. The sun is over the viewer's shoulder. That's when the picture is taken, always. It's one of the most carefully made photographs that ever happened. (Diamonstein, 1981)

I believe Winogrand's words sum up the intentionality and directorial nature of snapshot photography and what it is as a genre of photography, concisely. The innocent naivety of the taking and the unconcerned acceptance of the outcome could be described as a magic combination of the intentional and the unintentional.

Intentionality is the embodiment of desire and agency, representing purpose and fulfilment or what I believe Husserl meant by conscious awareness of intentionality (Husserl, 1973, pp.317–18). Brentano, Husserl's teacher, characterises intentionality as the everyday notion of doing something "intentionally" (McIntyre & Smith, 1989, p.2). My interest in the concept is to understand what it is that drives the deliberate act of taking a snapshot photograph. Taking a snapshot photograph is in my opinion quite different to taking any other form of photograph.

Intentionality defines an innate behaviour. For example, in the modern era taking snapshots was a domestic ritual. Consider the mother taking a snapshot of the ceremony of her five year old blowing out the candles on their birthday cake. It is my belief that the desire to record the event is innate, rather like writing a diary entry, we know what to do and how to do it and we have the tools, pencil and paper so we write the words without any further consideration.

So it is with snapshot photography; the camera is used much like a pencil to document the visual moment so that it will not be forgotten. There is no longer a need to remember this responsibility has been taken over by a prosthetic artefact. Although the act appears conscious it is driven by an unconscious intentionality. The ritual is part of a performance, manifested in the performativity of the gesture of pointing the camera and the agency of pressing the shutter. The inference is that the underlying drive behind the intentionality is innate. The technology is available and

we use it without further thought or consideration, without referral to the *noema*,⁸⁴ as Husserl may have put it. Whether intentionality is a conscious or unconscious phenomenon is a contentious question. David Pitt in his paper “Unconscious Intentionality” offers a well-argued support of the stance taken by John Searle and Galen Strawson on the Cartesian view that intentionality and consciousness are connected (Pitt, 2007, pp.1–2; Searle, 1991; Strawson, 2005).

The notion of intentionality links the snapshot to other aspects of my arguments through the concept of the technological and humanity realising themselves technologically. This argument links back to an earlier discussion regarding the notions of *originary technicity* and epiphylogenesis (Stiegler, 1998).

Peter-Paul Verbeek described this relationship as technologically mediated intentionality or cyborg intentionality, when human intentionality takes place through technological artefacts, in this case, the snapshot camera.

Verbeek discusses this in terms of composite intentionality in which the coming together of the human and the technological forms a merger that helps to constitute us as human. Just as telescopes and microscopes provide an insight into an otherwise invisible world, so the snapshot camera provides an insight into what it is to be human. Intentionality comes to bear when we consider how differently we view a scene through the viewfinder of a camera compared with how we see the

⁸⁴ Noema: is a technical term in phenomenology to stand for the object or content of a thought, judgment, or perception attributed to Edmund Husserl

unmediated scene, the intentionality of the two versions of the scene are quite different.

The snapshot is a phenomenological and cultural paradox. It is a not so naive art form, perpetrated by ordinary people. At first sight, the snapshot is casual and ill-considered but on closer examination, it is clearly both causal and intentional, carefully choreographed and directed as any movie scene or theatrical production, demonstrating causality and intentionality.

9.8 Summary

Susan Sontag, despite being ambivalent about the snapshot as a legitimate form of photography, describes it as a familiar rhetoric of a banal and unremarkable part of everyday life, but she recognises it as a social right and a ritual convention and a defence against anxiety. The photographic act Sontag suggests dispels anxieties of not belonging by providing a form of engagement with others and means of claiming life experiences (Sontag, 1979). Maybe Sontag meant a defence against the anxiety of forgetting.

The concepts discussed in this chapter were selected because I consider them to be the principal factors that contributed to the adoption of snapshot photography as an ingrained social practice. They are phenomena that were recognised and exploited by the capitalist institutions and which contributed to the constructivist and deterministic influences involved in both social and technological shaping of cultural behaviour that fuelled the desire to take snapshot photographs.

By understanding the emotions involved in the desire to consume George Eastman and others exploited the social imperatives of snapshot photography by managing

desire through intuitive entrepreneurial guile, what Stiegler identified as the power of hyper-industrialised capitalism; the management of the desire to consume through the collective unconscious by appealing to our primordial narcissism. Achieved by regular, persistent reinforcement of the marketing message; what Stiegler called the “vital psychic process” and Deleuze as ‘societies of control’. In Kodak’s case agency was replaced by the command to point and shoot – “You press the button and we do the rest.” Kodak customers were told where to photograph and what to photograph. They were even told what to do with their photographs when they received them back from Kodak’s control. They are to be archived in the family album as memories to replace the memories in our unconscious (Stiegler, 2011b). Kodak reinforced and exploited the primal innate fear of forgetting that drove the need to remember. These behaviours contributed to the evolutionary processes expressed in the theory of *originary technicity* and the concepts of externalisation, epiphylogenetics and epiphylogenesis that shaped the mnemonic technologies that our forebears invented to assuage our collective fear of forgetting.

10 DISCUSSION

10.1 Summary

This study has explored the phenomenology and the ontology of snapshot photography through practice-based research. The study was initiated by an autobiographical cognitive response to a biographical snapshot, found in a family photograph album. The practice project starts by responding to the vivid memories evoked and to the realisation that not all memories were recalled. The equivocal response led to the questioning of the popular conception of the snapshot photograph as a metaphor for memory.

The discovery of a second almost identical snapshot taken by me of my son twenty years later opened another line of enquiry that explored notion of the snapshot photograph as a ubiquitous cliché and asks why and how snapshot photography became established as an ingrained social practice that continues to evolve.

There was a diversion to explore the complexities of practice based research and the problem of establishing a methodology that recognised an individual intuitive approach to art practice as a mode of enquiry rather than a means of aesthetic creation. This led to the discovery of the a/r/tography framework, which provided a methodology particularly suited to inquiry that combines the arts with writing in a

practice based research environment, and a transformational auto-didactical approach to the acquisition of knowledge.

The use of Lewis Carroll's Alice adventures as a conceptual framework and as a lens, offered cohesiveness to the initially disparate practice elements. The concept of a journey through a mirror into a dark cave like room, in which theoretical ideas of repetition, shamanic practice, phantasmagoria, memory and journey developed into a rhizomatous network that germinated links, often serendipitously; the experience also had echoes of the Camera Obscura as a dark room and as a 'theatre of desire.'

The journey was one of creativity and generative thought that often led to unexpected outcomes.

The unlocking of memories by stepping into a family snapshot, the mirror of a childhood event, and the realisation of how commonplace such pictures were, initiated an epistemological journey of discovery through the agency of practice - in the search for an understanding of why we take snapshot photographs. Similarly, I stepped into Barthes snapshot of his life, *Camera Lucida*, the starting point for understanding of the experience of looking at photographs, particularly those that enable our memories. Barthes introduces the neologism *noeme* into the understanding of what snapshots represent. His explanation of what it means, "that or what has been" forming a connection between the snapshot and its metaphorical relationship with memory

The serendipitous discovery of the rhetorical device ekphrasis, led to an unexpected creative excursion into poetry while providing the inspiration for a number of experiments in the visualisation and textualisation of memory. The experience led to

a realisation of why the visualisation of the mundane is an important aspect of maintaining the collective memory and the collective unconsciousness, words alone are not sufficient, they can mislead and confuse.

The thought process led me to consider the history of visual expression and culture and how it may have some bearing upon the contemporary social practice of snapshot photography. If the snapshot could be considered as a form of prosthetic memory, what served as a metaphor for memory before the invention of photography and the snapshot? What drove the desire that gave rise to the first expression of the photographic process from which snapshot photography emerged? How far back in history was the starting point. Could the consideration of cave painting as the *originary technicity* be considered a step too far?

George Eastman wrote in a trade circular that he believed the universal language of the snapshot had its origins in Stone Age cave paintings (Olivier, 2007, pp.13–14).

This discovery linked with the reading of Stiegler's thoughts on *originary technicity* and his views on the relationship between the use of lithic and mark-making technologies in the exteriorisation of memory; also the prostheticity of memory and the evolution of technology in a cultural and social context.

Discovering the evidence that supported the notion of photography as a technology rather than as a medium opened further links that enabled a connection between cave painting and social influences on the evolution of technology and therefore ultimately snapshot photographs. From these findings an opinion formed that there was the potential of an evolutionary link between, photography, the snapshot and earlier forms of mnemonic mark making technologies.

These arguments led to an exploration of the social, cultural and institutional theories that may have facilitated the evolution of mnemonic mark-making technology as an enduring social practice. There would seem to be an innate human desire to remember through images; a potential link between cave art as an aboriginal shamanic practice and what Stiegler called capitalist institutions.

Then, as now, Shamanic Svengalis and the institutions of capitalism, manipulate desire and our unconscious by means of illusion and the exploitation of mythical characters, in a psycho-social phantasmagoria. Eastman's visionary use of the mythical Brownie sprite characters is an example of the contemporary use of mythical characters as shamanic influences to manipulate cultural behaviours. Alice's experience with mythical characters could be seen in the same light. The creation of a middle world where reality is suspended and replaced by unconscious imagery is a form of shamanic manipulation which has exploited the vulnerability and desires and is as old as humankind (DuBois, 2011). These behaviours are little different to the shamanic practices of Eastman and the Kodak Corporation in exploiting the proletariat's desire to consume and their fear of forgetting. Desire driven capitalism is recognised as a major influence in social construction of technology (Mackenzie, 2005). Organisations like Kodak subscribed to the capitalist doctrines that drove the desires of the modern world through similar psycho-social dogma of a market economy that exploited the vicarious desire to consume through notions of sentimentality and nostalgia (Stiegler, 2011a).

The rhetoric of the institutional marketing message exploited the hypnotic power of repetition and ritual to exploit the innate desire to perform by emphasising the social

power of the phatic gesture and communication identifying the intrinsic role of the woman as the family archivist and historian of childhood. Just as the earliest manifestation of the snapshot the handprints on the walls of the caves were thought to be made by women and children (Cooke, 2010; Pettitt & et al., 2016). In the modern era it was women and children who were manipulated by the institutional shaman to realise the primal need to capture the now and preserve it in the family album or on the wall of a cave for the future.

Research was been restricted to the snapshot as a phenomenon of the pre-digital era of photography and resisted the temptation to extend the exploration of the social practice of snapshot photography beyond the photographic era. However, I acknowledge that in the post-photographic digital era, snapshot photography continues to evolve both as a social behaviour and as a technology. The move to digital technologies has proved to be an even greater technological turn than the invention of photography. The social implications Fox-Talbot would recognise, but may not have anticipated; particularly his portable Camera Obscura having evolved into a multi-functional communications device capable of visualising, capturing, realising, remembering and sharing the sublime view he saw from the hotel balcony on Lake Como; Or how his concept of capturing memories by mark-making with the pencil of light would continue to evolve.

It could be seen as reductionist to make the rhizomatous connections hypothesized in this research as the journey of discovery of learning has progressed. Making sense of the chaotic world on the other side of Alice's mirror and my mother's snapshot, stretches linguistic signification in the search for meaning. Other than the

autobiographical connotation there is little difference in the discovery of a handprint or marks on the wall of a cave and the finding of a snapshot in a family album and seeing through both the nostalgia of past and the prosthetic residue of memory in that instant. The signification is similar, even if the connotation is not; they both represent social and institutional influences on the evolution of cultural behaviours. There is little difference between the shamanic manipulations of the social culture of our primal forebears and the capitalist pharmacology of the manipulation of the libidinal desire of the mass market. The phantasmagoria of the flickering flame in the theatre of the cavern and the visions of the future through the vortex of the void that is the memory palace of the snapshot provides an originary foundation for the technicity of the human and cultural and social imperative of mnemonic mark making and the social modelling of technological evolution.

The role of practice in this research has been as a mechanism for epistemological enquiry as part of an autodidactic search for new knowledge through the transformational experience of art practice. The creation of the artefact is an adjunct to the development of a rhizomatous framework that facilitates serendipitous connectivity of thought and practice in the creation of new knowledge.

There are still many nodes of the rhizome to explore and the journey is far from over. There are many unanswered questions that arise from this study not least the question of why I cannot remember the taking of the snapshot that memorialised my first day at school: why I cannot remember the click of the shutter? Although I think I understand why I took the snapshot of my son on his first day at school. I appear to have been satisfying an innate primal desire to externalise my memories, by the use

of an evolved mnemonic mark-making technology; or should that be, conforming to an established cultural practice.

10.2 Conclusion

Through the lens of two biographical family snapshots I have endeavoured to redefine snapshot photography as a mnemonic, phatic technology that satisfies an innate need/desire to remember and to communicate socially. I argue that snapshot photography represents the modern version of a mnemonic technology that evolved from lithic technologies represented by parietal mark making as a means of exteriorising memory as prosthesis.

The hypothesis is informed by the theory of originary technicity, the concept of epiphylogenesis and the discourse relating to the evolution of technology through socio-cultural moulding. Such influences being manifest in industrial and entrepreneurial institutionalisation

I postulate that Snapshot Photography can be defined by its innateness and by reference to concepts of intentionality, performativity and phaticity, recognised by a causal aesthetic visuality, which I have termed *snapshottedness*.

It is my belief that that the defining of snapshot photography in such a manner represents an original contribution to knowledge and our understanding of why snapshot is a ubiquitous ingrained social practice that continues to evolve.

It is also my belief that I have answered the research questions and the claim made in my thesis statement; that Snapshot Photography is a socially constructed, phatic, mnemonic mark-making technology (with origins in parietal art) that fulfils a cultural need to remember and communicate socially.

I wish to qualify the arguments presented in support of my thesis by qualifying my hypothesis that snapshot photography has Stone Age antecedents in parietal art.

Although I believe there is evidence available to support such an assertion, by recognising the controversial nature of the statement and that due to the limitations

of the scope and depth of the research, I offer the proposal as an allegorical foundation for my current research, which has the potential for development as a research project in the future.

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12 ILLUSTRATIONS

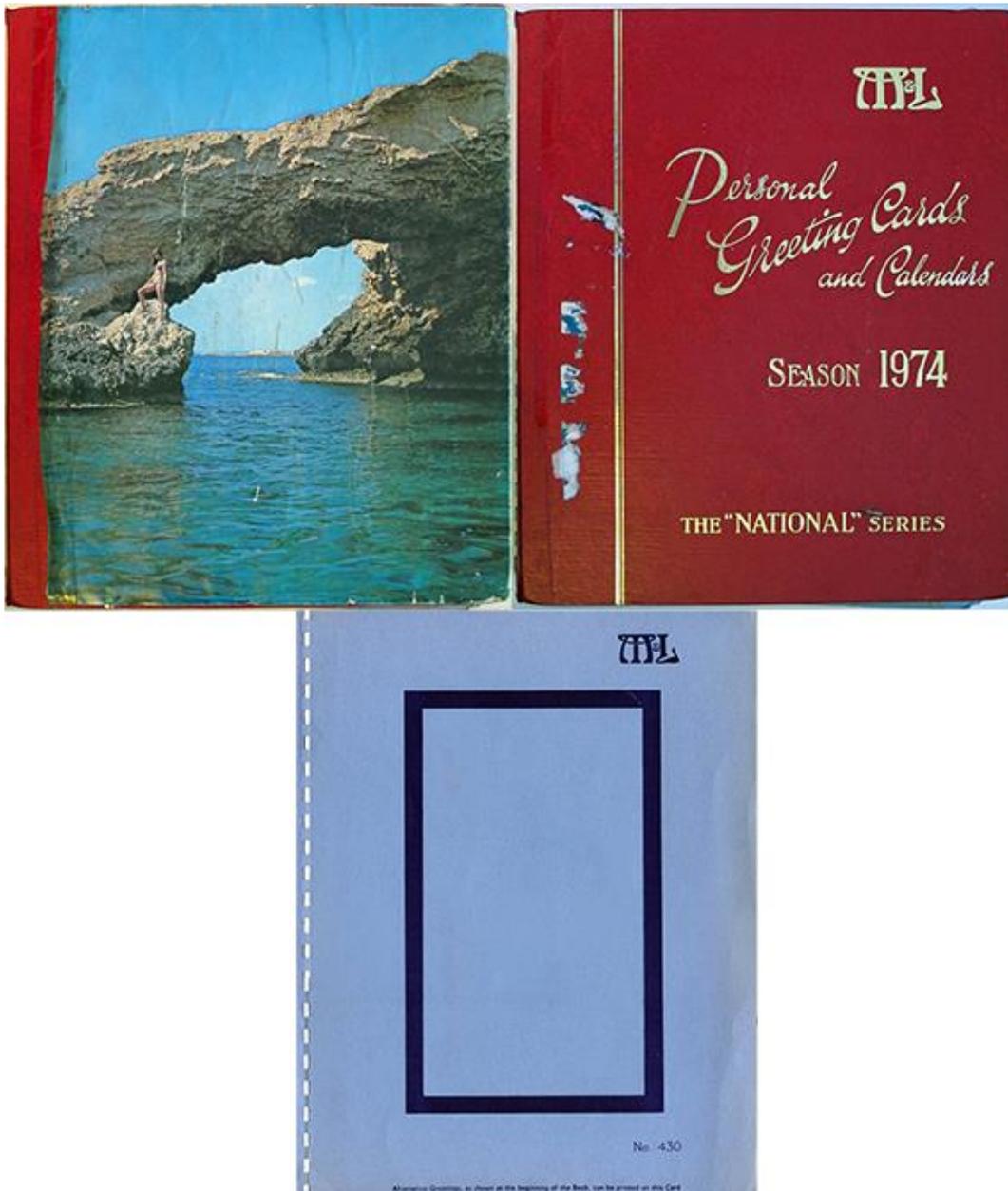


Figure 11 – Photograph Album Cover and Sample Page



Figure 13 - Mock-up of Exhibition with Custom built Camera Obscura (proof of concept only).



Figure 14 - View of Camera Obscura Screen

The image shows a view of the screen through the Camera Obscura setup in Figure 13 - Mock-up of Exhibition with Custom built Camera Obscura (proof of concept only).



Figure 15: - iCamera Obscura

The iCamera is a custom designed and built apparatus in the style of a Large Format Plate Camera. Using a simple lens upcycled from an inexpensive spotting scope, an image is projected onto a white screen at a slight angle in the camera and an iPhone 4S, mounted at the front of the camera and focused on the internal white screen, is used to capture the images visualised by the iCamera. The iPhone is triggered using a Bluetooth shutter release. The iPhone is running a Phot Booth app which directs the captured image to a printer.

13 APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Memory Text 1

13.1.1 Introduction

This Memory Text is created using the format suggested by Kuhn in *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (Kuhn, 2002, p.8). The format of the questions outlined below were designed by Kuhn with reference to the work of Rosy Martin and Spence (Spence & Holland, 1991 Spence, 1986 Martin & Spence, 1988).

Memory work takes all forms of remembering, memory accounts and memory texts as material for interpretation, and opens to question the taken-for-grantedness, or the transparency, of acts of memory in relation to the past. Taking expressions of memory as material for interpretation, memory work may deploy established procedures for analysing cultural texts, and these will be as productive and convincing as the practitioners' craft skills and insight allow (Kuhn, 2007, p.8).

13.1.2 Memory Text - Created 22nd November 2016

Consider the human subject(s) of the photograph. Start with a simple description and move on into an account in which you take up the position of the subject. In this part of the exercise, it is helpful to use the third person (she rather than I for example). To bring out feelings associated with the photograph, you may visualise yourself as the subject as she was at the moment, in the picture: this can be done in turn with all of the photographs human subjects, if there is more than one and even with animals and inanimate objects in the picture.

Consider the picture's context of production. Where, when how, by whom and why was the picture taken?

Description	<p>The photograph is a 2.25 inches square, B&W, printed on Kodak Velox paper, worn at the edges, with a caption written on the back. It had become detached from its place on the page of an album compiled by my mother. A page, which included mainly, photographs of me at various ages or stages of my life.</p> <p>The photograph shows a young boy in what appears to be school uniform. Cap, Gabardine Coat tied at the waist with a belt, what appears to be a light coloured jacket and shorts (possibly Donegal tweed), three quarter socks (grey) and black Oxford style shoes. I am carrying a large book or album under my arm.</p> <p>The other person evident in the photograph is the photographer depicted by their shadow. A left arm is discernible together with a rolled up shirt sleeve. From this it is assumed that the photographer is my father who was 6ft 3inches tall and weighed in the region of 16 to 17 stone (224 to 238lb).</p> <p>The boy is infant school age, and looks about say 5 to 7.</p>
Where:	<p>The boy is posed standing on a concrete path at the gable end of a Prefab. The path is lined with bricks on edge laid in a herringbone</p>

	pattern.
When	This would date the picture late 40's to 50's, although some Prefabs survived into the 80's.
How	Typically, the photograph would have been taken with a box camera. The family used both Kodak Box cameras and an Ensign Ful-View and probably later than this a Kodak folding camera.
Whom	From the shadow on the wall and path, and the apparent rolled up shirt sleeve, the picture is almost certainly taken by a burly adult male, probably my father.
Why	From the dress, full school uniform and the book under the arm, the assumption is photograph was taken to celebrate my first day at school.
Consider the context in which an image of this sort would have been made.	<p>The photograph would have been taken for personal use as a record of a significant event, first day at school, one of the commonest reasons for taking a family photograph.</p> <p>The photograph would probably have spent most of its existence in the envelope/folder in which it was returned from the Developer and Printer along with the rest of the frames from the roll of film, together with the original negatives. It is possible that it had been selected from the rest of the associated negatives and kept together with other selected photographs for reference and for sharing. It may have been kept in an album but more likely in a draw or shoe box. It was only later that the image was selected to be included in a thematic biographical album by my mother. The photograph at some time had been notated on the verso "Alistairs [sic] first day at school September 1953." When compared with the notation alongside the photograph in the album which was slightly different, the 3 had been crossed out and replaced with a 2 i.e. 1952 rather than 1953. In</p>

	<p>addition, the handwriting, unquestionably my mother's was of a much younger hand on the photograph when compared with the handwriting in the album, which was in block capitals. The difference in handwriting suggests that the note on the verso of the image had been made much earlier.</p> <p>In my family, it was quite common to view and share photographs, as a first born my photographs were probably shared quite frequently. The members of the immediate family were prolific "snappers", particularly my aunts, my mother's siblings. My maternal Grandfather, who I never met, was a semi-professional photographer with a commercial studio. I own the album in which the photograph resides and the photograph is rarely if ever viewed today other than by me. The album was compiled, I believe in the early 80's after my father was incapacitated by a severe stroke and confined to a nursing home, by my mother as a form of cathartic and or nostalgic therapy when confronted by and in anticipation of my father's imminent and inevitable death.</p>
<p>What photographic technologies would have been used?</p>	<p>A simple box camera would have been used and the film processed at the local chemist.</p>
<p>What are the aesthetics of the image?</p>	<p>The image is a typical snapshot devoid of intentional aesthetic qualities.</p>
<p>Does it conform to certain</p>	<p>It demonstrates the conventions of a typical snapshot, wide framing, subject in center of frame, rigid pose, technical issues, shadow of photographer intruding into image.</p>

Appendix

<p>photographic conventions?</p>	
<p>Consider the photographs currency in context or contexts of reception. Who or what was the photograph made for?</p>	<p>The snapshot is biographical and commemorative of an event, the first day at school. The parents and presumably the immediate family.</p>
<p>Who has it now and where is it kept?</p>	<p>The referent.</p>
<p>Who saw it then and who sees it now?</p>	<p>The referent.</p>

13.2 Appendix 2 – Performative Ekphrasis

13.2.1 Introduction

'A speech that brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes' This is the definition of ekphrasis taught to students in the Greek schools of the Roman Empire as they began their studies of rhetoric. It is a very different definition from the one which has become familiar in modern literary criticism for, however ekphrasis is defined in modern critical discourse; it is usually seen as a text or textual fragment that engages with the visual arts. Over the last few decades, ekphrasis has been defined as 'the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art', 'the verbal representation of visual representation' or 'words about an image'.¹ For all their variety, these definitions place a central importance on a certain type of referent: the visual arts (a category which sometimes includes and sometimes excludes buildings and monuments). But this was not its ancient sense, which was to use language to try and make an audience imagine a scene (Webb, 2009, p.3).

As an initial methodology I am creating a textual narrative from the photograph as an *ekphrasis* and evocation of memory in photographs as Linda Rader Overman describes in her Thesis and other writing on ekphrasis and photographs (Overman, 2012; Overman, 2013). Ruth Webb, describes ekphrasis as, "A speech that brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes" (Overman, 2012; Overman, 2013; Webb, 2009). Originally, *ekphrasis* referred to the description of art. Some contemporary poems are a description and an interpretation of art, as is Auden's, "Musee des Beaux Arts," or Elizabeth Alexander's "Tanner's Annunciation." The *ekphrastic* poem is not necessarily *about the art*, but more *about the act of looking at the art* (Auden, 1994;

Alexander, 2005). In my case the *ekphrastic* narrative is about looking at the photograph, a performative utterance about the image. *Ekphrasis: Writing from Photographs*

13.2.2 Preamble

The *first day at school snapshot photograph* came from a photograph album bequeathed to me by my mother. I believe, she had compiled the album during a melancholic period when my father was terminally ill with a stroke and in a nursing home. A time I suspect when she would have been in a reflective frame of mind. She would have been about three score years and ten at the time, roughly the same age as I am now. The large album is unusual in that it was home made from a repurposed spiral bound, “greetings card salesman’s sample book.” The red, fake leather cover bore the words “M&L, Personal Greetings Cards and Calendars, Season 1974, The National Series” in gold. She had disguised the album’s origins by covering it with a picture that looked like a scene from a holiday poster, as a dust cover. See **Figure 11** – Photograph Album Cover and Sample Page

Inside, on the original *sugar bag blue* pages, she had arranged her photographs thematically rather than the more usual chronological, maybe a reflection on the album being a retrospective compilation. The first thing in the album was not a photograph but a “first day cover” celebrating opening of the new Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, which was dated 30th May 1967, alongside was a snapshot of the laying of the original foundation stone with the note: June 1934 and a very small head and shoulders portrait of my mother cut from a larger photograph with the note: Jo 1938.

The photographs are arranged in groups, starting with photographs of my mother as a child with family and friends, then two pages of snapshots of her and my father presumably before they were married, and then pages of her wedding photographs. All the pages had been carefully notated with names, places and dates. The notes for the wedding photographs include a comment about the church having been bombed. There was also a list of those who were absent and those who were away on active service, this was 1943 and still a time of active war service.

On the next page where photographs of me at all ages, ranging from baby in arms to family man. I was attracted to one snapshot that had fallen from the place on the page where it had been fixed. The photograph was a snapshot of me as a young child dressed in school uniform, clutching something, a book, under my arm and standing in a place I immediately recognised. As I looked at the snapshot I had a strange sensation of familiarity with the place and self but not the occasion. I was standing at the gable end of the Prefab bungalow where I had lived since I was three. I remembered the clothes, the cap, the gabardine raincoat, and the shoes, but not of wearing them on that occasion. Neither could I remember the snapshot having been taken. I do not remember standing in that place or hearing the click of the shutter. I had an uncanny feeling that the image was of another, a doppelganger. A typical snapshot, technically flawed, it contained traces of the person taking the photograph, the harsh shadow of the photographer who I presume to be my father, was cast on the ground in front of me, towering over me and my shadow. It was the shadow of a burly figure with rolled up shirt sleeves; he was a big man, all six foot three inches and sixteen stone, the physique of a policeman.

On the back of the snapshot, written in my mother's unmistakable handwriting, were the words, *Alistairs first day at school September 1952* or was it a 3, the number looked as though it may have been altered. On the page next to the space from where it had fallen was written, with a slightly less firm hand, almost the same words in capital letters "*ALISTAIRS FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 1953.*" I suspect they had been written some years later when the album was compiled. But I am confused, my fifth birthday was in April 1944, and I presumably started school in September 1944, why would my mother have written 1953/2? Why would she have been uncertain about that date? I shall return to this dilemma. Finding the photograph brought back floods of vivid memories, of the place, school all manner of things but I had no recollection of the photograph being taken.

Browsing further into the album I discovered another snapshot of me in what appears to be the same school uniform I was wearing in the original snapshot. It was a professional photograph taken at the Festival of Britain celebrations in Liverpool, at a photo opportunity; I was sat on a motorbike. The photograph was dated as 1950, but of course the year of the Festival of Britain revelries was 1951. It is also probable that I may have worn similar clothes over the intervening years, as was normal in those days. But the photograph throws further doubt upon the evidence of the date and occasion of the original photograph.

13.2.3 Performative Ekphrasis – Monologue - 20th March 2016

I picked up one of my mother's family photograph albums. She had disguised the album's origins by covering it with a picture that looked like a scene from a holiday poster, as a dust cover. The album had originally been a samples book for a greeting card company. The red, fake leather cover bore the words "M&L, Personal Greetings Cards and Calendars, Season 1974, The National Series" embossed in gold foil.

I opened it, the first few pages were snapshots of my mother and father before they married. Then the photographs of their wedding, my mother had written names and notes, like who was not there, away on active service. This was 1943 the country was still at war. The next page was full of photographs of me, from a baby in a pram to pictures of my wedding and my children.

One snapshot caught my eye. It was a small black and white snapshot, just two and a quarter inches square. It was, lying loose, between the sugar bag blue pages. I picked it up; it was a bit "dog eared." On the back in my mother's unmistakable handwriting, in ink, not ball point, were the words, *Alistairs first day at school September 1952* or is that a 3? She has altered the last number of the date, how strange. Why would she not know the date I started school? Neither was correct, I started school in at Joseph Williams Primary School in September 1949.

The photograph shows me standing on the footpath at the gable end of 28 Lineside Road, Bell Vale, Gateacre, Liverpool, the Prefab bungalow where I had lived since I was three. I am in school uniform, wearing a cap, probably navy blue in colour and a navy blue Gabardine raincoat; very common school garb in those days. Children do not wear raincoats anymore.

I remember we used to wear them like a Batman cape fastened round the neck. I am also wearing light coloured short pants that is unusual, probably the pants to a Donegal tweed suit. I remember this because I have seen another photograph of me wearing such a suit for school.

My normal school pants would have been dark charcoal grey wool worsted. My mother always bought me worsted pants. Many kids wore grey flannel pants for

school, they were cheaper. My mother would not buy flannels, because she considered them rather working class.

I am clutching something under my arm. I am not sure what it is. It looks like a folder but it could be an annual. I was addicted to the Eagle annual, an annual specifically for boys. I think it actually said on the front "The Eagle Annual for Boys", imagine that today. It was based on a weekly comic that included lots of very sensible stuff as well as the usual stories; like exploded diagrams of battleships, planes and trains, for example.

The comic was expensive; it cost four and a half pence, compared with the Dandy and Beano at 2 old pennies. Interestingly the first Eagle Annual was published in 1951. So I could have received a copy for Christmas 1951. It was a standard Christmas present. I still have a full set of Eagle Annuals!

The Belle Vale Prefab estate was built between 1943 and 1949 to replace some of the housing stock lost in central Liverpool to the blitz. Belle vale was a greenfield site, south-east of Liverpool. It became one of the largest Prefab estates in the country, 1159 Prefabs. Prefabs were American designed, prefabricated bungalows made in redundant aircraft factories on the outskirts of Liverpool from the aluminium recovered from scrapped aircraft; the ultimate in Upcycling. They were delivered to site on the back of a lorry in pieces and could be erected on a pre-prepared brick and concrete foundation by a gang of just four men.

I believe we moved here in 1947 when I was aged 3, just before my sister was born in March 1948. The imminent arrival of a baby was probably the reason we moved. My father was a policeman, this placed him high on the waiting list for Corporation housing. Before the move, we had been living with my maternal grandmother for a brief period and prior to that, in Lodgings.

When I first looked at the 'First day at school' snapshot, the thing I noticed was where I was standing and then, what I was wearing. I remembered the bricks along the edge of the path. My dad recovered them from the garden and round and about,

they were left over from the building. He laid them in a herringbone pattern around the edges of all the paths.

I remember the Prefab vividly; I can see the whole of the inside in my mind's eye. Prefabs were well ahead of their time in terms of their fixtures and fittings. They had all mod cons, electric cooker, and a fridge, unheard of in 1947. There was a washing machine, not just a hot tub, and a mangle for squeezing the water out of the clothes. I remember thinking how clever, when the clothes came through the mangle they landed in the sink. My mother used to let me turn the handle of the mangle, but you had to watch your fingers.

The Prefab had warm air central heating, fired by a multi-fuel stove that had doors with little mica windows, and there was a hot towel rail in the bathroom.

I remember the walls of my bedroom were painted pale green, Eau De Nil my mother said it was called. The name stuck in my head because I thought it very strange. I also remember that the paint was called "distemper" the forerunner of emulsion paint. I can remember my father being very unhappy about how many coats of paint he had to apply before it covered the colour underneath.

I remembered the walk to school with great affection, it was about a mile. There were fields down one side of the road for most of the way. I remember acorn and conker trees. I must have started school just as all the acorns and conkers were falling off the trees. Halfway to school was the library, in a row of shops. Because it was a new estate in the middle of nowhere, they include shops and other amenities, strategically placed throughout the estate.

I remember my first library book, *Brer Rabbit and the Tar baby*, probably not very PC today. Why did the name Epaminondas pop into my head? The colour of someone's skin wasn't a problem when I was at school. I only remember one boy of colour; and strangely I can remember his name, Louis Cattrall. I found him again on the Belle Vale Project - Blog, where he had posted comments about life on the estate and of being mixed race.

Other things I remember looking at the photo. Behind me, you can see next door s coal shed. Every Prefab had one; they were repurposed Anderson air raid shelters, left over from the war effort. They had one end bricked up, and a door on the other. The coal had to be carried all the way from the road in sacks on the coalmans back. I used to watch them in amazement, they made it look so easy.

Despite my vivid memories of the place, I do not remember this snapshot being taken, which I find very strange. Because of the size of the photograph size, it was probably taken with my mother's beloved Ensign Ful-View camera, it was a simple point and click camera but it was a twin lens reflex with a proper large viewfinder in which you could actually see what you were photographing and it took 12 pictures on a roll. The Kodak Brownie, which we also had, had a tiny viewfinder but it produced a larger rectangular photograph.

The shadows in the photo are strong and long so it could have been taken early in the day. I have checked the orientation of the house and the gable end, where I am standing, faced roughly south west. This would suggest the photograph was taken in the early afternoon or evening rather than the morning. A bit unusual, most first day at school photos tend to be taken in the morning before setting off for school. Maybe that is a clue; maybe this isn't my first day at school. Could I just be modelling a new school uniform, maybe I am just trying the outfit on?

Who took the snapshot? Normally it would have been my mother, she was the family photographer. Just as the Kodak advertising suggests, the women are the recorders and archivists of family history. But, the shadow cast on the wall is not of a woman. It is of a burly arm with a rolled-up shirt sleeve. My father was 6 foot 3 inches tall and weighed over 16 stone; it looks like his arm. Maybe my mother was looking after my baby sister.

As I have said already, I don't remember having this photograph taken. I remember many other things but I cannot see my dad standing in front of me and I can't hear him telling me how to stand and to smile, but not to squint. I don't remember the click of the shutter, but I do remember the Ensign made a loud clunky click.

What about the date on the back of the photograph? We moved house around this time. It would have been sometime before the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, which was on 2nd June 1952. I know we had moved before the Coronation because at the time we did not have a family television at the new house. For some bizarre reason it was arranged that the family, my father, mother and baby sister, would watch the Coronation with the neighbour's next door to our new house, and I would have to watch it with one of our former neighbour's, the "Makin's", who live across the road from the Prefab at Lineside Road; fancy remembering their name. He was a Radio and TV repairer and the only other people we knew who had a telly, not only that they had a car, rare in the early fifties. I still cannot believe that I had to travel back to our former neighbourhood by bus on my own, aged 8 years. Strangely I can remember standing at the bus stop on the corner of Mather Avenue and Woolton Road, to wait for the 66 bus to Gateacre Village, from where I walked to Lineside Road a distance of approximately 3 miles in total.

From this information, it would seem that I moved to a new school some time before the Coronation, possible as early as September 1951. It would be normal to move school in September but I suppose it could have been Christmas 51 or even Easter 52.

There are so many things I can remember about living in the Prefab, but it puzzles me that I do not remember the occasion on which the photograph was taken. I can remember having Scarlet Fever and the name of the Doctor, Ellenbogen. Strangely I can remember that the Prefab windows were held in place with PK screws. Probably because my father locked himself out on a number of occasions and he had to remove the windows to get into the house. But I do not remember having my photograph taken.

END

This ekphrastic narrative was used as the script for the creation of an audio recording, which was used as the soundtrack for a video installation. The making and use of the video is described elsewhere.

Link to YouTube video – https://youtu.be/fraK1R4_bSw

13.3 Appendix 3 - Poem - First Day at School

Poem 2 - First Day at School

A snapshot found
Between the pages
Of me it seems
Just one of many
A family snap
An awkward pose
Upon the path
Standing alone
I clutch a book
The polished shoes
My cap in place
Stand just there
Dad speaks to me
You look the part
We stand there tall
Our shadows fall upon the wall
His sleeves are rolled
On muscled arms
He points the camera
Doesn't look

He's looking down
But not at me
I'm framed within
The tiny box
The lens it squints
With just one eye
Smile he says
I hear a click
Just one more
Should do the trick
He winds the knob
It clicks again
Not sure I smiled
No not again
The ritual unfolds
Just as before
One quick snap
A special day
What was the day
I don't recall

First day at school
That could be right
A little note
May shed some light
The words they say it's 53
That can't be right
Would make me nine
The date I'd say is 49
The photo's mute
It cannot tell
Memories I need
To break the spell
I know the place
But not the day
Remembering, it's hard to say
The written facts
Stand in the way
Frail memories
Have gone away
What was that very special day

Written in response to the "First Day at School" snapshot and the words my mother wrote on the back. "I remember the place but not the day".