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—Chapter 3—

The Photograph: A Place That Lacks Its Own Emplacement

The photograph in some sense can elude history.
Roland Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image*

According to Geoffrey Batchen, since the late nineteenth century photographs have been utilized and manipulated in a variety of different ways; therefore, from this time on “the photograph is treated as an entirely malleable concept, something to be made rather than simply taken.”¹⁷⁶ The flexibility of the photograph as a concept does not only stem from its manipulation in different mediums and discourses, but also from the fact that the photographic technology has been always altering and evolving since its conception. However, as Batchen argues, by looking at the history of photography, it becomes evident that “a change in imaging technology will not, in and of itself, cause the disappearance of the photograph,” because “photography has never been any *one* technology.”¹⁷⁷ For Batchen, throughout approximately two centuries of technological developments replete with numerous numbers of innovation and obsolescence, the photograph has remained existing, but as a pliable concept. Today, it has become commonplace for almost everyone to refer to a paper print, digital print, or a picture on computer screens, as a photograph. Yet, the question remains as what characteristics define a photograph in the present time, while throughout the history of the medium it has been continually shaping and reshaping in a variety of forms and guises.

As literary theorist Eduardo Cadava inquires, “how can we know what a photograph is when it has appeared in so many guises,” such as “heliograph, photogenic drawing, calotype, talbotype, cyanotype, daguerreotype, photogram, pinhole image, analog or digital photograph?”¹⁷⁸ As he argues, due to the manifold of forms photographs have appeared in throughout their history, it has become obvious that “a photograph has never been a *single thing*, has never had a consistent form, has never remained identical to itself. Instead it has continually been altered, transformed, and circulated.”¹⁷⁹ A photograph, as Batchen and

¹⁷⁶ Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*, 74.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 140. (My italic)

¹⁷⁸ Eduardo Cadava, “The Itinerant Languages of Photography,” in *The Itinerant Languages of Photography* ed. Cadava, E, Nouzeilles (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 25.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Cadava hold, has never been a single entity, but a malleable concept, constantly undergoing its own transmutation in different forms and within diverse mediums. It is because, since the advent of medium, the photograph has been continually influenced by the imaging technology in which it has been produced and reproduced. However, precisely due to the potential of reproducibility embedded in each photograph, it has been able to travel from one place to another, thereby continuing its life in different times and spaces.

As Flusser puts forward, photographs are like “silent surface(s) patiently waiting to be distributed,” referring to the capacity of photographs to move from their context by means of reproduction.¹⁸⁰ Although since the nineteenth century photographs have been constantly transformed by the technological advancements of the medium, one of the main features they have persistently retained is their *movability* through different channels of distribution. The simple fact that, either as materialized prints or as immaterial information, photographs can move into diverse channels of distribution by being reproduced. In this chapter, in order to examine how photographs move in different spaces, I will concentrate on how the photograph as a place travels through different distributary channels, the only quality that has inhered in them until the present day. While discussing different modes of distribution photographs can take, I will mainly focus on one specific channel that is undoubtedly the most prevalent one in our time: the internet. It is because looking at photographs’ method of distribution in the internet not only foregrounds how they have retained movability as their defining marker, but also will manifest how the photograph as a place inhabits the virtual space. To do this, firstly I will discuss how the photograph as a thing cannot ever be restricted to any specific location, but move by means of reproduction. Then, by examining a case study that make evident photographs’ movability and by drawing on the works of philosophers Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze, I will argue what kind of place the photograph can be when it is marked by movability, and *how* such place moves in space. In doing so, not only will this chapter show how the photograph can be seen as a place, but also how such place localises in space. By looking at photographs’ transmissibility, thus, this chapter asks how can the photograph be considered a place and how does this particular place traverse through different spaces? To this end, I will begin my analysis by explaining the relationship between places and their inherent capacity of alteration. That is, their potential of constant change through which they reflect their becoming, as do photographs through their continual evolution in diverse mediums and practices.

¹⁸⁰ Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy*, 49.

3.1 Never in a Single Location

The photograph is always more than an image.
Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*

According to Cresswell, the putative misconception that places are static stems from the Platonic distinction between the two notions of “chora” and “topos” as the constituents of becoming and the origin of existence. While in Plato’s terms chora refers to “the place or setting for becoming,” topos is rather the thing that undergoes the process of becoming.¹⁸¹ Although these two notions were used interchangeably in Plato’s writings, Cresswell argues, chora denotes a place that is more specific: it is a place that is incessantly in the process of becoming a place. As he points out, while for Plato “chora most often referred to a place in the process of becoming, topos would refer to *an achieved place*.”¹⁸² In other words, Cresswell argues that the idea of place since Plato has been bifurcated towards two seemingly disparate directions: that of topos, which suggests places are static and finalized, and that of chora, which proposes that places are always in the process of becoming. Accordingly, the distinction between the two aspects of place as something processual, such as places that host activities, and as a finalized entity has been perpetuating until the present time.

However, as philosopher Jeff Malpas contends, the notion of place contains “both the idea of the social activities and institutions that are expressed in and through the structure of a particular place...*and* the idea of the physical objects and events in the world.”¹⁸³ For Malpas, the concept of place is essentially a multifarious one and thus cannot ever be reduced to an achieved place, since it can reflect the entanglement of social interactions and physical places in which those interactions occur. As he contends, the idea of place essentially involves both “physical objects” and “social interactions,” since “it is within the structure of places that the very possibility of the social arises.”¹⁸⁴ That is to say, for Malpas the idea of place is not to be deemed as a finalized and static entity, but as something that is invariably in the state of alteration through different social practices. Along the same line, geographer Allan Pred puts forward that places are essentially marked by inherent processes, “whether presented as

¹⁸¹ Cresswell. “Place,” 2.

¹⁸² Ibid. (My italics).

¹⁸³ Jeff Malpas, *Places and Experiences: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35-36. (My italics).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 36.

elements of a spatial distribution, as unique assemblage of physical facts and human artefacts, or as a localized spatial form.”¹⁸⁵ Through introducing the concept of “paths”, Pred argues that both people and physical objects move through time and space, resulting in biographies that eventually lead to the formation of places.¹⁸⁶ Thus, he defines the concept of place as “a process whereby the reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies, and the transformation of nature ceaselessly become one another.”¹⁸⁷ That is to say, for Pred, places are not recognised by a set of predefined properties, but through processes or paths with which they engage with sociocultural activities that constitute them. Despite their different approaches towards places, what Malpas and Pred share in understanding the concept of place is that it is never found as an achieved place, i.e. it is never a topos.

According to the aforementioned scholars, regardless of being a geographical location or a physical object, a place should never be deemed as belonging to the inert, since it is always in the constant process of transformation. In the photographic discourse, a photograph can epitomize how a physical object can move through diverse sociocultural transformation, both affecting and being affected through this process. Photographs, Flusser proposes, even in their very physical form are “loose leaves which can be passed hand to hand,” stressing that photographs are instilled with the capacity of movement by being constantly exchanged among people.¹⁸⁸ Acknowledging that photographs are essentially mobile artefacts, theorist of photography Allan Sekula points out that the photograph is mainly used as “a token of exchange” in the photographic discourse, which can “be defined as an arena of information exchange.”¹⁸⁹ Precisely because photographs can be reproduced and relocated from one context to another, like “loose leaves,” Sekula holds that photographic meaning is never naturally given within the photograph, but is always “context determined.”¹⁹⁰ Thus, he defines the photograph as necessarily an “incomplete utterance,” since its meaning and form can be altered and adapted depending on its contexts of readability and modes of reproduction.¹⁹¹ Because the meaning and shape of photographs are always hinged upon their context of delivery, Sekula points out, “the most significant feature of the photograph is its *reproducibility*.”¹⁹² That is, the fact that

¹⁸⁵ Allan Pred, “Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places”, in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (1984): 279.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁸⁸ Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy*, 49.

¹⁸⁹ Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1982), 84-85. (First published as an essay in 1974).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*: 90. (*Italics in original*).

the photograph can be copied into infinite numbers, and each of the replications can enter into a new discourse of readability, which, in turn, weakens the singular existence of the photograph in any particular time and space.

Undermining the concept of authenticity in “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin propounded that the mass reproduction of artworks caused a significant shift in their singular existence in time, resulting in the loss of their “aura.” In Benjamin’s terms, the aura of the work of art referred to “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”¹⁹³ Before the advancement of technical reproduction, Benjamin argued that the work of art was appraised according to its ritual function, which would confer an aura of singularity upon the artwork. But, in the age of mechanical reproduction, the work of art is to a lesser degree valued by its ceremonial and ritual functions in human societies. Instead, according to Benjamin, the “cult value” of the work of art, which is the corollary of its ritual function, has been supplanted by its “exhibition value.”¹⁹⁴ For Benjamin, photography was the quintessential indicator of the shift from the cultic to the exhibitional function of artworks, because it substituted the domain of “tradition” with “plurality” of copies through mass reproduction.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he begins his article by stating that “in principle a work of art has always been reproducible,” thus proposing that reproduction was not a new feature per se.¹⁹⁶ In relation to photography, Sekula notes, “the status of the photograph as ‘unique object’ had an early demise with Talbot’s invention of positive-negative process.”¹⁹⁷ That is, even the early chemical photographs had the possibility of being reproduced as their inherent feature, and, therefore, reproduction was not anything new for the photographic medium. As Cadava furthers and explicates this discussion, even Greek coins, bronzes, and woodcuts were duplicable, thus “if the technological reproducibility of a work of art suggests something new, this something new is not a ‘first time’ in history. Rather, it marks the *intense acceleration* of a movement that has always already been at work within the work.”¹⁹⁸

As Cadava suggests, the reproducibility of an artwork has always been its intrinsic feature, and after the technological advancement of the photographic medium, this feature has

¹⁹³ Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 220.

¹⁹⁴ However, Benjamin argues that the “cult value” has never been completely eradicated. Because, for example, even the mass-produced photographs can gain “the cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead” offering “a last refuge for the cult value of the picture.” Ibid., 225-226.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 221.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 218.

¹⁹⁷ Sekula, “Invention of Photographic,” 90.

¹⁹⁸ Eduardo Cadava, “Theses on the Photography of History,” *Diacritics* 22, No. ¾ Commemorating Walter Benjamin (Autumn-Winter, 1992): 96.

only been extremely intensified. Precisely due to this intense acceleration in the reproduction phase, scholar Gabriela Nouzeilles contends, photographic pictures are always subjected to simultaneous forces of “domiciliation” and “dispersion,” even in their seemingly most immobile state in an archive.¹⁹⁹ It is because, while being preserved and domiciled in an archive, photographs retain the possibility of being rapidly reproduced in an infinite number, through which they can leave the archive and post-haste disseminate in different places and times. Nouzeilles refers to this aspect of photographs as “the archival paradox” in an archive, which features the coexisting potentials of “inscription” and “itinerancy” embedded in each photograph. As she explains this point:

The paradoxical condition of the archive—the hesitation between *inscription* and *itinerancy*—is intrinsic to photography itself. Photography is both Medusan and Protean. It does congeal what it sees, but it also sets itself, and with it its referent, into motion. It both mummifies and sets free.²⁰⁰

Endowed with the possibility of reproduction, Nouzeilles suggests, a photograph’s location cannot be demarcated by its archival location, but marked by simultaneous capacities of inscription and itinerancy. In other words, a photograph laden with the possibility of being reproduced is inasmuch domiciled in the place where it is situated as it is transferable to other locations. A photograph, Nouzeilles suggests, is “both the spectral shadow of a trace”—alluding to the ghostly existence of the referent in the photograph discussed in the previous chapter—and “its physical materialization.”²⁰¹ That is to say, for her, a photograph can concurrently be a physical object that can be touched and moved, *and* a place where the spectral image of the referent appears.

However, as Batchen notes, the awareness of the physicality of the photograph stems from the early daguerreotypes that had to be touched and handled with meticulous care.²⁰² Because of the careful handling of the early photographic images, their physical identity resulted in considering the photograph as “simultaneously [an] image and a thing.”²⁰³ As objects or things, in Flusser’s terms, photographs are loose leaves that can be exchanged

¹⁹⁹ Gabriela Nouzeilles, “The Archival Paradox,” in *The Itinerant Languages of Photography*, ed. Cadava, E, Nouzeilles (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 41.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 38.

²⁰² Batchen, *Each Wild Idea*, 60.

²⁰³ Ibid., 114.

between people and move from one place to another, facilitated through the intense acceleration of technological reproduction. However, also as an image, the photograph cannot be reduced to one place, since, as Casey points out, “the place of images” is not restricted to exact positioning, but it signifies an “intense efflorescence.”²⁰⁴ As he further explains: “what matters in the physical implacement of images is not how they are contained by a surface ... but how they appear at a surface,” because images are “indeed efflorescent phenomena.”²⁰⁵ While as a thing the photograph can be moved and exchanged from one hand to another, as an image it becomes an efflorescent phenomenon that can unfold towards different times and spaces. Consequently, whether considering the photograph as an image or as a thing, the indispensable fact to consider is that it cannot be delimited to where it is located, to the place where it happens to be. Because, having the inherent potential of reproducibility at its disposal, every photograph is capable of moving from its context and travelling towards a boundless number of contexts yet to come.

Refraining from calling photographs either objects or images, Flusser underscores their movability by stating that “photographs are *silent flyers* that are distributed by means of reproduction.”²⁰⁶ For Flusser, the significance of the photograph lies not in its consideration as an object or an image, but in the fact that it can be reproduced, thereby perpetually moving through different channels of distribution like a flyer. Being a flyer that can travel through different circulatory channels, a photograph cannot be deemed a finalized place, that is, it cannot be a topos that is finished in and of itself. As Pred and Malpas argue, the idea of place encompasses physical objects, social interactions and events in the world; however, a more defining fact concerning a place is that it never should be considered as an achieved place that does not undergo further alteration. Photographs as places manifest their constant modification and becoming through the possibility of being reproduced, whereby they can travel towards a multiplicity of directions. That is why Cadava proposes, the only specifying feature of photographs, which has been preserved since their conception, is their inherent *itinerancy*. That is, the fact that a photograph, through the inbuilt potential of being reproduced, can move across the globe and never remains in a single location: a movement through which “its significance is simultaneously altered and preserved.”²⁰⁷ In other words, irrespective of considering the photograph as an image or an object, Cadava and Flusser hold that the only defining index of

²⁰⁴ Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 287.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy*, 56.

²⁰⁷ Cadava, “The Itinerant languages”, 36.

photographs is their itinerancy, allowing them to travel across different locations like silent flyers.

At this point, having discussed the possibility of the photograph being a flyer that cannot be restricted to a single position, I will next look at a photograph to exemplify what specific kind of *place* photographs can be when their fate is to be everlastingly reproduced. In other words, by focusing on movability as a defining trait for photographs, in the following section I discuss how the photograph can feature a place that is never an achieve place; that is, how it manifests a place that is never permanently localised in time and space.

3.2 The Vagabond Locomotion of Photographs

Photographic images are essentially mutable and fluid artifacts, 'at home' in any context while simultaneously in transient.
Gabriela Nouzeilles, *The Archival Paradox*

In 2005, the Spanish conceptual artist, Joan Fontcuberta, hold an exhibition titled *Googlegrams* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In this gallery, he exhibited several photographic prints resulted from the accumulation of thousands of thumbnail images that were downloaded from the internet and combined by a photo-mosaic programme. The photo-mosaic software, the artist explains, is a programme that “selects each graphic sample from the bank of available images and places it according to chromatic value and density in the position that most closely coincide with a portion of the larger image being recreated, as if it were making a gigantic jigsaw puzzle.”²⁰⁸ Although the photo-mosaic software usually operates off-line, for the construction of *Googlegrams* it was connected to the internet in order to utilize the images that are made available in the Google search engine. Having been constructed by the photo-mosaic software, each of the *Googlegrams* reflected, in its totality, one of the photographic images that had become the icon of our time.²⁰⁹ Figure 4 features one of these photographic images called *Googlegram: Niépce*, which was based on the first known photograph taken by

²⁰⁸ Joan Fontcuberta, “Archive noise,” *Zabriskie Gallery.com* <http://www.zabriskiegallery.com/artist.php?artist=5&page=45> (accessed April 17, 2016).

²⁰⁹ For instance, among these iconic images was the photograph of the torture scandal in the Abu Gharib prison in Baghdad. It should be said that the artist’s choice of iconic refers to the photographs that were widely disseminated and discussed throughout the history of photography. Ibid.

Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, 1826. As “a composite of ten thousand tiny electronic images that link the photography’s chemical origins to its dematerialized pixelated present,” *Googlegram: Niépce* was made to resemble the first photograph taken in the history of the medium.²¹⁰

According to Cadava, *Googlegram: Niépce* represents the itinerancy of photographic images, because it represents how Niépce’s photograph has been travelling through different times and mediums to the present time.²¹¹ It reflects how the first photograph taken in the history of photography has been transmuted and commuted to the present digital world. Tracing the places where Niépce’s original photograph has been relocated to during the past two hundred years, Cadava suggests, the first photograph can reflect the “literal itinerancy” of photography: the fact that a photograph can physically travel from one location to another.²¹² However, *Googlegram: Niépce* not only shows how the first photograph has been transmuted and brought into the contemporary digital age, but can also foreground the characteristics of the photograph as a *place* that cannot be restricted to any particular location and time. In turn, Fontcuberta’s photo can make evident *how* the photograph as a place can be disseminated through the internet, in a space whose movements do not necessarily correspond with the term itinerary. To clarify, although Niépce’s original photograph can truly reflect the “literal itinerancy” of photographs, having been immaterialized and circulated in the digital space, I will further argue that *Googlegram: Niépce* becomes a place that necessitates a different *mode* of itinerancy.

Googlegram: Niépce is, above all, an attempt to redefine what a photograph is in our age when it can instantaneously travel from one place to another through accelerated modes of digital reproduction. In addition, it features how a photograph, being either a physical object, a thing or an image, always carries the traces of distant places and times. As Cadava notes, regardless of what photographs are made of, “they must be understood as surfaces that bear the traces of an entire network of historical relations, of a complex history of production and reproduction, that gives them a depth that always takes them *elsewhere*, always links them to other times and places.”²¹³ While proposing that photographs must be conceived as surfaces

²¹⁰ Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Googlegram: Niépce,” *Metmuseum.org*. <http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions/view?exhibitionId=%7B2e988323-b8df-496f-b72ae999e567faba%7D&oid=302283>. (Accessed April 17, 2016).

²¹¹ Cadava, “The Itinerant languages,” 27.

²¹² Taken in 1826 Niépce’s photograph was moved to London in 1827 where Niépce met Daguerre. Later in 1898, it was exhibited at Crystal Palace Photographic exhibition in London. Subsequently, it was moved to the Gernsheim Collection at the Ransom Centre at the University of Texas, the USA, where the photographs is being preserved today. Cadava, “The Itinerant languages,” 27-28.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 26. (My italics).

carrying the concatenated histories through which they were reproduced, Cadava signals another defining point about photographs: their capacity to be taken “elsewhere”, to other periods of time and locations. It is true that photographs can either materially or immaterially go elsewhere, thanks to their inbuilt potential of reproduction, but they also can contain an elsewhere within them while remaining in one place, as in the structure of an alibi. Same as a photograph, an alibi essentially provides a piece of evidence showing that one was elsewhere when an act allegedly have taken place, in so doing, it includes another times and locations within its operative structure.

As Barthes repeatedly pointed out, the essential function or principle inherent in all photographs is that they can be utilized as alibies.²¹⁴ That is, while remaining in one location, photographs can testify to, and somewhat include the existence of, other places in them, thereby providing a spatial linkage to where they refer to in the world. That is why Barthes proposes that an alibi should essentially be understood as a “spatial term,” since it features a place that always has “an ‘elsewhere’ at its disposal.”²¹⁵ Strictly speaking, while as a probative instrument the alibi can be found in a particular place, it always attests to the existence of an elsewhere within its configuration. As Barthes points out, in the alibi coexists “a place which is full and one which is empty,” referring to the capacity of an alibi to include an elsewhere within it, whereas that elsewhere does not literally lie in it per se.²¹⁶ For Barthes, thus, an alibi can be understood as a place that resists being completely emplaced, as it always bears the traces of other times and spaces within its structure. In other words, while an alibi can be localized—such as a photograph that is used for evidential means in the court—it always gives evidence to, and subsumes the existence of, other places and times, thereby reflecting what philosopher Michel Foucault once called a heterotopic place.

In his essay “Different Spaces”, Foucault proposed the concept of “heterotopias” as a kind of “places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable.”²¹⁷ Contrary to utopias, which are places that have no “real place,” heterotopias are actual places that only afford temporarily localisation, because they are marked by polyvalent functions that make them resistant to any permanent emplacement.²¹⁸ Foucault demonstrates this point by the

²¹⁴ Comparing photographs to the structure of myth, Barthes notes, “yes, indeed: Photograph is *dangerous*,” since “by endowing it with *functions*, which are, for the Photographer, so many alibies.” A few pages later, he mentions that “all photographs whose principle (or better, whose alibi) is ‘shock’”. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 28 and 32.

²¹⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Jonathan Cape (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 122.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Michel Foucault. “Different spaces”, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* 2 (1998): 178.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

example of a moving train. As he explains, “a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations, since it’s something through which one passes; it is also something by which one can pass from one point to another, and then it is something that passes by.”²¹⁹ That is to say, the multifarious functionalities of the train do not allow permanent localisation, because it is a place that, particularly when it moves, shares the aspects of other spaces and times as its constructive components. According to Foucault, heterotopic places are defined by the following principles: the operational mode of heterotopic places can change according to the society in which they are located; they have “the ability to juxtapose in a single place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves”; they are “connected with temporal discontinuities”; and lastly, “they have a function in relation to the remaining space.”²²⁰ While Foucault’s instances of heterotopic places mostly address immobile locations, ranging from prisons, hospitals, cemeteries, cinemas to brothels, this notion gains its full potential in an itinerant place, a ship that traverses across an ocean. As Foucault writes:

For example, the ship is a piece of floating space, *a placeless place*, that lives its own devices, that is self-enclosed and, at the same time, delivered over to the boundless expanse of the ocean, and that goes from port to port, from watch to watch ... the sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence.²²¹

For Foucault, a ship clearly embodies the qualities of heterotopic places because its mobility permits transference from one harbour to another, while at the same time, containing and being contained by other places in its route. In other words, the Foucauldian ship, same as a photograph, functions as a flyer that sails through different places and times bearing the traces thereof, thus forming an itinerant life that does not yield enduring localizations. Foucauldian ship displays a heterotopic character precisely because it is never permanently localised, but temporarily anchored in a harbour waiting to sail. Returning to *Googlegram: Niépce*, this photo proclaims how Niépce’s photograph has been sailing through different mediums and modes of reproductions, thereby revealing how the first photograph has become a heterotopic place that is never permanently localized. On the one hand, *Googlegram: Niépce* features how in the age of intense acceleration of photographic reproduction every photograph is a placeless place that cannot be delimited to a single location,

²¹⁹ Foucault. “Different spaces”, 178.

²²⁰ Ibid., 179-184.

²²¹ Ibid., 184-185.

but appears in a manifold of disguises through different modes of reproduction. On the other, as a placeless place, *Googlegram: Niépce* highlights that the photograph cannot be reduced to an achieved place that is finished per se. Instead, replete with the potential of reproducibility, the photograph becomes—in Flusser’s terms—a flyer patiently waiting to sail across different channels of distribution. As Flusser submits, “as an object, as a thing, the photograph is practically without value”: it is “a flyer and no more.”²²²

Nevertheless, as a flyer fertilized by the possibility of reproduction, the photograph is not distributed as in the Foucauldian train that has determinate starting and ending points, but rather as a ship that sails through unspecified trajectories and directions. As Flusser proposes, because photographs can be converted into electronic information, they do not abide by the conventional methods of distribution. Information, according to Flusser, is sent through four different methods: first, as in the theatre when the “receivers form a semi-circle around the sender”; second, as in the army when the sender relays information to conveyors; third, when the information is distributed into dialogues and enriched, as in scientific discourses.²²³ However, Flusser argues that the distribution of photographs is fundamentally through a fourth method; that is, through ‘massification’, when “the sender transmits the information into space, as on the radio.”²²⁴ Similar to the distribution of sounds into space, which cannot be limited to a one-to-one connection, Flusser suggests that photographs are essentially massified through undelimited spaces and towards countless destinations. Because photographs are distributed through massification, the space onto which they traverse is thus rendered unspecified and unmeasurable. In other words, having been converted into reproducible information capable of proliferating massification, photographs are no longer distributed as in the Foucauldian train into a traceable and measurable space with an opening and ending—i.e. the spatial distance between the departure and arrival of the train. Instead, the photograph as a massifying flyer is more accurately distributed through what philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari termed as “smooth space,” an uncountable space that can reverberate with the massifying character of photographs.²²⁵

In their seminal book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, in which Deleuze and Guattari discuss a large array of philosophical investigations, a specific chapter is

²²² Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy*, 51.

²²³ Ibid., 50.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Tran. Brian Massumi, Eleventh printing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 362. (Originally published in 1980 under the title *Mille Plateaux*, volume 2 of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*).

devoted to the distinction between two types of spaces: smooth and striated. According to the authors, whilst striated space features “homogenous” and “numeric” spatial movements whereby the movements in space can be specified, localized and thus counted, smooth space is intrinsically fluid and uncountable.²²⁶ Striated space, according to the authors, resonates with “the space of *pillars*” where all the movements are rendered into “parallel layers” and the flow is essentially “laminar” and linear. In turn, in striated space all the dimensions are expressed in fixed “units and points” and all motions are always “from one point to another.”²²⁷ That is to say, within the structure of striated space, every location is fixed and countable and every direction is rendered homogenous and measurable, thus all locations and directions are determinate. It is mainly because in striated space all movements are essentially from one specific point to another. That is why the authors propound that striated space should be conceived as a “centred space” that provides countable units and absolute positions.²²⁸ However, counterpoint to striated space is smooth space that is quintessentially uncountable.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, whereas striated “space is counted in order to be occupied,” as it is hinged upon determinate motions, directions, and locations, smooth “space is occupied without being counted.”²²⁹ That means, while in striated space the rhythms of movement can be identified and thus traced—e.g. as in the spatial movements of a train across the parallel railways on which it moves from one point to another—in smooth space movements are “without measure,” as in the manner in which a fluid occupies space.²³⁰ For the authors, the smooth space manifests itself best in the movement of the air, the sea, or systems of sound, since these spatial movements are fundamentally fluctuating, non-centric, and heterogeneous, in contrast to motions in striated space that are always from one countable location to another.²³¹ As they put it:

Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without ‘counting’ ... an example of this is the system of sounds.²³²

²²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 362 & 370. (Italics in original).

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 370.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*,

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 361-362.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 364.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 363.

²³² *Ibid.*, 371.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the distinctive principle between striated and smooth space is typified by two modalities of movement, i.e. two kind of motions that can be triggered through these spaces. As they argue, “in striated space, one closes off a surface and ‘allocates’ it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one ‘distributes’ oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings.”²³³ While in striated space movement is based on *allocation* from one fixed point to another, in smooth space movement is based on *distribution* through indefinite routes and directions. In other words, movements in striated space are based on fixed intervals that require determinate allocations—as in the case of a moving train that goes from one station to another—whereas movements in smooth space have distributary forms and are enacted through indeterminate trajectories—as in the movement of a ship that drift towards uncertain directions in an ocean. These two modes of movement, based on allocation and distribution, according to scholar Mark Nunes, remarkably manifest themselves when one searches for information in the internet space.²³⁴

As Nunes has proposed, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as allocation in striated space and distribution in smooth space can be epitomized by seemingly banal expressions of “surfing” and “cruising” information on the internet. Whereas the metaphor of “cruising the information” in the internet refers to going from one website to another in search of information—i.e. “from point A to point B”—“surfing the net” denotes a distribution into an infinite and untraceable plethora of information, which Nunes calls “the smooth cyberspace.”²³⁵ That is to say, in surfing the internet one does not look for information from one single point to another, which is the function of cruising the net. Instead, as Nunes proposes after Deleuze and Guattari, in surfing the smooth cyberspace “the points are subordinated to the trajectory,” because surfing the internet is primarily based on expansions and distributions whose directions are radically open.²³⁶ Accordingly, surfing the net is not much concerned with specifying the trajectories from which the information is attained, but it is more concerned with a multiplicity of transitions between indefinite routes. As Nunes explains:

²³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 482.

²³⁴ Mark Nunes, “Virtual Topographies: Smooth and Striated Cyberspace,” *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory* (1999), no page number in the online version. (accessed on, April 16th, 2016) <http://www.cyberhead2010.net/nunes.html>

²³⁵ Ibid., np.

²³⁶ Ibid., np.

To surf and to cruise. What separates these two metaphors is the space in which these activities can occur. ‘*Cruising*’ involves a linear motion within a bounded space: one moves directionally. In ‘*surfing*’, however, the ground itself appears unstable; the freedom involves ‘catching the wave’ rather than mastering the routes.²³⁷

For Nunes, the primary difference between cruising and surfing lies in the fact that the former is contingent on fixed routes and is performed through linear movements, whereas the latter is somewhat a relay between unspecified trajectories. In other words, cruising is a form of movement that is migratory, but surfing is essentially a nomadic movement that is not dependant on any fixed itinerary and intervals. The migrant, Casey notes, “is someone who goes from point to point in a journey, the nomad proceeds by ‘relays along a trajectory.’”²³⁸ Therefore, as Nunes’ reading of smooth space suggests, surfing for information in the internet is enacted through the space that is essentially multidirectional, uncountable, and nomadic, unlike cruising that involves a linear motion within a bounded space. The critical difference here is that surfing in the smooth cyberspace is not dependant on a fixed itinerancy, i.e. it is not a movement from point A to point B as in cruising. This means, surfing in the smooth cyberspace is not restricted to any determinate itinerary that can be specified, nor hinged upon absolute intervals at which one can arrive or depart from. Instead, surfing in the smooth cyberspace is nomadic, with open-ended directions and uncertain itineraries; therefore, it has a form of vagabondage, which is the exemplary mode of movement in the Deleuzian smooth space. As Casey has put forward:

Smooth space provides room for *vagabondage*, for wandering and drifting between regions instead of moving straight ahead between fixed points. Here one moves not only in accordance with cardinal directions or geometrically determined vectors but in a *polyvocality of directions*.²³⁹

As Casey proposes, the movements in smooth space are not to be understood as linear, straight, or “laminar”—to use Deleuze’s terms—since any motion in smooth space is quintessentially nonmetric and indefinite towards “polyvocality of directions.” Consequently,

²³⁷ Nunes, “Virtual Topographies,” np. (My italics).

²³⁸ Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 305.

²³⁹ Ibid., 304. (My italics).

in smooth space movements cannot be clearly demarcated and identified; instead, smooth space affords the possibility of vagabondage: a mode of movement that, much like surfing on the internet, is defined by indeterminate drifting that cannot be reduced to a point-to-point itinerary. By returning to *Googlegram:Niépce* at this point, it becomes possible to argue that this photograph manifests the possibility of what I call the vagabond locomotion of photographs in the smooth cyberspace, which should be nuanced from photographs' itinerancy. In that, *Googlegram:Niépce* is the direct corollary of surfing the word photo in the smooth space of the internet. This fact demonstrates the multiplicity of directions and locations from which each of *Googlegram*'s constitutive photographs was received. Therefore, the act of surfing on the internet indicates that the provenances of *Googlegram*'s components remain multidirectional, uncountable, and as such indeterminate, thereby undercutting the conventional mode of itinerancy with explicit starting and ending points.

Fontcuberta's photograph features how in the smooth cyberspace a photograph's movement cannot be delimited to a fixed itinerancy, as in the case of the Foucauldian train that travels from one definite station to another. By surfing on Google, above all, Fontcuberta discloses that in the age of intense proliferation of immaterial images the distributary directions and domiciliary positions of the photograph cannot be limited to the itinerary that can be specified and traced. Instead, being imbued with the possibility of post-hate reproduction and distribution towards unspecified directions, every photograph has become a potential vagabond, inexorably voyaging through the internet like a flyer. Therefore, *Googlegram* manifests that in the smooth cyberspace photographs are un-localizable places that ceaselessly sail into a plethora of digitized information and instantaneously massify through a polyvocality of directions, thereby manifesting *the vagabond locomotion of photographs*: the fact that in the smooth cyberspace the photograph's location cannot be delimited to "the place where it happens to be"—to use Benjamin's terms—nor can its distributary directions be demarcated by a fixed itinerancy. In that, having the possibility of reproduction at its disposal, the photograph is never an achieved place that permanently anchors in a location, but a nomadic one that everlastingly travels from one location to another while transmuting in a manifold of disguises. In other words, *Googlegram* evinces how in the smooth cyberspace the photograph is simply a *placeless place* that drifts towards indeterminate directions and locations ad infinitum, signifying a place that perpetually lacks its own emplacement: a vagabond flyer par excellence.

Up until this point, I have argued that looking at the photograph's movement in smooth cyberspace can foreground how it becomes a placeless place, which continually journeys

through a multitude of unspecified directions and locations. Considering it as image, however, can manifest other spatial facets that are preserved on its visual contour. That is to say, the spatial features of the photograph are not only limited to its transmissibility in the internet space, nor to the way it travels between people and different geographical locations, but they also pertain to its surface. As Flusser reminds us, “the information the photo carries sits on its *surface* and not within its *body*, as in the case of shoes or fountain pens.”²⁴⁰ That means the photograph does not only consist of immaterial data or a materialized object that can move through different spaces, but it is also a purveyor of visual information: it is an image as well. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will shift my focus from the body of the photograph to its surface, in order to look at the spatial features of photographic place: a visual place that is embedded in the photograph as an image.

²⁴⁰ Vilém Flusser, “The Photograph as Post-Industrial Object: An Essay on the Ontological Standing of Photographs,” *Leonardo* 19, No. 4 (October 1986): 330. (My italics).