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## **Place: Towards a Geophilosophy of Photography**

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## —Chapter 4—

### Photographic Place: Looking at the Photographic Image from Its Edge

There is no edgeless place.

Edward S. Casey, *Keeping Art to Its Edge*

As Thrift notes, images are an indispensable element for understanding the inherent qualities of space, “because it is often through them that we register the spaces around us and imagine how they might turn up in the future.”<sup>241</sup> Through framing a piece of space, photographic images not only enable us to register our surrounding space but can also bestow meanings upon it on the photograph’s surface, thereby turning it into a photographic place. As Cresswell argues, places are essentially regarded as “meaningful segments of space.”<sup>242</sup> By selecting a piece of their surrounding space and preserving it as an image, therefore, people can constitute a photographic place: a meaningful image-place that provides the possibility of endless revisiting in the future. In other words, having registered a portion of space on the photograph’s surface, we utilize photographs as what Tuan considers to be place: “an object in which one can dwell.”<sup>243</sup> In this chapter, in order to study the spatial aspects of the photographic image, I will look at photographic place: a visual place that is preserved on the photograph’s surface for dwelling.

However, the camera does not simply frame our surrounding space and preserve it as a photographic place, as if unaffected, but converts that space into a two-dimensional image. The result of this selection and ensuing conversion are image-places that differ from what we see in the world in two essential ways. Firstly, having been converted into a photographic place, the spatial scales in the world are not only preserved but also altered according to the perspectival rules executed by the camera. As art historian Ernst Gombrich once argued, although perspectival images seem to represent the world unaffectedly, we should be aware that “the idea of perspective is merely a convention and does not represent the world as it looks.”<sup>244</sup> By underlying how perspectival conventions influence what we see in images,

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<sup>241</sup> Thrift, “The Fundamental Stuff,” 100.

<sup>242</sup> Tim Cresswell, *In Place, Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minnesota: Minnesota Press, 1996), 150.

<sup>243</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 12.

<sup>244</sup> Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 254. Moreover, the American philosopher Nelson Goodman gives a comprehensive account of the way in which perspectival conventions influence our way of seeing in *Languages of Art*. He argues that any picture in perspective, like photographs,

Gombrich undermined the putative transparent quality of photography, the fact that photographs can embody the world as it appears to the naked eye.<sup>245</sup> As a result, the space we observe around us differs from its resultant two-dimensional image, because, the spatial scales in photographs can be altered according to the perspectival rules imposed by the photographic camera. Secondly, if the conversion of our surrounding space suggests that we do not see the world as it appears in photographs, the camera's selection of that space declares that we always and only see a part of it in photographic places. The fact that the camera can frame a piece of space from our vicinage and preserve it as a photographic place implies that the rest of the surrounding space has been eliminated from the image. Consequently, by capturing a segment of space and framing it as a photographic place, a blind field comes into existence: a non-visible surrounding space that is left out from the photograph. For instance, looking at the photograph of a building in a street, the blind field refers to all the other buildings in the surrounding space that have been separated and thus rendered discontinuous from the frame. As Sontag notes, thanks to the photographic frame "anything can be separated, can be made discontinuous, from anything else, all that is necessary is to *frame* the subject differently."<sup>246</sup> Framing a part of space, therefore, not only converts a portion thereof into photographic place, but also implies that the photograph cannot expose what has been discontinued from the frame. In other words, the photographic frame functions as an *edge* that proclaims that a segment of space is *converted* to and another is *detached* from photographic place.

As Casey has suggested, in order to gain a better understanding of something one should conduct what he calls a "liminological study": a study that takes the comprehension of something to its very edge.<sup>247</sup> In this chapter, to investigate the spatial features of the photographic image, I will carry out a liminological study of photographic place. That is, I will look at the spatial features that lie inside, outside and at the photograph's frame, or its very edge, in order to foreground the implications of framing for photographic images. Accordingly, this chapter asks how can a liminological study of photographic place—i.e. the study of its

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"have to be read; and the ability to read has to be acquired." Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), 14.

<sup>245</sup> The transparency discussion of photography, mainly advocated by the American art critic Clement Greenberg, suggests that photography is "the most transparent of the art mediums devised or discovered by man," since it can "put all emphasis on an explicit subject." However, as Ernst Gombrich and Nelson Goodman have argued among others, one way to undermine the transparency discussion is to acknowledge that photographic images are constructed according to the laws of perspective, a convention that is imposed by the camera and has to be learned by the viewer. Clement Greenberg, "The Camera's Glass Eye," *The Nation*, (March 1946): 294-296.

<sup>246</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*, 22. (My italics).

<sup>247</sup> Edward S. Casey, "The Edge(s) of Landscape: A Study in Liminology," in *The Place of Landscape: Concept, Context, Studies*, ed. Jeff Malpas (MIT eBook Collection: The MIT Press, 2011), 91.

frame as an edge—feature the spatial characteristics of photographic images? To this end, I will first discuss the particularities of photographic framing in comparison to painting and film. Later, I will deploy two photographic places taken by ESA and NASA to discuss the significance of the excluded part of the frame for our spatial understandings of photographs. Lastly, I will show how considering the photographic frame as an edge, which both converts and discards a segment of space, can shed light on spatial features of photographic places. In the following section, I begin my analysis by explaining the specificities of the photographic frame through an examination of how different theorists have reflected upon this matter.

#### 4.1 Specificities of the Photographic Frame

The ‘blind field’, the extra-frame dimension.  
Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image*

The use of the lens in cameras was first described by Giovanni Battista della Porta in the second edition of his book *Magica Naturalis*, published in 1589. For approximately 200 years lens cameras created circular images that would fade away around their circumference, mainly because of the round structure of optical lenses. It was not until the early nineteenth-century that the portable *camera obscura* was equipped with the square and rectangular ground glass, a surface that would only show the central part of the image. As a result, the square and rectangular glasses of the nineteenth-century artists became the progenitors of the photographic frame as it is known today.<sup>248</sup> From its very conception, hence, the photographic frame was a means of selecting a part of the visual field and leaving the rest aside, thereby imposing its structure upon the world represented by photography. As theorist of photography and photographer Victor Burgin notes, the photographic frame does not only add a “unique point-of-view” to the system of representation, but its “agency” also structures that representational model.<sup>249</sup> The agency of the frame, for example, can be its capability of making visual connections between disparate elements from afar, when a house in the distance can be juxtaposed next to a house that is near, creating a coherence that did not exist before framing.

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<sup>248</sup> Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, “Photography, Vision and Representation,” *Critical Inquiry* 2, no.1 (Autumn, 1975): 149.

<sup>249</sup> Victor Burgin, “Looking at Photographs,” in *The Photography Reader*, ed. by Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), 133.

Still, given that our way of perceiving the world is markedly dependant on the frame's predetermined structure, framing is not only an advantage but also a limitation. The restrictive aspect of the frame can be best exemplified by Camille Recht's evocative comparison between the painter as a violinist and the photographer as a pianist, quoted by Benjamin in 1931. While the violinist, Benjamin cites,

must first produce the note, must seek it out, find it in an instant; the painter strikes the key and the note rings out ... the photographer, like the pianist, has the advantage of a mechanical device that is subject to restrictive laws, while the violinist is under no restraint.<sup>250</sup>

Similar to the pianist whose creative options are limited to the predetermined high and low pitches of the piano's keys, the photographer is restricted to the pre-structured way of seeing made available by the camera's frame. Metaphorically, the piano's keys are for pianos what frames are for cameras; they both provide the advantage of using a mechanical device by subjecting the user to its restrictive laws. Accordingly, the photographic frame can give coherence to the world, yet at the same time, it imposes its restrictive laws upon it. It is because the photographic frame is essentially a method of selecting a segment of the world and thus unselecting the rest, a selection process that relies on the predetermined structure of the frame.

Commenting on the specificities of the photographic frame in the early 1970s, Szarkowski suggests that while a painter *conceives* a representation of the world and then frame it at will, the photographer *selects* a piece of the world according to the viewing range of the camera's frame. Considering this selection process, the photographic subject is never strictly discrete, as if it is completely isolated from the world, but the frame creates the illusion of a self-contained subject in the photo.<sup>251</sup> In other words, seeing the photographed subject as isolated and independent from the world is to disregard the selection process of the frame. By selecting several visual elements in one photo, Szarkowski argues, the photographic frame constitutes a new relationship between the photographed subject and what has been eliminated from the frame.<sup>252</sup> This tendency is usually absent from a painterly frame, since normally we do not think what could have existed next to the painted subject in the world. Comparing frames in painting and photography, the theorists Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen write, "when we

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<sup>250</sup> Cited in Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography," 249.

<sup>251</sup> Szarkowski, *Looking at Photographs*, 100.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

look at a painting of a figure that dominates the canvas... we do not mentally construct the actual scene in the artist's studio and the peculiarities of the artist's cornea, retina, to depict the figure as he did."<sup>253</sup> Instead, we only confront the finalized painting as the conclusion of the artistic process, ignoring what has been excluded from the frame.<sup>254</sup> Like Szarkowski, Snyder and Walsh argue while the painterly frame compels us to look at what has been painted on the canvas—i.e. a conception of the world—the photographic frame motivates us to mentally construct the actual scene, as if we could see what lies vicinal to the frame in the world.

To deploy the terms introduced by Bazin in relation to film and applied to photography by the American photographer Eliot Porter, the painterly frame suggests a “centripetal” composition but the photographic frame tends to become a “centrifugal” one.<sup>255</sup> In the centripetal composition, the viewer is drawn to look at all the elements that are kept within the frame, but in the centrifugal composition “the eye is led to the corners and edges of the picture; the observer is thereby forced to consider what the photographer excluded in his selection.”<sup>256</sup> The centripetal composition applies more fittingly to a painting than a photograph, since a painting is a *conception* of the world wherein the viewer's eyes are lodged inside the frame, but a photograph is a *selection* of the world whereby the viewer is inclined to imagine what is excluded from the frame. This means, while looking at a painting it is not sensible to ask what was located next to the painted subject in the studio, the photographic frame impels the viewer to ask: What was lying next to the photographed subject in the world? According to Cavell, this question essentially marks the distinction between the photographic and painterly frame. As he puts it:

You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame. This generally makes no sense asked of a painting. You can ask these questions of objects in photographs because they have answer in reality. The world of a painting is not continuous with the world of its frame; at its frame, world finds its limits. We might say: A painting *is* a world; a photograph *is of* the world.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Snyder and Walsh Allen, “Vision and Representation,” 154.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Although Porter applies both terms in relation to the photographic frame, the centripetal composition applies more aptly to the painterly frame; because, being a conception of the world, a painting rarely refers to what has been left out from its frame. Eliot Porter, *Intimate Landscapes: Photographs by Eliot Porter* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), 11.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 24. (Italics in original).

While the painterly frame is a limit at which the viewer is pulled back into the painting, Cavell suggests that the photographic frame motivates the viewer to seek what lies adjacent to the photograph in reality. Thus, for him the photographic image becomes continuous with the world of its frame, whereas a painting becomes a world in and of itself.<sup>258</sup> Echoing Cavell's argument, more recently literary theorist Clive Scott suggests that photography generally distinguishes itself from other visual arts by its *cadrage*—i.e. the frame. As he contends, in painting the frame “affirms the autonomy of the picture surface,” allowing the image to grow inside the frame, whereas the photographic frame “invites reality to make sense, [and] constantly re-views reality and its varying potential compositions.”<sup>259</sup> Agreeing with Cavell, Scott proposes that the prominent quality of the photographic *cadrage* is that it defies the autonomy of the picture surface, that it signals the photograph is of the world and not a world in itself. To clarify, for Cavell and Scott the photographic frame does not constitute a world *within* it, but declares that it has been positioned *on* the world, selecting and preserving a part in the photograph.

As Scott has proposed, it is precisely because the photographic frame “is placed *on* reality” that it naturally induces our awareness of a blind field.<sup>260</sup> In general, the blind field refers to all that could have been included in the frame but has been rendered discontinuous from it by the camera. Looking at the close-up photograph of a table in a room, for instance, the blind field refers to all the surrounding spaces in the room that are not visible in the photo. The blind field, Scott argues, is “the extension of space and time beyond the photographic frame.”<sup>261</sup> To exemplify the spatial dimension of the blind field, Scott draws attention to the way newspapers tend to undermine the omitted spatial part of their photographs. Instead of drawing the viewer's attention to the blind field, newspapers usually refer to the photograph's comments, reports and other accompanying texts. According to Scott, this is “how a newspaper monopolizes the news,” by supplanting the photograph's blind field with texts, disregarding what has been left out from the frame.<sup>262</sup> Nonetheless, not all kind of photographs possess a

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<sup>258</sup> Although it is usually true that the photographic frame, with less effort than the painterly frame, motivates the viewer to envisage what would be located next to the photographed subject in the world, thus becoming an image of the world, it is not always the case. For instance, in the genre of “photorealism” that began in the late 1960s, in which an artist attempts to reproduce a painting based on a photograph and as realistically as possible, the painterly frame can also motivate the viewer to imagine what would lay next to the painted subject in the world; as in the work of, John Baeder, Ralph Goings, and Chuck Close. A comprehensive documentation of photorealism movement is given by Louis K Meisel and Linda Chase in *Photorealism at the Millennium* (New York: Abrams Books, 2002).

<sup>259</sup> Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999), 180.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.



blind field, or can instantly activate its awareness through their frame. For instance, in staged photographs, when the entire scene is arranged and composed by the artist before the photo is taken, the photograph does not persuade the viewer to imagine beyond the frame. That is, the frame does not constitute a centrifugal composition in which the viewer is inclined to conceive what has been excluded from the photograph; instead, staged photography propels the viewer to look at the visual elements that are kept within the frame. Because, similar to painting, in staged photography the photograph becomes a conception of the world and not a selection thereof, so the viewer's eyes tend to remain within the visual boundaries of the frame.<sup>263</sup> While staged photography is an instance of pre-photographic intervention, constructed and manipulated photographs can exemplify how the existence of the blind field can be influenced after the photograph is taken. For instance, in relation to photographic places, the photographs that are assembled in a post-photographic phase can obscure the existence of the blind field within their frame.

As scholars of photography Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest have suggested, photographic places generally fall under two categories: constructed places, which may or may not have a reference in reality, and existing places, which ostensibly have a reference in reality.<sup>264</sup> While existing photographic places provides an expectation of the blind field, since they are taken from the world, owing to their fictitious appearance, constructed photographic places tend to undermine this expectation in the viewer. According to Van Gelder and Westgeest, a clear example of an existing place in the early history of photography is William Henry Fox Talbot's *View of the Lincoln's Inn* (1843-1846), and the best-known early example of a constructed place is Oscar Gustave Rejlander's *The Two Ways of Life* (1857).<sup>265</sup> However, as they argue, in the early history of photography it was easier to distinguish between constructed and existing photographic places, whereas in contemporary photographic practices this distinction has become rather obscure. The obscurity between existing and constructed photographic places can be aptly exemplified by the landscape series taken by Joan

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<sup>263</sup> In staged photography, rather than capturing a precise moment in real life, the artist make specific choices when artificially constructing the desired scene. By consciously arranging compositions and placing elements in the frame, staging photographers become the directors of their photographs. Although staged compositions became well-known in the 1980s through the work of Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall, and Gregory Crewdson, its origin can be found in 'tableau photographs' that have been created since the beginning of photography. For instance, 19<sup>th</sup> century photographers, such as Oscar Gustav Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson, made staged photographs based on classical and biblical stories. Marta Weiss, Karen Henry and Ann Thomas, *Acting the Part: Photography as Theatre: A History of Staged Photography*, ed. Lori Pauli (London and New York: Merrell, 2006).

<sup>264</sup> Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory: In Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 115.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 115-117

Fontcuberta, called *Landscape without Memories* (2005). By deploying a computer software, which transforms the cartographic data received from existing places in the world into photographs, the artist has built a series of photographic places that lie on the margin of construction and representation of the existing reality.<sup>266</sup> Although Fontcuberta's photographic places have been received from the world, due to their computer-simulated appearance, their frame does not instantly trigger the awareness of the blind field. Yet at the same time, given that these photographic places have been based on existing places in the world, their frame does not completely discard the expectation of the blind field in the viewer. In other words, Fontcuberta's constructed places neither immediately activate nor completely eliminate the blind field, instead, they indirectly motivate its expectation within the frame. Therefore, while some photographs can encourage the viewer to immediately imagine the blind field, to extend beyond the frame spatially, others may discard or obscure the excluded spatial dimension. To be clear, while staged and manipulated photography do not imply the existence of the blind field—as they are conceptions of the world—existing photographic places activate the awareness of its presence and the constructed photographic places with a reference in reality motivate its existence within the frame.

However, the existence of the blind field is not only peculiar to the photographic frame but also pertains to the filmic frame. The main difference is that a film not only implies the existence of the blind field, but also interpolates it into its sequence of images in order to produce the illusion of continuity. As Scott states, “while the film continually moves into its ‘blind field’ and thus creates the illusion of ongoing reality, the photograph both implies a ‘blind field’ and reveals the illusoriness of its reality.”<sup>267</sup> In other words, while in film the blind field might enter the frame after the passage of time, in photography the blind field remains forever off-frame but is nonetheless implied in the photograph. The “off-frame space” is a term Christian Metz utilizes to refer to the spatial dimension of the blind field in photography and film.<sup>268</sup> According to Metz, “in film there is a plurality of successive frames, of camera movements, and character movements, so that a person or an object which is off-frame in a given moment may appear inside the frame.”<sup>269</sup> That is, the filmic off-frame is always temporarily off-frame, so it may enter the frame through camera movements, character movements, or the continuity of images. In addition, Metz reminds us that while photography

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<sup>266</sup> Joan Fontcuberta and Geoffrey Batchen, *Landscape Without Memory* (New York: Aperture, 2005).

<sup>267</sup> Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 180.

<sup>268</sup> Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” 142-143.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

is marked by “silence and immobility,” film utilizes other orders of perception, such as auditory, in order to obliterate the permanence of the blind field.<sup>270</sup> For example, while we are looking at a film that shows a walking person in a street, by hearing the sound of tires screeching on asphalt, the spectator can anticipate that the next frame will include a car in the frame. For Metz, in short, the filmic blind field may be temporarily off-frame, but it is never off-film. Therefore, the blind field may enter into the frame and its arrival can be anticipated by the camera and the object movements, or the auditory markers that are embedded in the film. That is why he argues that while the filmic off-frame space is “substantial,” the photographic off-frame space is “subtle.”<sup>271</sup> As he explains:

If the filmic off-frame is substantial, it is because we generally know, or are able to guess more or less precisely, what is going on in it. The character who is off-frame in a photograph, however, will never come into the frame, will never be heard ... The spectator has no empirical knowledge of the contents of the off-frame, but at the same time cannot help imagining some off-frame, hallucinating it, dreaming the shape of its emptiness. It is a *projective* off-frame (that of the cinema is more *introjective*).<sup>272</sup>

Although the photographic off-frame cannot enter into the frame, Metz notes, the viewer cannot resist imagining, hallucinating or dreaming about what has been excluded from the frame, thereby projecting it onto the photograph's surface. Because, as Scott has noted, the existence of the photographic blind field is at the same time suggested and masked in the photograph.<sup>273</sup> In other words, even though the photographic blind field never explicitly enters the frame, its existence is unfailingly implied; in that, being a selected piece of space, the photograph allows the viewer to mentally construct the actual scene in the imagination, revealing that it is of the world and not a world in itself. Therefore, while a painterly frame does not possess a blind field and a filmic frame may expose it at any given moment, the existence of the photographic blind field is often simultaneously *insinuated* and *concealed* within the frame. It is due to the existence of this imperceptible, excluded but nonetheless

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<sup>270</sup> Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” 140.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 142-143. (My italics).

<sup>273</sup> Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 180.

implied spatial dimension that it seems sensible to ask: What was lying adjacent to the photographed subject in the world?

At this point, having discussed the specificities of the photographic frame, I will first look at an existed and second at a constructed photographic place, in order to foreground the spatial significance of the blind field in the variety of contemporary photographic practices. To make palpable how the implied but veiled existence of the blind field affects the photograph's surface, I look at an existing photographic place with an extremely maximised blind field. As Metz proposes, the photograph itself is the "in-frame, the abducted part-space."<sup>274</sup> In the following section, therefore, I will next study an existing image-place that has been severed from extraterrestrial space, to see how the maximization of the blind field affects the in-frame.

## 4.2 Photographic Place in a Maximised "Blind Field"

Short distance is not in itself nearness.  
Martin Heidegger, *The Thing*

As Flusser argues, photographs can generally be categorized into three types: amateur photos, e.g. snapshots taken in everyday life; professional photos, e.g. artistic and experimental photos; and photos made by fully automated cameras, e.g. photos taken by a satellite.<sup>275</sup> Figure 5, taken by an exceptionally automated camera, falls under the last category. In March 2004, European Space Agency—ESA—launched a spacecraft called Rosetta to perform a detailed study of a comet in space. Rosetta was equipped with two extremely advanced cameras: one optical narrow-angle camera, NAC, intended for high-resolution mapping of the surface of the comet, and one wide-angle camera, WAC, optimized for capturing the vicinity of the comet.<sup>276</sup> During its journey, Rosetta flew past Mars and a manifold of asteroids to reach the targeted comet. Eventually, after 10 years of travelling through space, Rosetta reached its target in August 2014 to conduct a series of studies, such as photographing the comet's orbit and surface.<sup>277</sup> By

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<sup>274</sup> Metz, "Photography and Fetish," 143.

<sup>275</sup> Flusser, "Post-Industrial Object," 291.

<sup>276</sup> While the narrow-angle camera could peer into space from several kilometres afar to capture the surfaces of the comet, the wide-angle camera was intended to capture wide-angle views when the spacecraft was planned to land on the comet. Planetary. "Rosetta's OSIRIS Camera Instrument." *Planetary.org* <http://www.planetary.org/explore/resource-library/data/rosetta-osiris.html>. (Accessed March 2, 2017).

<sup>277</sup> ESA. "Rosetta Mission." *rosetta.esa.int*. <http://rosetta.esa.int/> (Accessed March 2, 2017).

optically zooming onto the comet, Rosetta's narrow-angle camera captured several black and white photographs from the comet's surface, with a remarkably high visual and topographical precision. Figure 5 was taken on July 2016, shortly before the mission was successfully ended on September 2016. According to ESA, this photograph was taken by the NAC camera that allows extreme optical zooming, when the spacecraft was at a distance of 9.115 km from the comet, 297355104 km from The Sun, and 523909280 km from the Earth.<sup>278</sup> This photograph, however, not only manifests an extraordinary topographical accuracy, but also epitomizes how the camera can maximise the blind field by travelling through infinite space and optically zooming onto its subject matter.

With regard to ESA's photograph, the blind field refers to all the vast space through which the spacecraft has physically travelled and all that it optically zoomed in order to reach its subject matter; it is all the circumambient space that is excluded from this photograph. On the one hand, the camera's vertiginous distance from the earth indicates how it can traverse into infinite space to select a piece thereof, bringing a photographic place into being. On the other hand, the significant distance of the camera from the comet signifies how it can optically penetrate into the space to reduce the field of vision, thus increasing the blind field of the photograph. By literally travelling through the space and optically peering into it, therefore, Rosetta's narrow-angle camera *maximises* what could have been included but has been instead left out from the photo. However, the maximisation of the blind field not only allows us to reach where we would not otherwise, but it also affects the way with which we visually comprehend photographic places. To better grasp this point, what is needed is a close observation of ESA's photograph.

Looking at ESA's photograph, one realises that the monochrome terrain does not easily reveal itself to the viewer. The conspicuous lack of vegetation suggests that the represented location cannot be a place that bears the traces of plant life, like a remote location in a forest. In addition, the presence of the unusual rocks scattered across the jagged ground implies that the embodied location is not a desert either, where vegetation life is usually rare to find. The absence of all traces of human life, too, adds an extra veneer of obscurity across the photograph. Deprived of all traces of plant and human life, the photograph seems like the abyssal zone of an ocean where the cycle of nature has given way to erosion, such as deep-water photos that

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<sup>278</sup> ESA. "Space in images." *m.esa.int*, [http://m.esa.int/spaceinimages/Images/2016/07/Comet\\_on\\_3\\_July\\_2016\\_OSIRIS\\_narrow-angle\\_camera](http://m.esa.int/spaceinimages/Images/2016/07/Comet_on_3_July_2016_OSIRIS_narrow-angle_camera). (Accessed March. 2, 2017).

are taken for the purposes of marine investigation. Still, due to the homogenous light that is projected across the perceptible elements from above, the viewer is assured that the photographic place is not captured underneath an ocean. Hypothetically, the embodied location could have been a high mountain where vegetation ceases to exist and the natural cycle gradually corrodes all the existing rocks and stones. Yet, because of the absence of linear perspective and the horizon line, the viewer is incapable of identifying the location as the high altitude of a mountain, where usually one sees the sky bordering with the summit. More noticeably, the strange area of darkness on the upper hand-side of the photograph, where the shadows of rocks dissolve into the dark space, suggests that the embodied terrain cannot be a mountain's summit. Because, unlike this photograph, an illuminated summit usually has the sky in its background and not the abyssal black of infinite space. All the same, the area of darkness on the upper hand-side of the photo can function as a threshold for a closer reading of the photograph. Because, it is a visual linkage to the comet's *rim*, a type of edges that can attribute spatial functions to perceptible things, or if not fully represented as in this case, obscure their spatial purposes.

As Casey proposes, edges are found in a variety of forms, one of which is a rim. A rim, he argues, "is an edge that is at once determinate and detachable; it is perceived *as such*, not only as the end of an object or event but as separate from it."<sup>279</sup> For instance, a rim can be the spatial ring that surrounds a hole in the earth, since a rim essentially "*surrounds* something, whether this is a thing or a non-thing."<sup>280</sup> In other words, the very purpose of a rim is to confer spatial functions to things by surrounding them, thus making them identifiable from other things. For example, if the ESA's camera had not exceedingly zoomed onto the comet's surface and left some of the surrounding space around it, the photographic place could have had a rim—i.e. like the space photographs of the planet earth in which we can identify the earth by its surrounding spatial rim. The exclusion of the rim around the comet, above all, renders difficult the spatial reading of the photograph, in that, it obscures the functionality of the represented location. As the scholar Filip Mattens argues, in both photography and architecture we perceive spatial connections between visible elements according to the way with which we understand their purposes and functions.<sup>281</sup> For instance, looking at an interior of a building,

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<sup>279</sup> Casey, "The Edge(s) of Landscape," 94. (Italics in original).

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Filip Mattens, "The Aesthetics of Space: Modern Architecture and Photography," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69, no.1, special issue: The Aesthetics of Architecture: Philosophical investigation into the Art of Building (winter 2011): 112.

we do not see rooms; we see dining rooms, living rooms, staircases, and so on. We see these rooms in their functional connection with the adjacent rooms... This means that the way we *perceive* the concrete spatial nexus of the interior of a building is a function of how we spontaneously *apperceive* its practical organization.<sup>282</sup>

In photographs, too, we understand the spatial links between perceptible elements according to their function and use within their surrounding space. To clarify this point, only when the viewer can perceive the spatial link between the comet's surface and its surrounding rim do they apperceive the practical organization of the photographic place. It is only after this spatial connection is made that the viewer can rest assured that ESA's photograph shows the surface of a comet, and not any other possible location. Therefore, by excluding the comet's spatial rim, ESA's photograph has obscured the functions and purposes of the photographic place, obliterating the spatial links that could have been made between the in-frame and the off-frame. In other words, by maximising the blind field and reducing the field of view, the purposiveness of the photographic place has been masked. It is the *first* reason why the ESA's photograph cannot be easily identified by the viewer, since it does not explicitly represent its spatial nexuses with its surrounding space. As Mattens puts it: "When functionality and its significance vanish, so too does the purposive nexus that ground our spontaneous spatial interpretations."<sup>283</sup>

However, the maximization of the blind field not only eradicates possible spatial nodes between the photographic place and what is left outside the frame, but also affects our judgment of spatial scales within the frame. Commenting on how different spatial scales affect our visual judgment of photographs, the philosopher Patrick Maynard distinguishes between interval, ordinal, nominal and absolute scales in photography.<sup>284</sup> The maximization of the blind field, more perceptibly, can influence the interval spatial scales in photographs. The interval scales refer to the proximity of visual elements in relation to each other, when "one thing's being closer to another than to a third" allows us to guess the *dimension* and *position* of things in photographs.<sup>285</sup> In terms of dimension, objects with familiar scales allow the human eye to compare the size of things relatively, so determining the interval scales in photographs. For

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<sup>282</sup> Mattens, "The Aesthetics of Space," 112. (Italics in original).

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>284</sup> Patrick Maynard, "Scales of Space and Time in Photography," in *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, ed. Scott Walden (Hong Kong: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 191.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

instance, by looking at the photograph of a person standing next to a building, the human size allows the viewer to make an approximate anticipation of the size of the building. However, when a photographic camera optically zooms into space, bringing things visually closer to us, it also alters the perspectival depth and, in turn, distorts the interval scales in the photograph. The most obvious example of this spatial distortion can be found in travel photography, when a tourist standing in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa pretends that he/she is holding the tower, as if they are positioned adjacent to each other and have corresponding sizes. In this situation, thus, the proximity of the perceptible elements and their dimensions in the world are not the same as what one sees in the photograph. That is how through optical zooming the camera can disfigure both the dimension and the position of things in photographs. As the American philosopher Nelson Goodman rightly remarks, “there is nothing like a camera to make a molehill out of a mountain,” and it is equally true that there is nothing like a camera to make a mountain out of a molehill—e.g. comparing a person’s body with the Tower of Pisa.<sup>286</sup>

Looking at ESA’s photograph, not only the amplification of the blind field has eliminated the spatial links between the photograph and its surroundings, but it has also affected the interval spatial scales within the photographic place. To recall, this photograph has been taken from 9.115 km away by means of an extreme optical zooming. Looking at the lower side of the photograph, where several pieces of stone are laying on the ground, one cannot impartially estimate the real dimension of the stones nor their distance to the rocky background. If the first blatant reason for this is the lack of any familiar scales for the viewer—such as a human body that could make scale comparison possible—the second essential reason is that there is no accurate relation of proximity in the photograph. Owing to the exceptional zooming function of the ESA’s camera, one knows that the size and distance of the visual elements in the photo does not correspond to their real dimensions and position in the world. To be clear, on the one hand, the stones on the ground could be gigantic boulders much bigger than a human body, and their distance to the rocky background could be a few kilometres. On the other hand, they could be infinitesimally small stones that are exceptionally augmented through the optical zooming capability of ESA’s camera, placed within a few centimetres of each other. This impossibility of having an unbiased judgment about the dimension and position of the visual elements in the photograph, above all, indicates how the extension of the blind field can undercut the spatial scales within the photographic place. It is the *second* reason that ESA’s photograph cannot be

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<sup>286</sup> Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), 15.



easily identified by the viewer, since the real dimension and position of the visual elements have been obscured in the photograph. To put it differently, lacking any accurate interval scales in the in-frame, the viewer of ESA's photograph cannot decide whether the camera has made a molehill out of a mountain, or the opposite has taken place.

Deprived of instructive spatial markers with which the photographic place could be impartially read, ESA's photograph seems to have come from no actual place in the world. Because, having eradicated the photograph's spatial links to its surroundings and having distorted the spatial scales within it, the expanded blind field has divorced the existing photographic place from its former presence in the world. As the philosopher Jean Baudrillard notes, photography is mainly a method of dissociating the photographed subject from the world, in order to capture its disappearance in the frame.<sup>287</sup> Observing the photographs of Sophie Calle, he writes, "photography is itself an art of disappearance, which captures the other vanished in front of the lens" leaving no traces thereof except for its "vanished presence."<sup>288</sup> By solely capturing the vanished presence of something in photographs, Baudrillard argues that photography makes all the other traces of the photographed subject disappear, thus detaching it from its actual origin in the world. As he remarks in *The Perfect Crime*, photography is essentially a means of "dissociating the object from any previous existence and capturing its probability of disappearing in the moment that follows. In the end, we prefer the *ab nihilo*, prefer what drives its magic from the arbitrary, from the absence of cause and history."<sup>289</sup> Like a perfect crime that leads to nothing, Baudrillard holds that photography can strip of all traces that link the photographed subject to its prior existence in the world, as if it has been inscribed on the surface of the photograph out of nothing. That is, instead of arguing that the photograph is a trace that leads to the world, he suggests that every photograph states that the rest of the world has been detached from it, leaving no traces of its previous existence behind. To be clear, by dissociating its subject from the world, Baudrillard contends that every photograph is a trace that merely proclaims that the rest of the world is absent in it. As he puts it:

Every photographed object is merely the trace left by the disappearance of everything else. From the summit of this object exceptionally absent from the rest

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<sup>287</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London & New York: Verso, 1996), 58.

<sup>288</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Sophie Calle. Suite Ventitienne. Jean Baudrillard. Please Follow Me*, trans. Dany Barash and Danny Hatfield (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 86.

<sup>289</sup> Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, 58. (Italics in original).

of the world, you have an unbeatable view on the world. The absence of the world, which is present in every detail, reinforced by every detail.<sup>290</sup>

The maximization of the blind field in ESA's photograph, above all, brings this point to the forefront: the fact that the rest of the world has been radically dissociated, detached, and in turn absented in the frame. Despite the camera's effort to reach the unreachable part of the infinite space, the maximization of the blind field has made the rest of the world inaccessible in the photograph, rendering an existing place unrecognizable in the frame. Firstly, by eliminating possible spatial relations between the inside and the outside frame, the increased blind field does not allow the photographic place to signify its spatial links to its surroundings. Secondly, by impairing interval scales, the amplified blind field has veiled the real dimension and position of the visual elements within the frame. As such, the maximization of the blind field has not only stripped of the *spatial nexuses* between the in-frame and the off-frame, but has also destabilized *spatial scales* within the frame, thereby dissociating an existing photographic place from its previous existence in the world. Regardless of the camera's attempt to make the unknown space known to us, through physically circumnavigating it and optically peering into it, the maximised blind field has achieved the contrary. It has produced an unidentifiable photographic place: an abducted part-space that merely proclaims that it is "exceptionally absent from the rest of the world." In other words, owing to the profound expansion of the blind field, ESA's photograph manifests a *defamiliarized photographic place* wherein "the absence of the world" is "present in every detail, reinforced by every detail", as if it has been inscribed on the surface of the photograph *ex nihilo*.

At this point, having discussed how the maximisation of the blind field can defamiliarize an existing photographic place, I will look at a constructed photographic place whereby photography aspires to encompass the greatest amount of the blind field it is capable of. In other words, this time, through discussing a constructed photographic place taken by NASA, I will look at how the minimization of the blind field affects the in-frame.

#### 4.3 Photographic Place in a Minimised "Blind Field"

Many places exist for us merely as images.  
Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*

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<sup>290</sup>Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, 58.

How can a photographic place acquire a minimised blind field? The immediate answer to this question is, by increasing the photograph's field of view to capture as much space as possible around the subject and inscribing it onto the photograph's surface. This is precisely what the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, has managed to achieve through deploying Hubble's Advanced Camera for Surveys, ACS. ACS has a wide field of vision that sees from natural light to ultraviolet, making it capable of studying the distribution of stars and galaxies in the universe.<sup>291</sup> In January 2015, NASA published the largest photograph ever taken of infinite space, from our closest galactic neighbour called the Andromeda galaxy (figure 6). The view displays a 48.000 light-years-long stretch of the galaxy, a vast portion of infinite space that is captured in one single frame. Although the Andromeda galaxy is 2.5 million light-years away from earth, it is still the biggest target in the sky out of a myriad of galaxies that Hubble routinely photographs, which are billions of light-years away.<sup>292</sup> In order to capture the widest possible angle, NASA took 7.398 exposures from its targeted galaxy and assembled them in one high-resolution photograph. NASA's photographic investigation resulted in the largest and the sharpest constructed photographic place of infinite space. The resplendent resolution of the photograph, which shows over 100 million stars and thousands of star clusters embedded in the galaxy's pancake-shaped disc, allows the viewer to zoom into aeons of light years in one single photographic frame.<sup>293</sup> According to NASA, the photographic cartography of the Andromeda galaxy likens to "photographing a beach and resolving individual grains of sand."<sup>294</sup> That is how NASA, by capturing an enigmatic portion of space, has created a constructed photographic place with a profoundly reduced blind field, including as much space as possible in one frame. In other words, the extraordinary wide viewing range of the photograph indicates NASA's ambition to diminish the adjoining space that could have been left out from the frame. The immense portion of infinite space seized in this photograph, therefore, signifies how the photograph's blind field has been radically minimized.

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<sup>291</sup> NASA, "A Bigger, Clearer Picture," *Hubblesite.org*.

[http://hubblesite.org/the\\_telescope/nuts\\_and\\_bolts/instruments/acs/#top](http://hubblesite.org/the_telescope/nuts_and_bolts/instruments/acs/#top) (accessed March 9, 2017).

<sup>292</sup> NASA. "Hubble's High-Definition Panoramic View of the Andromeda Galaxy." *NASA.gov*.

<https://www.nasa.gov/content/goddard/hubble-s-high-definition-panoramic-view-of-the-andromeda-galaxy>. (Accessed March 15, 2017).

<sup>293</sup> This photograph contains 1.5 billion pixels. Because of its tremendously large size, NASA has provided a zoom tool with which we can peer into every single detail of space that is captured in this image. ESA.

"Sharpest ever View of the Andromeda Galaxy." *Spacetelescope.org*.

<https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/heic1502a/>. (Accessed March 2, 2017).

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

NASA's photograph features an endless number of fulgurating stars, some of which are distinct from their surroundings and others that are unfurling into a stream of light towards open-ended directions. Each modicum of the perceptual space in the photo may correspond to the entire size of the planet Earth, if not a significantly larger dimension. As NASA tells us, on the lower left-hand side the viewer can see the centre of the galaxy, where the amber light is unfolding towards the centre of the frame. The stream of refulgent stars, coming from the bottom left-hand side towards the centre of the photo, displays how the medium of photography has fleshed out the spatial arrangement of a galaxy from afar. By enhancing our sense of vision and expanding our field of view, thus, NASA has embodied the spatial construction that underlies the Andromeda galaxy, allowing us to scan across a sight that remains physically farfetched in the universe. As Tuan points out, a "sight provides us with a spatially structured universe" since in it "all the objects are visible at the same time, and they are stable long enough to apprehend their relationship to each other."<sup>295</sup> Due to the profound reduction of the blind field, NASA has successfully provided the viewer with a sight of space, a stable view in which the spatial composition of a colossal galaxy is visualized for the human eye. As Tuan has suggested, a sight enables us to see spatial structures by rendering everything visible at the same time, so within it the objects can signify their relationships to one another. Being a sight of space in which the relationships between the perceptible elements are succinctly clarified, Andromeda's photograph can make visible another type of edge, a spatial edge that silently percolates through the photograph: a spatial gap.

As Casey puts forward, "a gap serves to separate rather than surround. It differs from a rim by being between two things rather than tightly enclosing one thing or group of things. It discontinues what it separates spatially."<sup>296</sup> Unlike spatial rims that surround things to confer spatial functions to them—e.g. ESA's photograph—Casey suggests that gaps come between objects in order to separate them and make them spatially discontinuous in their surroundings. Because of the exceptional image quality of NASA's photo, the viewer can zoom into every minute area of the photograph's surface to distinguish the stars from each other, and in turn, observe the dark areas that separate each star from its contiguous neighbour.<sup>297</sup> The area of darkness scattered across the photo's surface, conferring it with a veneer of black tune and making each star distinct in the frame, foregrounds the spatial gaps of the photograph. Through

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<sup>295</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Segmented World and Self* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 118.

<sup>296</sup> Casey, "The Edge(s) of Landscape," 94.

<sup>297</sup> For zooming into the compressed version of the photo, the viewer can visit NASA's website; but for having access to the full size of the image, the viewer can use the "zoom tool" offered on: *Spacetelescope*, <https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/heic1502a/>. (Accessed March 2, 2017).

the expansion of the field of view, the space that encloses each star has been transformed to the gap that spatially discontinues it from the rest of the frame. In other words, the minimization of the blind field has converted the spatial *rim* that surrounds each individual star into the spatial *gap* that infiltrates in-between them. Having converted the stars' rims into the gaps amid them, the photograph displays a spatially structured universe that enables the viewer to forge connections between all the perceptible elements in the frame. That means, without the presence of the spatial gaps in the frame, neither the stars nor the Andromeda galaxy would have had any distinctive outline. Lingering in the background of the image, therefore, the spatial gaps have marked the contours of the stars and the galaxy, and in turn constituted the very coordinating spatial structure that permeates through all the visible elements in the frame. It is owing to the existence of the spatial gaps in the frame that the viewer can see a sight of space: a stable view in which the spatial fabric of infinite space has been laid bare for human apprehension.

However, by representing a grandiose sight of space, NASA assures the viewer that its photographic place surpasses the human way of seeing, declaring that the human eye cannot ever see the fabric of space as a camera does. As Snyder and Walsh Allen argue, the common fallacy about photography is rooted in the supposed resemblance of the human eye to the photographic camera, as if they could see the same thing. As they contend, the whole notion that a photograph shows us "what we would have seen had we been there ourselves" is utterly absurd.<sup>298</sup> As they explain this point:

A photograph shows us 'what we would have seen' at a certain moment in time, *from* a certain vantage point *if* we kept our head immobile *and* closed one eyed and *if* we saw with equivalent of a 150-mm or 24-mm lens *and if* we saw things in Agfacolor or in Tri-X developed in D-76 and printed on Kadabromide #3 paper.<sup>299</sup>

Snyder and Walsh Allen underscore the fact that the human eye essentially differs from the camera in its way of seeing, arguing that we would not have seen the same scene had we been where a photograph is taken. For instance, NASA's photographic place could show us what we would have seen had we been there ourselves, *if* the human eye could register from

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<sup>298</sup> Snyder and Walsh Allen, "Vision and Representation," 271.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 271-272. (Italics in original).

natural light to ultraviolet, *if* we could see a panoramic view of aeons of light years in detail and *if* we could discern the imperceptible spatial gaps between the stars. In short, we would have seen the same if the human eye could do the impossible; that is, seeing a sight of space in which the spatial structure of a galaxy is expounded for human comprehension. Thus, assuring that we would not have seen the same had we been there ourselves, NASA's photographic place provides us with the only sight of the Andromeda galaxy. That is, incapable of seeing it with our eyes, Andromeda's photograph feeds our perception with the only image of how the spatial structure of a galaxy appears to be in the world. As Kracauer once argued:

The photographic image cannot give a complete idea of anything whatsoever if the person viewing the image has not *already seen the thing*... A weak picture postcard that one brings back from a journey better fulfils the function of a photograph than does an elaborate showy photograph of *unvisited destinations*.<sup>300</sup>

For Kracauer, to have a comprehensive idea of photographed things, one had to have already seen them in the world; because, according to him, we perceive photographs by associating them with our previously acquired concepts from the world. However, Andromeda's photograph seems to defy Kracauer's contention, since it displays a photographic place that is *not* hinged upon what we have already seen in the world. For, the subject of NASA's photograph remains perpetually inaccessible to the naked eye—i.e. it does not show what one could see if one had been physically where the photo is taken. Instead, NASA's photograph presents the viewer with the spatial sight of the Andromeda galaxy for the first time, thus it photographically presents a sight that remains perceptually unreachable to the human eye. Consequently, unable to see the actual sight with our own eyes, for the first time we confront a galactic sight of the Andromeda in the photograph. This means, NASA's constructed photographic place has become the first and the only source with which we can spatially think of the Andromeda galaxy as such, revealing how the photograph of unvisited destinations can feed our very perception of the world. In other words, by expanding our field of view and vision to the extent that they exceed our way of seeing, NASA's photograph foregrounds how a constructed photographic place *precedes* its memory in our perceptual world. According to the philosopher, Henry Bergson, looking at the world our perceptual

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<sup>300</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, "Photographed Berlin," in *The Past's Threshold: Essays on Photography*, ed. Despos, P.& Zinfert, M. Trans. Joyce, C. (Zurich: diaphanes, 2014), 56. (My italics).

system conflates the immediate image that it registers from objects (afterimage) with their previously registered ideas (memory), merging them into a “memory-image” that makes it impossible to distinguish between perception and memory.<sup>301</sup> As he puts it:

*If, after having gazed at any object, we turn our eyes abruptly away, we obtain an ‘afterimage’ of it ... but, behind these images, which are identical with the object, there are others stored in memory, which merely resemble it, and others, finally, which are only more or less distantly akin to it. All these go out to meet the perception, and, feeding on its substance, acquire sufficient vigor and life to abide with it in space ... Any memory-image that is capable of interpreting our actual perception inserts itself so thoroughly into it that we are no longer able to discern what is perception and what is memory.*<sup>302</sup>

For Bergson, the demarcating line between perception and memory is indiscernible, since by looking at an object and registering its afterimage, we always unknowingly integrate that image with the memory of the object we possess from the past. As a result, we forge a memory-image that amalgamates the instantly perceived afterimage with our previously registered memory of the object, rendering memory from perception indistinguishable. For instance, when we turn our eyes away from the photograph of a vista where several trees are laying in the background and the sun is shining from above, we do not merely interpret the scene through its afterimage; but we also deploy our memory of trees and the sun from the past to make a coherent memory-image with which we understand the photographic vista. That is why for Bergson our perception resembles a “photographic view of things,” since through it we synthesize the afterimage of something with its memory, forging a memory-image with which we perceptually construe the world.<sup>303</sup>

Looking at NASA’s photographic place, however, the only visual memory of the Andromeda galaxy is what we acquire as its afterimage, since there are no other means to register a memory of the sight of space that is fundamentally unreachable to the human perception. That means there cannot be any previously registered memory of how the spatial fabric of the Andromeda looks like except NASA’s photograph. Although the photograph’s

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<sup>301</sup> Henry Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books: 1991), 102-103. (My italics).

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103. (Italics in original).

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

minimized blind field goes beyond our way of seeing, it allows the viewer to replace the afterimage of the photo with its memory, thereby perceiving an inaccessible spatial sight through the photograph. In this case, the afterimage of the Andromeda galaxy *becomes* its memory for the first time, revealing how a constructed photographic place can antecede our perception of the existing world. As such, by supplanting the afterimage of the Andromeda with its first memory, NASA's photograph manifests a photographic view of things that founds our very perception of an unvisited destination in the world. In other words, by radically minimizing the blind field, NASA has constructed a *familiarized photographic place* in which our perceptual distance towards what remains physically far removed has been reduced: it is a photographically accessible sight of space wherein—to use Bergson's phrase—"we are longer able to discern what is perception and what is memory."

At this point, having discussed how the minimization of the blind field can familiarize a constructed photographic place, making it precede its memory in our perceptual world, I will further look at the implications of the blind field for the photographic frame itself. When a photograph is framed, Cavell proposes, "the rest of the world is cut *out*. The implied presence of the rest of the world, and its explicit rejection, are essential in the experience of a photograph as what it explicitly presents."<sup>304</sup> Hence, in the following section, I will next look at photographic place from the very edge at which the rest of the world is cut out and thus its implied presence is buried: its frame. To do so, I consider the photographic frame as *boundary* and not as *border*, in order to discuss how the mere existence of the blind field at the edge of the photograph affects the in-frame.

#### 4.4 Permeability and Pliability of Photographic Place

That which is outside the frame (putting-into-lethargy and absolute value of the frame)  
Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*

The liminal is not a state in which one can remain—it is not 'static' at all.  
Jeff Malpas, *The Threshold of the World*

I have hitherto discussed the particularities of two types of edges, i.e. rims and gaps, in relation to ESA's and NASA's photographs respectively. However, Casey's most intriguing insight

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<sup>304</sup> Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 24. (Italics in original).



into the study of edges—i.e. liminological study—lies in his distinction between borders and boundaries. According to him, borders are essentially a means of closure, exclusion and therefore impermeability. For instance, the effect of having a border between two countries is “not just the restriction of traffic or trespass but their exclusion wherever possible. Every border is constructed such that it is closed or subject to closure.”<sup>305</sup> In other words, in Casey’s view edges are seen as borders when they lose their inherent openness, that is, when they are established “not just to distinguish but to *keep apart*.”<sup>306</sup> In contrast to borders, boundaries are a type of edges that are intrinsically made for transmission, porosity, and thus permeability between the two grounds that they distinguish. The essential difference between borders and boundaries is that while in the former exclusion and closure are embedded in them as their very purpose, in the latter porosity and permeability “are built into them from the start.”<sup>307</sup> For Casey, the distinction between borders and boundaries is not only limited to geography but also applicable to all the arts that edges figure. In architecture, for example, borders are the impermeable walls and roofs, which are inherently meant to separate the inside from the outside, whereas boundaries are the passable doors and windows, which are meant to make connections between different spaces.<sup>308</sup> In a different light, Casey puts it:

*Borders* exist in oral poetry as pauses between stanzas of verse as they are read out or in written poetry as the margins of the page that surround a given poem. *Boundaries* arise ... when the reverberations of pronounced words are still heard as the poet goes onto the next line.<sup>309</sup>

To be clear, while borders are established to articulate definite separations between two grounds, boundaries are made to dissolve precisely these separations, thereby allowing the distinguished spaces to communicate through them. Similar to poetry and architecture, what is inscribed on the surface of photographs, too, has an edge: the frame itself. However, I would like to suggest that the photographic frame operates not so much as a border, which utterly isolates and discontinues the image from the world, but rather as a boundary, which links the photographic image to the world it is severed from. This means that the photographic frame does not easily fall under the rubric of borders, because—as I have discussed before—the world

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<sup>305</sup> Casey, “The Edge(s) of Landscape,” 94.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. (Italics in original).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>308</sup> Edward S. Casey, “Keeping Art to its Edge,” *Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 9, no.2 (August 2004): 147.

<sup>309</sup> Casey, “Keeping Art to its Edge,” 147. (My italics).

of the photograph becomes continuous with the world of its frame through the possession of the blind field. In other words, having the blind field at its disposal, the photographic frame impels our imagination to ask what lies adjacent to the area photographed, outside the frame. In doing so, unlike borders in which closure and exclusion inhere within them, the photographic frame allows mental projection and thereby spatial extension beyond the frame, relating the inside to what lies outside in the world. Thanks to the existence of the blind field, therefore, the photographic frame functions as a boundary that innately links the in-frame to the outside, undermining its function as an impassable border around the photograph's surface.<sup>310</sup> In other words, considering the photographic frame as boundary is to recognize its imaginal permeability, viewing it as a porous edge that undercuts the establishment of any definite division between the inside and the outside. Remarking on the permeability of the photographic frame, the art historian John Tagg writes:

The frame is an adjunct that is neither inherent nor indispensable. Marking a limit between the intrinsic and the extrinsic, it is neither inside nor outside, neither above or below... The frame thus stands out against the two grounds that it constitutes—*the work* and *the setting*—and yet, with respect to each of these, it always dissolves into the other. This oscillation marks its presence and effaces its effect.<sup>311</sup>

In Tagg's description, while the work refers to the image on the surface of photographs, or that which is enclosed *inside* the frame, the setting refers to the context in which the photographic image is received, which remains *outside* in relation to the work. Concerning NASA's photograph, for instance, the work is the image of the galaxy that is sealed off in the frame, and the setting is the surrounding context in which one sees this image, i.e. a computer screen, a wall, a printed paper, a book, etc. The frame, however, neither belongs to the realm of the work (inside) nor to the setting in which the work is received (outside). Instead, Tagg argues that the frame comes as an edge between the work and the setting, the two realms that it brings to existence by its mere presence, yet at the same time it effaces its effect by dissolving into them. In other words, for Tagg, too, the frame cannot become a border that circumscribes

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<sup>310</sup> Following this argument, I also would like to suggest that while a photographic frame functions as a boundary, a painterly frame functions as a border, since, as I have discussed before, a painting is a world in and of itself, which is existentially separated from its origin.

<sup>311</sup> John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: The Photographic truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 246. (My italics).

a definite distinction between the two grounds that it constitutes, but rather functions as a permeable boundary, which by establishing the work and the setting, fades its presence *in-between* them.

As Casey has put forward, the *in* of the in-between can be distinguished in three ways: first, as a “measurable distance” (e.g. a definite distance between two locations); second, as a “juxtaposition” (e.g. when one juxtaposes two imaginary locations on a map, which are not contiguous in geographical actuality); lastly, as when we say “that we are ‘in-between jobs now’, that is, situated between having one definite job and taking up another definite job: but exactly where is not at issue, since we are just somewhere between these two distinct positions.”<sup>312</sup> The position of the frame in relation to the work and the setting falls under the last category of in-betweenness. Similar to being in-between jobs when a person is indeterminately situated between two definite positions, Tagg argues that the frame is only indeterminately emplaced between two distinct grounds. That is, the frame is just somewhere between the inside and the outside, dissolving into both and withdrawing its presence in-between them. In this situation—to use Casey’s phrase—“where is not at issue,” but the perviousness of the frame with reference to the work and the setting, or as Derrida calls them, the *ergon* and the *milieu*.

As Derrida proposes, no analytical framework can positively account for the concept of frame, since the frame is essentially a *parergon*, that is, “a hybrid of outside and inside,” which by its fragile existence between the two divides the *ergon* (the work) from the *milieu* (the setting).<sup>313</sup> Submitting that the frame is a compound of inside and outside, or a *parergon*, he argues that it is inessential to ask where does the frame take place.<sup>314</sup> For, the frame does not have any beginning or an end by which it can be decisively determined; instead, Derrida states, the frame “creaks and cracks, breaks down and dislocates even as it cooperates in the production of the product.”<sup>315</sup> That is, for Derrida the frame is not only a *permeable* edge with reference to what is enclosed in it (the *ergon*) and the context that encloses it (the *milieu*); but more notably, it is a *malleable* construct as such, which constitutes the concepts of inside and outside by vanishing in-between them. As he puts it:

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<sup>312</sup> Casey, Edward S., “Edges and the In-between,” *PhaenEX: Journal of Existence and Phenomenological Theory and Culture*, no. 2 (2008): 3.

<sup>313</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian Macleod (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 63.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 75.

The *parergon* stands out (*se détache*) both from the *ergon* (the work) and from the *milieu* (the setting), it stands out first of all like a figure on a ground ... but the *parergon* is a form which has its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy.<sup>316</sup>

Even though the frame stands out from the work (the *ergon*) and the setting (the *milieu*), marking the limits of inside and outside in doing so, its significance lies in that it dispels its pronounced presence in-between them, that it melts away. That is why Derrida propounds that the essence or truth of the frame, if it had any, is essentially its parergonality: the fact that the frame is a pliable construct and therefore fragile.<sup>317</sup> The term parergonality, on the one hand, underlines that the frame is intrinsically a malleable edge, which comes into being in order to demarcate between the two realms of inside and outside. On the other hand, this term also suggests that the frame, by burring and effacing itself between the work and the setting, makes pervious the edge at which the inside meets the outside. In other words, the parergonality of the frame features both its permeability *and* pliability, thereby presenting the liminal existence of the frame in-between the *ergon* and the *milieu*. As Malpas defines:

The liminal is that which stands between, but in standing between it does not make some point of rest. Instead, the liminal always carries a movement with it—a crossing, a movement towards or away from, a movement into or out of. Etymologically, 'liminal' comes from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold, but related also to the Latin *limes*, meaning boundary.<sup>318</sup>

The parergonality of the frame, to an undeniable extent, foregrounds its very liminality. Because, by standing out in-between the inside and the outside, the frame does not make some point of rest, but instead, it sets into motion a movement into or out of the *ergon* and the *milieu*. That is, the Derridean concept of *parergon* features the frame as a liminal construct whereby the *ergon* intermix with the *milieu*, yet at the same time remaining distinct from it. In the experience of liminality, Malpas writes, “the experienced elements, even though distinct,

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<sup>316</sup> Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 61.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>318</sup> Jeff Malpas, “The Threshold of the World,” in *Funktionen des Lebendigen*. Edited by Thiemo Breyer and Oliver Müller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 161-162. (Italics in original).

nevertheless evoke one another, never appearing entirely apart.”<sup>319</sup> The liminality of the frame on the one hand suggests that, by coming as an edge in-between the ergon and the milieu, the frame can distinguish and thus stabilize what is contained in it. On the other hand, it suggests that, by effacing its conspicuous presence in-between the inside and the outside, the frame can make pervious and thus destabilize what is enclosed in it. To be precise, the liminality of the frame means that it can originate a crossing between the ergon and the milieu, thereby both stabilizing and destabilizing, familiarizing and defamiliarizing their definite delineations through it. Bringing this liminality to the fore, Derrida succinctly asserts: “Framing always supports and contains that which, by itself, collapses forthwith.”<sup>320</sup>

More fitting than many frames, the photographic frame can epitomize this liminal character, by featuring how the ergon comingle with the milieu through the blind field. As I have already discussed, the existence of the blind is simultaneously implied and masked within the photographic frame. Yet, it does not mean that the blind exists inside nor outside the frame, but that it rests precisely where the inside meets the outside, where the work merges with the setting, and where the ergon intermingles with the milieu. In other words, the photographic blind field neither resides on the surface of the photograph (the ergon) nor in the context in which it is viewed (the milieu), but rather it lies *at* the very edge wherein they confront one another. In this way, the blind field unfolds as a tertiary element where the edge of the inside confronts the edge of the outside, making possible an “edge effect” to take place, a geographical term that fleshes out how the blind field emerges as an extra frame dimension. As Casey proposes, an “edge effect” takes place where the edges of two regions intermix in heightened intensity and richness, resulting in an amplification that exceeds the number of involved parties.<sup>321</sup> In this situation, he states, “instead of a mere summation of forces, there is an augmentation beyond the known and measurable forces of existing constituents: rather than  $1+1=2$ , we have a circumstance of  $1+1=2+n$ .”<sup>322</sup> Analogous to an edge effect, which causes an augmentation that exceeds the summation of engaged parties, the photographic blind field arises as an *n* factor where *the edge of the ergon* coincides with *the edge of the milieu*, where the inside confronts the outside, at the marge of the frame. To illustrate this point, we need to return to NASA’s photograph.

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<sup>319</sup> Jeff Malpas, “The Threshold,” 167.

<sup>320</sup> Derrida, Jacques, *The Truth in Painting*, 79.

<sup>321</sup> Casey, “The Edge(s) of Landscape,” 101.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

Looking at NASA's photographic place in a way that I presented it here, the image of the galaxy that is enclosed inside the frame stands for the ergon, and the white surrounding area that engulfs the in-frame instantiates the milieu. Knowing that NASA's photograph is of the world and not a world in itself, the viewer can mentally construct the excluded surrounding space and thus spatially extend the in-frame into the white area. In turn, the viewer can envisage how the fluvial of starts would unfurl beyond the frame. Through the imaginational permeability of the in-frame into the setting, hence, the viewer projects the blind field onto the crossing of the inside and the outside. That is, thanks to the liminal existence of the blind field, the excluded spatial dimension inserts itself where the work intersects with the setting, unfolding towards the milieu. In this situation, the blind field lies neither in the work nor the setting in which the work is received, but springs up as an *n* factor at the very edge at which the ergon confronts the milieu. Therefore, owing to the insinuated but concealed existence of the blind field at the edge of the photo, the photographic place itself becomes a *liminal place*, paving the way for an edge effect to come about.

This potentiality not only pertains to the surface of NASA's photograph but also to all the photographic places that possess a blind field, such as existing photographic places that activate and constructed photographic places that can motivate its existence within the frame. For, the enshrouded existence of the blind field can transform the frame from a border into a boundary, allowing the work to uncoil towards the setting in the imagination. In other words, if the maximization of the blind field can defamiliarize and its minimization can familiarize the in-frame, seeing the frame as a boundary that surreptitiously holds the blind field suggests that it is capable of *both*. On the one hand, given that a boundary is an edge that distinguishes between different grounds, it can make distinct a segment of space and bestow meanings upon it in the photograph, thereby underpinning what is enclosed in the frame. On the other hand, having the blind field at its disposal, the photographic frame can interpolate the excluded spatial dimension in-between the inside and the outside, thereby liquefying what is sealed off within the frame. Precisely this possibility of supporting and collapsing, underpinning and liquefying, familiarizing and defamiliarizing that is embedded in the frame marks the liminality of photographic place. That is, the liminality of photographic place suggests that the frame, where the implied presence of the rest of the world is buried, is a boundary that can manifest an extra frame dimension. In that, irrespective of its minimized or maximised manifestation, the mere existence of the blind field transmutes the frame from an impervious border into a porous boundary, allowing *mental projection* and *spatial protension* beyond the frame. As such, thanks to the crepuscular existence of the blind field at the edge of the photograph, the photographic

place can become a *liminal place*, manifesting a photographic edge effect par excellence. In other words, calling the photographic place a liminal place, I propose, is to consider the frame as an indeterminate, permeable, and pliable boundary in-between the inside and the outside, wherein the blind field reposes in a subterranean way.

As I have discussed, if the maximization of the blind field can defamiliarize (ESA's photo) and its minimization can familiarize the photographic place (NASA's photo), its mere existence suggests that the photographic frame can achieve both, making liminal what it holds within it. At this point, having discussed the possibility of the photographic place becoming a liminal place, thanks to the existence of the blind field at the edge of the photograph, I will zoom out from the placial role of the photograph to include the last participant of photography: the spectator. As theorist of photography Ariella Azoulay has proposed, a photograph is neither the immaterial or material thing that travels through different spaces nor that which is inscribed on its surface, i.e. the image; but it can be deemed as a special encounter that takes place in relation to the camera or the spectator.<sup>323</sup> To grasp an ontological understanding of photography, she suggests that all the participants in a photographic act should be taken into account, i.e. the photographer, the camera, the photograph, and the spectator. In doing so, it becomes possible to formulate the photograph as the result of an encounter. Thus, in the following chapter, I will next explore how the inclusion of the spectator in a photographic act can account for the spatiotemporal aspects of the notion of place.

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<sup>323</sup> Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, trans. Louise Bethlehem (London: Verso Books, 2015), 23.