Place: Towards a Geophilosophy of Photography

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--Chapter 6—
The Aftermath of Place

> There always exists a lacuna between the representation and what is represented, no matter how that representation is conceived.
> Dan Stone, *Chaos and Continuity*

As John Szarkowski noted in the 1960s, while paintings are made from conventional schema deployed by the painter, photographs are taken; they are primarily a matter of organising elements of the world, a process that imparts a factual character to photographs. He further remarks that the factuality of the photographic picture essentially differs from the reality of the world it represents, and these things ought not be confused.[403] As Szarkowski reminds us, although after a photographic shooting the subject matter and the picture thereof seem to be alike, as if a photograph of a place and a physical place in the world could be the same, they are not the same thing. This is because after being photographed the physical place transforms into a photographed place through a set of historical and representational practices peculiar to the medium of photography. To fully grasp a photographed place, therefore, one should become acquainted with the means with which photography embodies actual places in the world; that is, the representational schemes and genres whereby it transforms them into photographs of places. Only afterward does it become possible to examine how photography translates an actual place into a photographed place in order communicate specific contents to the spectator. But, since the advent of photography a wide range of photographic practices have conveyed meanings through places, such as cityscape, landscape, street, and topographic photography, each through distinct representational techniques and different understandings of what characterizes a place in the world. There is, however, one photographic genre that includes and employs all the aforementioned photographic practices in order to relay its content, and it does so by simply regarding them as particular places in the physical world: aftermath photography.

In this photographic genre, the photographer visits a vacant physical place in the world, where something went wrong in the past, and irrespective of its physical characteristics, considers it a place instilled with meaning. In doing so, aftermath photography aims to direct

[403] John Szarkowski, "Introduction to The Photographer's Eye,", in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (New York, Routledge, 2003), 97.

the spectator to the concomitant histories of physical places in the world by putting an undeniable emphasis on their specificities in the world of photography. In this genre, a narrow street is as much of a place as an infinitely immense landscape, since for aftermath photography what defines a place is not its physical features, but the historicity that is anchored to it. As a result, aftermath photography not only creates an incontrovertible rapport between physical places and their photographic embodiments, but also essentially puts place at stake. As art historian Donna West Brett puts it, aftermath photographs are "both constructing notions *of* place, and in turn, as being constructed *by* place."[404] However, after the photographer captures a terraqueous piece of the world with the camera, viewing it as a place replete with historical significance, the inherent representational systems of photography make the photographed place intelligible to the viewer. That is, if on the photographer's side every physical location on the earth with entailing histories is seen as a place, each photographic practice requires a different way of seeing, thus different way of dealing with space and time. For instance, while looking at a street photograph the viewer is inclined to perceive time as the instant at which the photo was taken, while looking at landscape photographs the viewer is impelled to extend the act of looking, and in turn experiences a "pause in time."[405] In other words, if the photographer views a narrow street and an enormous landscape equally as places, having turned them into photographic representations, they require different methods of looking in order to correspond to the representational system in which they are delivered. In this chapter, to examine how a particular representational model affects our way of accessing the subject matter, I will narrow my focus to the way in which aftermath photography deploys landscape pictures to communicate its content. In that, as Casey contends, landscapes "are congeries of places in the fullest experiential and represented sense. *No landscape without place;* this much we may take to be certainly true."[406]

Yet, aftermath photography does not only communicate its content through photographed places, since for this genre what makes an area distinct from others is not its visual attributes, but the event that took place therein prior to the photographer capturing the photo. Thus, to convey the histories that are attached to a physical place in the world, this genre requires an accompanying text to narrate the story behind the photographed place. That means, in aftermath

[404] Donna West Brett, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2. (Italics in original).
[405] Thierry De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* 5, Photography (summer, 1987): 121.
[406] Edward S. Casey, *Re-presenting Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 271. (Italics in original).

photographs the content of the photographed place is not only given through the image but also through text. As Clive Scott notes, by underlining the role of text regarding the photograph, it becomes possible to argue that the photographic narration is "not *in* photos, but *with* photos."[407] Accordingly, in order to comprehend how the genre of aftermath photography communicates a content to the viewer, this chapter considers both the image and the text as the containers of meaning, that is, as means of signification.

Therefore, to investigate how a particular representational model deals with place, both in the material world and the world of photography, this chapter asks: How does aftermath photography translate a *physical place* into a *photographed place* in order to communicate a specific content to the spectator? To do this, I will first focus on the relationship between landscape and place, in order to foreground how the physical landscape in the world can be seen as a place and how such a place propels the photographer into its vicinity. Having discussed how the physical landscape as a place affects the photographer, I will then examine how the embodiment of that place, i.e. the landscape photograph, influences our way of seeing. To this end, I will concentrate on the temporal aspect of looking at landscape photographs within aftermath photography, indicating how this genre utilizes landscape images to elongate the act of looking. Afterwards, while retaining my focus on aftermath photography, I will further explore the function of the text in relation to photographed places, showing how an accompanying text directs the spectator's attention to the subject matter of the photo. Finally, by delving into several concepts given by philosopher Giorgio Agamben, I will argue how the genre of aftermath photography, by turning physical places into photographed places, deploys places as markers of meaning and vehicles of signification. To this end, in the following section I will begin my analysis by looking at the very material and physical place in the world—i.e. the landscape—before it enters into the representational space of aftermath photography.

6.1 Landscape and the Agency of Place

> It is in and through *landscape*, in its many forms, that our relationship with *place* is articulated and represented.
> Jeff Malpas, *Place and the Problem of Landscape*

> Agency is a matter of intra-activity.
> Karren Barrad, *Posthumanist Performativity*

[407] Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image,* 54.

According to art historian Lucy Lippard, the contemporary usage of the term landscape is rooted in the German fifteenth-century term *landschaft* as a "shaped land, a cluster of temporary dwellings … the antithesis of the wilderness surrounding it" and "in the Dutch seventeenth-century word *landschap* or *landskip*—a painting of such a place, perceived as a scope, or expanse."[408] Since the very conception of the term landscape in cultural and geographical lexicons, Lippard suggests, it has been associated with human dwellings in places and the way in which they visually perceived those experiences. Yet, not everyone has the same way of experiencing and perceiving places, since each place evokes a different set of meanings to individuals according to their interests and the way in which they interpret their experiences. For instance, while a landscape can be a topographical view of a place for one individual, it can be a matter of geopolitical evolution of the same place for another one. In other words, what a landscape is depends on the beholder's understanding of the place. As geographer D.W. Meining sets forth in his famous article "The Beholding Eye," the same landscape can evoke ten different versions of meaning depending on each individual's way of perceiving it. Looking at the landscape, he explains:

> We may certainly agree that we will see many of the same elements—houses, roads, trees, hills—in terms of such denotations as number, form, dimension, and color, but such facts take on meaning only through association; they must be fitted together according to some coherent body of ideas. Thus we confront the central problem: any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads.[409]

Therefore, the same landscape can be viewed as nature, habitat, artifact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, aesthetic and finally as place, depending on what attributes and qualities individuals elicit from and assign to it.[410] Considering the landscape as a place, Meining proposes, it becomes "a locality, an individual piece in the infinitely varied mosaic of the earth."[411] It is because to view landscapes as places is to regard them as "*particular*

[408] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicultured Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 8.
[409] D.W. Meining, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 33-47.
[410] Ibid., 33-47.
[411] Ibid., 45.

localities" wherein "our individual lives are necessarily affected in myriad ways."[412] In this view, the landscape evokes its affinity with places; it manifests the "individuality of places," the fact that each particular place has its own inherent features, specificities and concomitant histories that constitute its context. Landscape, as Relph has suggested, is "both the context for places and attribute of places."[413] The view of landscapes as places is what Casey embraces as well, as particular localities that are inherently interlaced with and comprised of places, since for him landscapes are to be essentially understood as "placescapes" and never as spaces.[414]

According to Casey, despite being a "cusp concept," the term landscape makes it possible to distinguish between place and space, yet it always remains within the former category.[415] While it is common practice to consider the landscape as a mere middle term between place and space, Casey firmly contends that the landscape intrinsically falls under the category of place. Even if landscapes are made up of a colossal terrain of places, which may seem to fade into an expanded space, he argues that they do not become "open wide spaces" but can create regions as "a very large set of places."[416] As he puts forward:

> There is no landscape of space, though there is landscape both of place and region … A landscape may indeed be vast; it can contain an entire region and thus a very large set of places. Yet it will never *become* space, which is something of another order altogether. No matter how capacious a landscape may be, it remains a composition of places, their intertangled skein.[417]

That is to say, irrespective of the expansiveness and grandiosity of a landscape, Casey holds that the landscape is always the "intertangled skein" of places and thus never belongs to the category of space, featuring the attributes of regions as the interconnections of numerous places. As he argues elsewhere, both landscapes and seascapes belong to the same category; that is, they come in to being "when places are concatenated into regions."[418] For Casey, therefore, a landscape or a seascape reflects the characteristics of place as *place-cum-region*,

[412] Meining, "The Beholding Eye," 46. (my italics).
[413] Edward Relph, Place and Placelessness (London: Pion, 1976), 123.
[414] Edward S. Casey, *Re-Presenting Place*, 271.
[415] Edward S. Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does it Mean to be in the Place-World?", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, No. 4 (Dec, 2001): 689.
[416] Ibid.,
[417] Ibid. (Italic in original).
[418] Casey, "A Study in Liminology," 107.

i.e. as a numerous concatenation of places that are coalesced into a region, which are nevertheless always place-bond and place dependent.

As Malpas explains, Casey foregrounds the inherent affinity between landscape and place to clarify that the landscape should be understood as "an articulation of place" and "the relationship to place."[419] However, "the problem of landscape" results not only from "our relationship with place," but also "from the problematic nature of that relationship," states Malpas.[420] That is to say, Malpas suggests that it is through the concept of landscape that, firstly, we become aware of the intrinsic rapport between places and ourselves and then we realize the different methods of engagement that we utilize to understand places. Eventually, he puts forward that a landscape essentially arises "out of our original involvement with the place" in which a specific locality "affects and influences us."[421] In other words, he claims that the landscape makes comprehensible the ways in which we *involve* with a place wherein our perception and understanding are hinged upon the particularity and singularity of the place. Malpas even goes on to argue that this involvement with particular places is not only limited to our lived experiences, when, for instance, a photographer confronts the landscape as a view in nature, but it is also true when we confront a representation of the landscape as an artwork, as a "view of a view." As he writes, we must acknowledge that landscape art

> should not be constructed as merely the presentation of a view but as rather the 'view of a view'; hence it's properly representational … But the very possibility of such view in the first place already depends on having a place and so an experience … It always already depends on an involvement and orientation with respect to some *particular place* or locale.[422]

As Malpas suggests, confronting a landscape, either as a vast concatenation of places that constitute a region *or* as a representation of that lived experience that is located somewhere, is always dependent on a particular place where humans are involved with some localities. On the one hand, Casey argues that our engagement with places can give rise to the landscape as a multitude of places that are concatenated into regions, an involvement that is always place-bound and place-caused. On the other hand, Malpas suggests that this involvement is always

[419] Jeff Malpas, "Place and the Problem of Landscape," in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies,* Ed. Jeff Malpas (Ebook Collection: The MIT Press, 2011), 6.
[420] Ibid. 15.
[421] Ibid., 9.
[422] Ibid., 8.

based on a particular place or locale, whether it is with a view in nature or with a view of a view as a representation. Despite their different approaches, what Casey and Malpas share regarding the defining attributes of the landscape is that they both concur that the landscape is about our mode of involvement with some particular localities, an involvement that is necessarily place-dependent. Nevertheless, the pertinent question about the relationship of landscape and place is how people get involved with some particular localities that are marked by expansiveness and grandiosity?

As Meining reminds us, the idea of landscape as a place embraces not only that which we see, but "all that we live amidst," because it regards the landscape as an environment that includes sounds, smell, visual relationship and the "ineffable feel of place as well."[423] Due to the complexity of our engagement with the landscape as a place, for instance, Crouch has recently coined the term "flirting" to address "a nuanced, contingent, uncertain and fluid" method whereby people engage with a landscape in an indeterminate way.[424] Concerning people's involvement with a landscape, the term flirting suggests that not all the constitutive elements of the landscape are necessarily visible in it nor belong to it, since being also an environment, it is made of a multitude of distinct but interrelated elements that taken together make a coherent unity as landscape. Long before Crouch, however, sociologist George Simmel referred to the constitutive elements that permeate through the landscape without belonging to it as "the mood of landscape".[425] He explains this point in a rather long passage where he compares a person's and a landscape's mood as follows:

> When we refer to the mood of a person, we mean that coherent ensemble that either permanently or temporarily colors the entirety of his or her psychic constituents. It is not itself something discrete, and often not an attribute of any one individual trait. All the same, it is that commonality where all these individual traits interconnect. In the same way, *the mood of landscape* permeates all its separate components, frequently without it being attributable to any one of them. In a way that is difficult to specify, each component partakes in it, but a mood prevails which is neither external to these constituents, nor is it composed of them.[426]

[423] Meining, "The Beholding Eye," 7.
[424] Crouch, "Landscape, Performance," 121-122.
[425] George Simmel, "The Philosophy of landscape." *Theory, Culture & Society,* 24 (2007): 26. (Originally published in German in 1913 under the title *Die Philosophie der Landschaft*).
[426] Ibid. (My italics).

That is to say, the mood of landscape conjures up as an intermingling of all its constitutive elements—such as sounds, smells, lights, sights, etc.—in between the beholder and the particular locality from where he or she perceives the landscape. Yet, as Simmel notes, the mood of landscape does not belong to any of the components that give rise to it. To deploy a term used by geographer Nicholas Entrikin, the mood of landscape refers to a mode of "betweenness" that permeates in between a particular location and a beholder while remaining independent from both. As Entrikin submits, places are "best viewed from points in between," so are landscapes viewed as particular localities marked by the involvement of humans with places, given that this involvement not only includes people and places but also the non-human elements that pervade in between them.[427] Drawing on Schiffer, Ingold clarifies that the category of "non-humans" does not only include the immediately visible but it also comprises "a blank category that covers everything else that is given independently of people," including "sunlight and clouds, wild plants and animals, rocks and minerals and landforms."[428] In other words, non-humans are all the in-between ingredients of the landscape that in their totality evoke the mood of landscape, the feeling that "permeates all its separate components, frequently without it being attributable to any one of them."[429]

As Simmel further points out, while the mood of landscape allows us to call a landscape "cheerful," "heroic," "melancholic" or ghostly, it always pertains "to *just this* particular landscape."[430] "Even if mood was nothing more than the feeling evoked by a landscape in the observer", Simmel states, "then this feeling, too, in its actual determinateness, would exclusively be tied to *just this,* and precisely this, landscape and could not be transferred to any other."[431] Here Simmel draws attention to the fact that the mood of landscape—being its evoked feelings resulted from the intermingling of all its intermediary elements in the observer—is necessarily tied to a particular place. To be precise, the mood of landscape anchors to the vast locale where the involvement of humans and non-humans is acted out. It is through the mood of landscape—the invisible in-between elements that are sensed but not necessarily perceived—that each landscape acquires its distinctive character for the observer. Consequently, the mood of landscape underlines how by acknowledging the non-human

[427] Nicholas Entrikin, *The Betweenness of Places: Towards the Geography of Modernity* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 3.
[428] Tim Ingold, "Towards an Ecology of Materials," *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 41 (2012): 431.
[429] Simmel, "The Philosophy of landscape," 26.
[430] Ibid., 28. (Italics in original).
[431] Ibid.

elements that pervade in-between people and particular localities, places can become meaningful and distinctive, allowing people to be possessed by and attached to them, and eventually to have feelings for them.

Discussing how each specific place can become meaningful for people by acknowledging their in-between elements, sociologist Michael Mayerfeld Bell has proposed that places make us believe that they have ghosts, endowing them with distinctive significance for those who visit them.[432] By the term ghost, Bell does not refer to a spiritual, metaphysical or supernatural element, but to a sentiment that "gives a sense of social aliveness to a place," generating "the specificity of the meaning" each particular place acquires through people's engagement with it.[433] That is to say, the ghost of place is the corollary of people's involvement with places when it results in a sense of familiarity and attachment to specific locations, a feeling that lingers in-between people and places. To a certain extent, thus, the ghost of place reflects its mood. If for Simmel the mood of landscape instigates feelings for its entirety without belonging to any of its constitutive elements, Bell's understanding of the ghosts of place, too, suggests that places can induce feelings through people's involvement with them, engendering a ghostlike presence that permeates in-between them without belonging to either of them. Also similar to the mood of landscape that is always rooted in a specific location, the ghosts of place are, according to Bell, the "stubborn and quirky singularities" that always pertain to a particular place and not the others.[434] Whether they call it a ghost or a mood, Bell and Simmel underline the fact that, firstly, places have the potential to actively interact with people through the non-human elements that permeate in-between them. Secondly, they underscore that this involvement between places and people are always peculiar to the particular localities wherein their interactions transpire. In other words, they argue that places have the *agency* to interact with people through their in-between non-human elements that are localized in them.

As geographer Phil Hubbard notes, agency is not only an attribute of humans who have the potency of making things happen, but it can also be deemed as "a *relational effect* generated in networks by humans and non-humans alike."[435] Hubbard suggests that although agency is putatively considered to be an attribute of humans who can actively intervene in the world, by taking into account the role of non-humans in our interventions with the physical world, it becomes possible to view agency as a relational effect in which non-humans are active as well.

[432] Michael Mayerfeld Bell, "The Ghosts of Place," *Theory and Society* 26, No.6 (Dec, 1997): 815.
[433] Ibid., 815.
[434] Ibid., 831. (My italics).
[435] Phill Hubbard, *City* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 159.

For instance, both the mood and the ghosts of place can highlight the fact that places can actively affect people through the intervention of their non-human elements, thereby constituting the agency as a relational effect in between them. Ingold exemplifies the active involvement of non-humans by arguing that we not only "see" landscapes, which implies the passivity of the landscape in the act, but we also "hear" the physical landscape, which implies that the landscape is active in this interaction.[436] As he writes:

> To be seen, an object need do nothing itself, for the optic array that specifies its form to a viewer consists of light reflected off its outer surfaces. To be heard, on the other hand, an object must actively emit sounds or, through its movement, cause sounds to be emitted by other objects with which it comes into contact… In short, what I hear is *activity*.[437]

For example, when a photographer confronts a landscape it is not only a matter of ocular involvement with the place, which would imply that the landscape is passive, but it also includes other senses, such as aural, revealing the activity of the landscape in this interaction. In this instance, the agency is deemed as a relational effect between places and people through the engagement of the in-between ingredients of the landscape, those components that are localized where the photographer confronts the landscape as a concatenation of places. In this case, in short, agency is an enactment that brings about in between people and places.

As theorist Karren Barad contends, agency is not an attribute that either humans or non-humans can possess, but it is an "enactment" that congeals in-between them; it is an "intera-acting."[438] Opposing the idea of "interaction" that presupposes the passive engagement of one of the involved parties, Barad proposes the term "intra-action" to underscore that agency results from the sedimentation of active parties, which are all equally affected and affecting in the act.[439] At this point, I would like to suggest that *the agency of place*—analogous to the mood and the ghosts of place—comes into being only through the intra-active involvement of people with places, manifesting the non-human elements that perfuse in-between them, whereby each particular place acquires its distinctive significance in the observer. In other words, the agency

[436] Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2. Conception of Time and Ancient Society (Oct.1993): 162.
[437] Ibid., 162.
[438] Karren Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an understanding of How Matter comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3, Gender and Science: New Issues (spring, 2003): 826-827.
[439] Ibid., 815.

of place is its very potentiality to engender a relational effect between humans and particular localities through their intermediary components. As such, before a photographer converts a physical place into the photographed place, before an actual place in the world is turned in to its representation in the photograph, the physical place in the world has the potential of actively affecting the photographer through the intra-active involvement of its intermediary non-human components. The agency of place, thus, reflects this intra-action, which coagulates and sediments wherein a photographer involves with the place, driving the photographer to a particular locality with quirky singularities that make it distinct from other places. To put it differently, the agency of place signals the ghosts or moods with which places actively affect the beholder in a sheer inbetweenness: *it is the very gravitating relational effect that propels the photographer to a particular place and not to others*.

At this point, having argued that the landscape can be seen as a concatenation of places into regions where people are involved with particular localities *and* the possibility of the given localities to acquire agency through intra-acting with humans, I will shift my focus from physical places to when they become photographed places. In other words, I will indicate that if it is a geographical matter before the photograph is taken, when the physical place is turned into the photographed place it becomes a matter of representation. As literary theorist Ernst Van Alphen notes, "we do not see the world in photographs, but concepts of the world. In order to understand photographs adequately we have to consider them as conceptual, which means we have to be aware of the translations that have taken place from the world in the photographic technology."[440] That is, photographers do not literally cut physical places from the world and capture them in the photograph as if unaffected, but translate them through the photographic apparatus in order to make a representation thereof. To grasp a better understanding of the photographed place as the subject matter of photography, therefore, it is essential to learn how our way of seeing delivers the meaning of the photograph. In the following section, by retaining my focus on the particularity of places that exist in the world, I will next indicate that photographic shooting somehow produces some "representational carcasses" of physical places, and in doing so, it leaves their agency behind it.[441] To this end, I will focus on aftermath

[440] Ernst van Alphen, "Time Saturation: The Photography of Awoiska van der Molen," *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 8 (2014): 4.

[441] I borrow this term from the sociologist Rob Shields who states, "photographic 'shooting' kills not the body but the life of things, leaving only representational carcasses." Rob Shields, "A guide to urban representation and what to do about it: Alternative traditions of urban theory," in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the Twenty- First Century Metropolis*, ed King, A.D. (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 230.

photography that, by regarding landscapes as particular localities instilled with meanings, pays a significant attention to their distinctiveness and singularities, aiming to show how we *see* photographed places in this specific genre.

6.2 The Photographed Place (The Image)

> The encounter with the photograph is the encounter between two presents, one of which, already past, [one of which] can be animated in the *act of looking.*
> Marian Hirsch, *Surviving Images*
>
> We do not believe in ghosts, we are haunted by them.
> Tom Gunning, *To Scan a Ghost*

In 1972, art critic John Berger coined the term "way of seeing" to underscore that we learn how to see artworks by means of different representational schemes and practices, and in so doing we impart meanings on them through this learned ability.[442] The way we look at photographed places is, too, learned through different representational systems and genres that aim to elicit the meanings of photographs. However, merely knowing the "way of seeing" photographs does not always assure an unconditional degree of understanding them, albeit it can lead us to gain a more precise level of interpretation for unearthing the content of photographic images. This is the case in the genre of aftermath photography, which by putting an ineffaceable emphasis on a particular locality captured in the photograph, where there is nothing to see except the place, inquires the veracity of our way of seeing and understanding the photographic content.

Instead of recording events as they happen, in aftermath photography the photographer visits vacant places where something has occurred before, to first capture and later convey the traces of the event through photography. As West Brett suggests, by showing vacant places where something has occurred before, aftermath photographs "promise a possible connection to the event, to the memory and history of the site, but in their failure to deliver, allow space for interpretation."[443] By confronting the spectator with photographed places, where usually something has gone wrong in the past, aftermath photographs provide the possibility of

[442] John Berger, *Way of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).
[443] Donna West Brett, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 5-6.

reflection upon the past through embodying vacant places. According to West Brett, by attempting to record some essence of the past events in particular places, aftermath photos "offer a view into the past from the edge of the present."[444] To this genre, therefore, what is an essential importance is how representing particular localities can become a vehicle for accessing the past when they are observed in the present. In what follows, I will narrow my focus on how aftermath photography specifically deploys the representational methods of landscape genre in order to communicate a trace of the past from the present time of photographed places.

Figure 8 is an instance of aftermath photography, a photographed place taken by Dutch artist Gert Jan Kocken, presented as a part of the gallery titled *Disaster Areas* (1999). In his exhibition, Kocken displayed a series of landscape photographs from different European countries, ranging from Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, and Belgium, where some calamitous events had happened in the past due to the negligence of the people living or working there. By returning to the exact location where the incidents had taken place and capturing their vicinities in photographs, Kocken asked whether photography could constitute a connection with the past through representing places and by underlining their particularities. That is, through involving with places with the aid photographic apparatus, the artist stressed the role of particular localities in the act of remembrance of the past. Kocken's photograph displays a seaside view in Zeebrugge, Belgium, twelve years after the disastrous event had taken place in this specific location. The incident occurred on March 6th, 1987, when a roll-on roll-off car ferry called the *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized in the displayed location shortly after leaving the harbor of Zeebrugge, killing 193 people.[445] Just four minutes after its departure, the ferry sunk nearby the harbor as a result of the staff's negligence in leaving the ferry's bow door open.[446] Despite the poignant story that lingers behind the picture surface, looking at the photograph the viewer is confronted with a place imbued with delicate serenity mirrored by the blue seascape. The

[444] West Brett, *Photography and Place*, 77.
[445] UK government. "Flooding and Capsize of ro-ro passenger ferry Herald of Free Enterprise with loss of 193 lives." *Gov.uk.* Https://www.gov.uk/maib-reports/flooding-and-subsequent-capsize-of-ro-ro-passenger-ferry-herald-of-free-enterprise-off-the-port-of-zeebrugge-belgium-with-loss-of-193-lives#summary. (Accessed 14 November, 2016).
[446] In this incident, three different individuals who worked for P&O enterprise could be held culpable: "the assistant bosun who was responsible for shutting the doors had fallen asleep and the Chief Officer whose responsibility was to ensure the doors were shut had failed to do so"; and also the captain "could confirm from the bridge whether or not the doors had been shut." Nevertheless, rather than the three individuals, this incident became a landmark in what is known today as "corporate manslaughter", a case in which no single individual but the entire enterprise is liable for manslaughter, which is P&O in this case. Only after the investigation into this incident in Zeebrugge, did charges against a corporation became recognized by law. Celia Wells, *Corporation and Criminal Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 200), 106-107.

entire photograph evokes a strong sense of tranquility, a sentiment reflected by the cerulean sky overlaid by the translucent clouds ending in the middle of the photograph where the sky edges with the sapphire sea, arousing a tangible placidity in the observer. The scene could have been a Sunday-afternoon photo of a family who visits the seaside to savour the unspoiled landscape, energizing and refreshing for the following week just by looking at the scenery. What we look at, thus, is not a place that in any sense could reflect the tragic story behind it, but a particular location recorded by the representational elements of the genre of landscape.

According to scholar of photography Liz Wells, there are mainly two key lines in landscape photography: the first one focuses on "pictorial images," which are constructed according to the "preconceived idea" of what a landscape can look like, and the second one is "straight" or "topographical", which mirrors "the composition of the classic landscape painting."[447] Landscape photos in aftermath photography, including Kocken's photograph, evidently fall under the category of straight landscapes, since in this genre the photographer's primary intent is to make an exact geographical record of the physical place in the world.[448] That is, landscape photographs used in aftermath photography aim to make a topographical document of a specific location while reflecting the compositional elements of landscape painting. As scholar Isis Brook summarizes, the classic appreciation of landscape pertains to three categories, which do not always remain distinct but interrelate in many cases: first, the pastoral, which reflects a landscape that is meant to please the viewer through "regularity, smoothness, tranquility and unity" wherein nothing is abrupt; second, the sublime that "relies on an emotional response to the grandeur of features," such as vastness and irregularity, which creates "a sense of awe in the person experiencing them;" and third, the picturesque that reconciles the two by blending "the craggy irregularity of the sublime into the smaller more intimate compass of the pastoral."[449] Although, to a large extent, Kocken's photograph may correspond with the characteristics of the pastoral by conveying a sense of tranquility and calmness, it borders with the sublime if one considers the immensity and limitlessness of the stygian sea that is vanishing into the horizon. As a result, looking at Kocken's photograph leaves the viewer uncertain about which aesthetic category can aid the interpretation of the represented scene. In other words, the traditional aesthetic categories of landscape seem to fall

[447] Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 33.
[448] According to the artist, the location displays the exact location where the incident had happened. All of Kocken's photographs were taken in a way that the focal point of the photograph aims at the precise location of the incidents. For instance, in figure 5 this it is the area that points at the sea border where the sky vanishes into to the horizon. Personal interview with the artist, January 15th, 2017.
[449] Isis Brook, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscape," in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies,* ed. Peter Howard et all (New York, Routledge, 2013), 108.

short of an adequate explanation for Kochen's photograph, primarily because they are all premised upon the interpretation of the landscape as a visual scene. As Brook contends, all the aforementioned categories have regularly been criticized as they offer a "scenic conception of landscape," as something merely visual.[450] Landscape photography, however, is not only about the scenic interpretation of places, but also has a strong affinity with the temporal dimension of seeing, when a specific location is affixed to the immutable photographic frame, inviting the viewer to cease the sequence of time.

When we look at landscape art, Agamben puts forward, "we perceive a *stop in time*, as though we are suddenly thrown into a more original time. There is a stop, an interruption in the incessant flow of instants that, coming from the future, sink into the past."[451] By looking at a landscape art, Agamben suggests, the temporal sequence of time seems to come to a halt, as if the beholder departs from actual time and enters into a temporal suspension. Remarking on the temporal suspension caused in the act of looking, theorist of modern art Thierry de Duve argues that it is mainly in "time exposure' photographs that the viewer experiences a halt in time.[452] In time exposure photographs, such as landscape, portrait and still life photos, de Duve contends that the viewer experiences a "now" that is "without any spatial attachment," since "it is not a present but a virtual availability of time in general."[453] According to de Duve, while snapshot photographs can create a tension between arriving too early to witness the event in the photograph and always being too late to experience the event in real life, time exposure photographs provide the possibility of a temporal cessation generated from the "act of looking."[454] In other words, he puts forward that the now of time exposure is not embodied as that which one can see happening within the photograph's narrative, but remains as a potential that viewers can experience through a prolonged looking. As de Duve explains:

> The word *now*, used to describe the kind of temporality involved in time exposure, does not refer to actual time … It is to be understood as a *pause in time*, charged with a potential actualization, which will eventually be carried in the time-consuming *act of looking*.[455]

[450] Brook, "Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscape," 111
[451] Giorgio Agamben, "The Original Structure of the Work of Art," in *The Man Without Content*, trans. Giorgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 99. (My italics).
[452] Thierry De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* 5, Photography (summer, 1987), 121.
[453] Ibid., 118.
[454] Ibid., 121.
[455] Ibid. (italics in original, except "act of looking").

In confronting a landscape photograph, thus, one not only registers a visual scene but also experiences a pause or stop in time: a *temporal arrest* that constitutes the now of the landscape, which awaits actualization within the elongated act of looking at the photograph. Nevertheless, as Victor Burgin reminds us, in a long confrontation with a photographic image it "no longer receives *our* look, reassuring us of our founding centrality, it rather, as it were, avoids our gaze."[456] Here Burgin foregrounds two essential elements embedded in prolonged looking at photographs. First, he stresses the fact that by remaining for a long time with photographic images, such as landscape photographs, one does not merely see the image anymore, which implies a passive registration of the scene, but rather look at the photograph, which entails an intentional observation. Second, he suggests that due to the elongated confrontations with photographs, to a certain extent, they seem to elude our gaze; that is, they do not permit our persistent seeing to be non-judgmental about what is looked at, which is implied in the act of gazing, and instead they can invite us to stare at them, which implies a seeing that entails a sense of judgment. As geographer Denis Cosgrove explicates, most European languages differentiate between the passive and active usage of the sense of sight in relation to "seeing" and "looking". As he elucidates:

> The former suggests the passive and physical act of registering the external world by eye; the latter implies an intentional directing of the eyes towards an object of interest. In English, *viewing* implies a more sustained and disinterested use of the sense of sight; while *witnessing* suggests that the experience of seeing is being recorded with the intention of its verification or subsequent communication. *Gazing* entails a sustained act of seeing in which emotions is stirred in some way, while *staring* holds a similar meaning but conveys a sense of query or judgment on the part of the starer.[457]

On the one hand, looking at landscape photographs encourages the viewer to sustain his or her look at the landscape, bringing the now of the photograph to a standstill and causing the

[456] Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," in *Thinking Photography*, ed. by Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1982), 152.
[457] Denis Cosgrove, "Landscape and the European Sense of Sight—Eyeing Nature," in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. Key Anderson, et al. (London, California and New Delhi, Sage Publication, 2003), 253. (My italics).

experience of a temporal suspension as the direct result of long looking. On the other hand, long looking at photographs impels the viewer to relinquish the viewing position in order to become a witness whose act of looking requires further verifications. In doing so, elongated looking at landscape photographs invites the witness to stop uninvolved gazing and instead to make a judgment about what is looked at, to stare at it. At this point, the close rapport between aftermath photography and the landscape genre becomes more tangible. If photographers like Kocken opt to choose a serene landscape to convey a heart-rending story, it is because looking at landscape photographs can cause an interruption in the incessant flow of instants, providing the possibility of a temporal arrest within which we are invited to witness the remnants of the past in order to make a judgment about them. That is, if Kocken has employed the genre of landscape to convey a tragic story, it is to invite us to *look* intentionally at something long gone, to *witness* the veracity of the past laid bare by photography and finally to *stare* at the photographed place with our judging eyes. By photographing a placid seaside, therefore, Kocken does not intend to convey a scenic conception of landscape that awaits a passive registration, but instead he invites us to look, to witness and to stare at the photograph in order to inquire about the past in the temporal abeyance caused by the sustained act of looking.

Nevertheless, in aftermath photography we are called to tenaciously look at something that inevitably evades the photographic frame, since we are invited to look at that which remains absent within the photographed place. As philosopher Jean Luc Nancy reminds us, there are essentially two types of absence in the history of representation: the first is "the absence of the thing," and the second one is "the *absence within* the thing."[458] It is the latter type of absence that pertains aptly to aftermath photography, a genre that aims to evoke the memory of the past as a dormant absence within the photograph, rendering inefficacious the viewer's attempt to assimilate and locate the absence in the frame. As West Brett notes, aftermath photographs that show a location where traumatic events took place in the past "present a tension between making visible what is absent," yet failing to do so, they situate "the viewer at the edge of an absence."[459] That is, this genre aims to communicate a sense of absence that remains latent within the photograph, where the viewer is encouraged to look indefatigably and yet unavoidably in vain. For, irrespective of our attempt to look, witness and stare at Kocken's photograph in order to understand the event that once occurred in this particular location, we are confronted with the event as an absence within the photographic frame. That

[458] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Forbidden Representation," in *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 37.
[459] West Brett, *Photography & Place*, 51.

is, we are drawn into the tension between seeing and not seeing the event in the photographed place, where our eyes are promised something that they cannot see. According to West Brett, this situation resembles an astigmatic condition: a "defect of the eye or of a lens whereby rays of light from an external point converge unequally in different meridians, thus causing imperfect vision or images."[460]

West Brett deploys an optometric term to indicate that looking at photographed places within the genre of aftermath photography does not necessarily point towards any specific focal point in the photograph, as if the internal absence within the frame could be addressed directly. Instead, as she puts forward, "an astigmatic view allows for multiple view points; the focal point is not fixed and, therefore, enables different ways of seeing places of trauma that account for the viewer being excluded from the image."[461] As in the astigmatic condition when our eyes cannot constitute a lucid vision of what they are looking at due to the unequal point of convergence of light rays, West Brett suggests that traumatic landscapes leave us with manifold of focal points in the photograph, causing the beholder to remain on the periphery of the image and its reception.[462] Due to the failure in delivering the latent absence to the fore, aftermath photography makes the viewer feel excluded from the image, yet at the same time, it persistently demands the viewer to look at that which remains indiscernible within the photograph. Consequently, whereas aftermath photography utilizes the landscape genre to *invite* the viewer for an active engagement in the act of looking, the elusive absence within the photograph combined with the past time of photography *excludes* the viewer from the frame. The result of this situation, as literary theorist Ulrich Baer proposes in his book *Spectral Evidence*, is a feeling of nonbelonging in the viewer.[463]

Commenting on the vacant landscapes of the German photographer Dirk Reinartz, taken in a former concentration camp—photos that also fall under the category of aftermath photography but indeed with an undeniably different degree of tragedy and intensity—Baer suggests that his photographs create a simultaneous sense of exclusion and invitation in the viewer.[464] Our knowledge that these photographs belong to the irretrievable past, he states, "excludes us from the site as powerfully as the conventions of landscape art pull us in," leading to a "sense of nonbelonging" in the viewer.[465] According to Baer, while the classic

[460] West Brett, *Photography & Place*, 3.
[461] Ibid., 50.
[462] Ibid., 3.
[463] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005): 76.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid., 76.

compositions of landscape painting inherited by photography create a sense of fondness for Reinartz's photographs, his landscapes also remind us "that we are excluded, that we have arrived *après coup*, too late and perhaps in vain."[466] For, looking at landscape photos marked by the inherent pastness of photography, the viewer knows that the photographed place and its accompanying context belong to the irrevocable past, a time to which we are always too late to respond. It is precisely the same concurrent sense of exclusion and invitation that permeates through Kocken's photographs as well. Whilst the familiar composition of the landscape genre invites us to pleasingly traverse the photograph in the act of looking, the historical context of this specific location unsettles our viewing position by reminding us that we have arrived too late to avoid to the disaster. The result of this disquieting situation, Baer notes, is that "these images create in us the feeling of being addressed and responsive to the depicted site and, crucially, of seeing the site not for its own sake but as *a pointer back to our own positon*."[467] In other words, he proposes that the vacant landscapes that bear the traces of traumatic events in the past, *reverse* the act of looking at the photograph and create a sense of being addressed by the absence within the landscape. In this situation, therefore, it is not only the viewer who unilaterally stares at the landscape, but it is as though the landscape can point back and address the viewing position whence it is looked at.

To recall, West Brett proposes that in looking at traumatic landscapes one has to adopt an astigmatic lens, a method that suggests there is no single focal point in the landscape with which the internal absence can be addressed, but multiple focal points that enable a blurred and opaque kind of vision. Baer, however, furthers this point by proposing that not only is there not a single focal point that can be addressed by the viewer, but also "the picture points back to one viewing position," as if the landscape can observe and address the viewer.[468] To be precise, Baer points out that the internal absence in traumatic landscapes essentially occludes our vision, and in so doing, it enables the absence within the photograph to point back to us while we cannot point at it, evoking a feeling of being observed by a ghostly presence in the landscape. In other words, it is a situation that one feels being addressed by that which comes from the photograph without being able to identify the source of sight in the photograph. Derrida has called this one-sided source of sight that comes from the photograph towards the viewer as the "visor effect" of the medium of photography. According to Derrida, the visor effect refers to a situation when a spectral presence in the photograph, "the invisible visible"

[466] Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 63.
[467] Ibid., 68. (My italics).
[468] Ibid., 73.

within it, addresses the viewer without any possibility of exchange.[469] As he explains, "a visor symbolizes the situation in which I can't see who is looking at me, I can't meet the gaze of the other, whereas I am in his sight."[470] Similar to when the internal absence in traumatic landscapes points back to us without us being able to point at it, Derrida's understanding of the visor effect manifests a pure unilateral gaze that comes from the photograph towards the viewer.

As Derrida puts forward, the visor effect makes it possible to consider "the spectre" in photographs as "someone who watches or concerns me without any possible reciprocity."[471] By the spectral presence of photography, Derrida refers to the irreversible temporal aspect that is embedded in each photograph. The fact that the photographed subject can address us, as in the absence within traumatic landscapes that points back to one viewing position, but we cannot reverse time and address the photographed subject, or in the case of Kocken's photograph to avoid the disaster. In photographs, Derrida puts it:

> The specter is not simply someone we see coming back, it is someone by whom we feel ourselves watched, observed, surveyed … it concerns me, it regards me, it addresses itself only to me at the same time that it exceeds me infinitely and universally, without me being able to exchange a glance.[472]

That is to say, although the viewer of photographs can feel a spectral presence emanating from the photo, as if it stealthily observes and watches the viewer, this ghostly existence remains infinitely out of reach as it belongs to the irreversible past time of the photograph. Derrida's notion of the specter in relation to photographs, therefore, refers to the temporal irreversibly caused by the pastness of photography, which constitutes a non-reciprocal gaze to which we cannot respond but, nonetheless, feel necessitated to do so. In accord with Derrida, Stiegler emphasizes this point by suggesting that the "ghostly effect" of photography is essentially "the sentiment of an absolute irreversibility," it is a situation in which the photograph "touches me, I'm touched, but I'm not able to touch." [473] For Stiegler, too, when the past time affixed in each photograph collides with the present time of its observation, it

[469] Jacques Derrida, "Spectrographies," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory,* ed. Esther Peern et al. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 40-41.
[470] Ibid., 41.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid. 40.
[473] Bernard Stiegler, "The Discrete Image," in *Echographies of Television: Film Interviews,* trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Malden: Blackwell Publishers in association with Polity Press, 2002), 152.

results in a feeling as if the viewer is touched by the photographed subject without being able to touch back. As Derrida and Stiegler have pointed out, the spectral presence in photographs is caused by the moment when irreconcilable temporalities clash with each other, one that refers to the present time when a photograph is looked at and the other to the absolute irreversible past lodged in the photograph. The result of this situation is a ghostly effect that seems to address itself to the viewer of the photograph, yet at the same time infinitely exceeds the viewer, as each photograph is inevitably marked by the irrevocable pastness of its subject.

Pertaining to Kocken's photograph, the ghostly effect refers to the temporal incongruity between being addressed by the absence within the landscape, a sense that is reinforced by the genre that invites our elongated act of looking, *and* the past time of photography that declares we have arrived *après* c*oup* and too late to avoid the unfolding of the disastrous event. Through simultaneously referring the viewer to the internal absence buried in the photograph *and* yet assuring the viewer that there cannot be any response to the call of this absence, hence, Kocken's photograph can constitute a non-reciprocal call that comes from the photograph towards the viewer. In other words, the spectral presence of Kocken's photograph comes into being precisely when the viewer is simultaneously pulled in by the now of the landscape and excluded from it by the temporal irreversibility of photography. As such, even though our attempt to look, to witness and to stare at the absence within Kocken's photograph may leave us in vain, they make possible and reinforce the spectral presence that lies on the edge of different temporalities, pointing to our viewing position "without any possible reciprocity." It is, in Nancy's words, when the landscape becomes "a perspective that comes to us" and not a perspective that we project onto it, manifesting the unilaterality of the visor effect of photography.[474]

At this point, having discussed the possibility of aftermath photography to constitute a temporal arrest in which the spectral presence of the photograph resides, I will look further at the *direction* from which this ghostly effect originates. Although it seems that the ghostly effect of photography—as the incongruity of different temporalities—originates directly from the photograph itself, as I will further show in the case of aftermath photography, this temporal clash does not simply take place in the photograph. It is not to say that the ghostly presence does not reside in the photograph, as it is the photograph that attests to the absolute irreversibility of the past, but in this specific genre the historical context of the photographed

[474] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Uncanny Landscape," in *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 59.

place only *in part* originates from the photograph. While in aftermath photography the temporal discordance that creates the spectral presence is only partially in the photograph, for instance, in the case of "spirit photography" it utterly resides in the photograph. [475] As Gunning reports, by "super-imposing two or more images photographed at separated times," the spirit photographers of the nineteenth-century could create eerie portraits resulted from the "encounter of two ontologically separate worlds."[476] By "ontologically separate worlds," Gunning refers to the unique time of each portrait that was combined with another photograph's temporality to yield an "incongruous juxtaposition" that evoked their ghostly effect. In this case, hence, the ghostly effect as the incompatible clash of different temporalities took place only in the photograph, since the collision of the disparate times of each portrait would be visible in the image. In the case of aftermath photography, however, the viewer only becomes aware of different temporalities when the knowledge of the irreversible past, i.e. the historical context of the photographed place, is communicated by the photograph's caption. To be precise, when Kocken's caption informs the viewer that 192 people were drowned in this particular location and cannot be saved anymore. As Baer notes, without an accompanying text, a traumatic landscape is only "a view without context."[477]

Thus, by retaining my focus on the genre of aftermath photography and Kocken's photograph, in the following section I will further investigate the origin of the photograph's spectral presence in relation to its caption, aiming to indicate that in this particular genre the incongruous juxtaposition of different temporalities occurs not *in* but *with* the photograph.

6. 3 The Photographed Place (The Text)

> In Rome, people with fine sympathetic natures stand up and weep in front of the celebrated 'Beatrice Cenci the Day Before Her Execution.' It shows what a label can do. If they did not know the picture, they would

[475] Spirit photography was an approach to photography that aimed to capture ghosts or other spiritual entities, especially common in the late 19th century. The spirit photographers by juxtaposing two or more photographs on each other attempted to make spooky feelings in the viewer, aiming to convey the existence of ghosts and specters in real life. In September 2005, after many years the Spirit Photography exhibition was brought to public in the Museum of Art in New Your City. According to Gunning, while many people treated the exhibition as a joke, the unprecedented attention to this outdated approach can indicate more about "our beliefs about photographs" than our "beliefs in ghosts". Tom Gunning, "To Scan a Ghost : The Ontology of Mediated Vision", in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory,* ed. Esther Peern et al. (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 212.
[476] Ibid., 213.
[477] Baer, *Spectral Evidence,* 71.

> inspect it unmoved, and say, 'Young Girl with Hay Fever; Young Girl with her Head in a Bag.[478]
> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*
>
> The image is mute, and the text crackles with white noise.[479]
> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Distinct Oscillation*

Aiming to delineate some of the inherent characteristics of photography in the 1950s, Siegfried Kracauer pointed out that photographs aid perception by "isolating what they present" from the rest of the world, calling this trait the "selectivity" of photographs.[480] Then he argued the "selectivity" of photographs create an emphatic but alienated state in the spectator, because by isolating a part of the world, photographs at the same time draw attention to that which is represented in the frame and refer to what has been excluded from it. For this reason, Kracauer argued that photographs always suggest a sense of infinity, since they always embody the fragments of the world from which they were selected, isolated and cut out, signifying that the photograph necessarily "precludes the notion of completeness."[481] That is to say, Kracauer suggested that precisely due to the selectivity of photographs, they can invite the viewer to imagine infinite possible relationships between the outside and what it captured in the frame, and in so doing, they encourage the spectator to perform unrestricted interpretation of their content. In short, Kracauer proposed that the photograph is an incomplete representation of the world that stimulates unbounded interpretation. For instance, while one can construe a photographed place as a geological examination of the recorded location, another can interpret it as means of estimating the real state value of the represented property. One of the ubiquitous ways to avoid the unlimited ways of reading photographs is to label them with a caption, in order to orient the spectator's attention towards a narrower way of looking and interpreting the photograph's content.

Remarking on Atget's photographs of vacant places in Paris taken around 1900, Benjamin said that "free-floating contemplation" was not an apt way of describing the content

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[478] Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, chapter 44 (Boston: University Press, 1883), 448. https://archive.org/stream/lifeonmississipptwai#page/n7/mode/2up. (Accessed the digitized version on 21st November, 2016).
[479] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Distinct Oscillation," in *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 75.
[480] Siegfried Kracauer, "The Photographic Approach," in *The Past's Threshold: Essays on Photography,* ed. Despox, P.& Zinfert, M. trans. Joyce, C. (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2014), 64. (Originally published in *Magazine of Art* in 1951).
[481] Ibid., 72.

of these photographs, since having no caption they would refer the viewer to an infinite number of possible interpretations. According to him, Atget's photographs of deserted places in Paris indicated that "for the first time, captions have become obligatory" in the history of photography.[482] However, it is not only that the lack of caption in Atget's photographs could promote unobstructed reflection, which may or may not have corresponded to the content of the image, but as art theorist Rosalind Krauss has pointed out, the absence of caption in his work puts the "artistic intention" at stake, leaving it "as mute and mysterious as ever."[483] Atget's caption-less photographs, therefore, could foreground two essential features of titles in relation to photographs: first, a photograph's caption can orient the viewer's attention towards a specific channel of interpretation, inhibiting the act of looking to be a mere "free-floating contemplation"; second, a photo's caption can help the viewer to comprehend the photographers' intention for taking the photos. In other words, Atget's instance indicated the dependence of photographs on captions and hence language for communicating the historical context they wanted to deliver to the viewer. Accordingly, in the history of photography Atget's case stands as an early example of how language could have aided the interpretation of photographs by narrowing reflection, and how it could have lead the viewer's perception towards a more accurate understanding of the artistic intention.

Nevertheless, as Burgin contends, not necessarily every photograph must have a caption to indicate a bound with language or to carry a linguistic component; "even a photograph which has no actual writing on or around it is traversed by language when it is 'read' by a viewer."[484] For Burgin, there is no photograph that can be purely visual as in our act of looking at photographs, he suggests, we utilize our previously taken for granted ideas of how to read the photograph as a text, so the photograph becomes "the site of a complex intertextuality." As he exemplifies this point, "an image which is predominantly dark in tones carries all the weight of signification that darkness has been given in social use; many of its interpretants will therefore be linguistic."[485] For instance, by simply looking at Kocken's photograph, we are not only utilizing our visual sensory system to understand the photo, but in Burgin's terms, we are

[482] Benjamin, Walter, "Work of Art," 226.
[483] As Krauss contends, by coding and numbering his photographs rather than naming them, Atget's work attains the "function of a catalogue" in archiving images, and therefore the authorship becomes an irrelevant term in relation to Atget's photographs. It is because, "the coding system Atget applied to his images derives from the card files of the libraries and topographic collections for which Atget worked," and so his photographs of deserted places in Paris, above all, question the issue of authorship, artistic intention and subjectivity. Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," *Art journal 42*, no. 4, The Crisis of the Discipline (winter, 1982): 316-317.
[484] Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," 144.
[485] Ibid.

also "invaded by language."[486] In that, by employing our previously acquired knowledge that a translucent sky and a calm sea conjure up adjectives such as serene, placid, and tranquil, the viewer is already immersed in the realm of language through the photograph. That is why Burgin argues that even an uncaptioned photograph carries linguistic component within it, because "in the moment it is looked at: in memory, in association, snatches of words and images continually intermingle and exchange one for the other."[487]

Although Burgin is right in proposing that each photograph is traversed by language immediately after it is looked at, in the case of aftermath photography the underlying linguistic codes in the photograph lead the viewer astray, instead of aiding the viewer to elicit the content of the image. For instance, by merely looking at Kocken's photograph without a caption, we are embroiled in what Barthes called the "polysemy" of images, the fact that in each photograph coexist infinite possible meanings and signs depending on the viewer's reading of the photo.[488] Therefore, instead of understanding the tragic story that impelled Kocken to this particular location, the viewer who is unaware of the photograph's historical context is inclined to read the visual quietude and aesthetic beauty of the image, thus imputing tranquillity and serenity to a woeful seascape. To be clear, without a caption, in the genre of aftermath photography the viewer is misled rather than guided by the act of looking, and in turn, ensnared in the polysemy of images.

According to Barthes, "all images are polysemeous," implying a "floating chain" of possible meanings and messages from which "the reader is able to choose some and ignore others."[489] Each society, he notes, has developed numerous techniques "to counter the terror of uncertain signs" and the "floating chain" of meanings that each image can evoke: "the linguistic message is one of these techniques."[490] As he explains, in our modern society that functions through mass communication the "linguistic message" can appear "as title, caption, accompanying press title, film dialogue, comic strip balloon" and other supplemented texts.[491] Exemplifying the way in which a linguistic message can narrow the overwhelming possibility of meanings a photograph can evoke, Barthes further states that a photograph's caption "helps me to choose *the correct level of perception*, permits me to focus not simply my gaze but also

[486] Victor Burgin, "Seeing Sense," in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Post-Modernity* (Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1986), 51.
[487] Ibid.,
[488] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image Music Text,* ed. Stephan Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 39.

[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid., 38.

my understanding."[492] For Barthes, the linguistic message is essentially a way of channelling our understanding towards what an image is meant to communicate according to its maker; that is, it is a tool the viewer uses to eschew from solely gazing at the image, thus allowing the image to entrap the act of looking in a polysemeous state. In other words, a photograph's caption prevents the viewer from being traversed and invaded by the latent linguistic codes that reside *in* the photograph, and instead it gives direction and a correct level of perception to the act of looking through the linguistic messages that are supplemented *with* the image.

Discussing the role of caption in photographs, Clive Scott states, "photography tends to strengthen our assumption that something is worth looking at only if we already know what it is."[493] That is, only when we have a contextual knowledge of what we are looking at given by an accompanying linguistic message. It is because, he writes, photographs "refer too pointedly and yet do not know how to name what they refer to."[494] By acknowledging the infinity of meanings an uncaptioned photograph can suggest—or what Barthes refers to as the polysemy of photographic images—Scott further asserts that photographs are not "self-sufficient" as "without a title, they are incoherent."[495] According to Scott, a photograph's caption is essentially to be understood as "an intervention, a response [of the producer] forestalling the response of the viewer."[496] That is to say, he suggests that a photographer captions the photograph in order to take an advance action to curtail impertinent interpretations on the side of the viewer, inhibiting the polysemy of the image to govern the act of looking, thus giving coherence to the photograph. To illustrate his point, Scott distinguishes between two types of caption in relation to photographs: first, "the rebus" caption that always predetermines and affixes the meaning of the photograph according to the photographer or the person who exhibits it; second, "the quotational" caption that allows the viewer to interfere in the meaning of the photograph, or to react to it, leaving space for participation and interpretation in the act of looking.[497]

With regard to aftermath photography, the caption seems to fall under the category of the rebus, because it is the photographer that firmly predetermines the significance of the represented locality, making the meaning of the photographed place impervious to any alternative interpretation. As Scott notes, a rebus caption always precedes the photograph

[492] Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 38. (italics in original).
[493] Clive Scott, "Title and Caption," 60.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Ibid.,
[496] Ibid., 48.
[497] Ibid.,52.

making it "dependent on its purveyor" and consequently leaves no room for the viewer's interference in the meaning of the image.[498] This appears to be the case with Kocken's caption, in that, his caption inflexibly asserts that the embodied seascape merely shows a particular place or locality wherein a disastrous event befell 193 people, precluding the viewer to read the vista differently than the photographer demands. In contrast, for example, the seascapes of the Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto (fig. 9), which bear a striking resemble to Kocken's photograph in terms of composition and angle, can foreground the usage of the quotational caption. It is because, by only captioning his photographs with the year and the name of the displayed location—e.g. *Caribbean Sea, Jamaica, 1980*—Sugimoto permits the viewers to interfere in the meaning of the photographed place, allowing them to construe the seascape according to what they ascribe to and elicit from the embodied location. In Sugimoto's case, therefore, the topographical caption simply functions as a description that invites the viewer for the further examination of the photographed place, leaving open the question why this specific location has been photographed and not any others. In other words, while Kocken's caption precedes the photograph in order to restrict the range of possible interpretations that may transpire in the act of looking, Sugimoto's topographical caption succeeds the photograph, inviting the viewer to partake in and react to the photographed place through further elucidations. Therefore, the difference between the quotational and the rebus caption is not only about how they deliver the image's content but also *when* they instigate their work; that is, the time in which these different types of caption trigger the process of meaning making.

As Scott suggests, a caption never refers to the time of the photograph, since it is either predetermined by the photographer, which implies that it initiates its work before the viewer looks at the photograph, or it functions as "a reaction to" the photograph, which suggests that a caption activates after the photograph is looked at.[499] As he puts it:

> The caption never coincides with the image, never exists in the same time: it either *precedes* the image, as it may do in a rebus—the image is called upon to encode or enigmatize the caption—or *succeeds* it, acts as a reaction [a quotational]. Consequently, meaning is itself displaced, removed from the image.[500]

[498] Scott, "Title and Caption," 51&53.
[499] Ibid., 51.
[500] Ibid. (my italics).

Apart from their different methods of delivering the content of the photo, Scott proposes, these two types of caption make evident that the caption is never synchronized with the photograph. That is, the caption is either anterior as in the rebus or posterior as in the quotational vis-à-vis the temporality of the photograph. At this point, given the different temporal functions each of the aforementioned captions can play, a closer look at Kocken's caption can be instructive. Even though Kocken's caption abides by the category of the rebus, thereby preceding the photograph and making it dependent on its purveyor, the way the caption utilizes language making it succeed the photograph and comes after it. To be exact, whereas Kocken's caption delivers the meanings that are formerly cleaved to the image by the photographer, occluding further interpretations of the image, it deploys the language of news photography and thus asks for the viewer's further response to the image. As film theorist Peter Wollen suggests, looking at the verb-forms used in photo captions can shed light on how they supply their contents. According to him, "art photographs" are usually captioned with noun-phrases that lack all verb-forms to stress a state, "documentary photographs" use the progressive present to highlight actions, and "news photographs" tend to use the narrative present to highlight events.[501] Common in news titles and headlines, "the narrative present" is the employment of the simple present tense when narrating recent past events, "especially with an effect of vividness or immediacy."[502] By foregrounding the role of verb-forms in photograph captions, consequently Wollen proposes while art and documentary captions signify states and processes respectively, the caption in news photography signifies events that are allegedly contemporary with the photograph's time.[503]

Returning to Kocken's caption, by using the narrative present in the caption that resembles that of news photography—i.e. *The Herald of Free Enterprise* Capsizes *Just...*—the photographer invites the viewer to look back at the sapphire seascape as if looking at a news photograph, thus making the caption come after the image in order to solicit the viewer's reaction to the photo. That is, having read the photograph's caption reminiscent of news photography, the viewer is inclined to look at the seascape as if it displays the event that has just happened in the recent past, which hence requires immediate attention and reaction. Therefore, on the one hand, by imputing a predetermined and seemingly rebus caption to the

[501] Peter Wollen, "Fire and Ice," in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), 77.
[502] The narrative present, also known as "the historic present," is used in order to add dramatic emphasis to the recent past events by usually using the simple present tense in news titles. P.H, Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*, 3d edition (Oxford online database: Oxford University Press, 2014) (Accessed on Oxford Reference online database on 9th of December, 2016).
[503] Wollen, "Fire and Ice," 77.

seascape, Kocken curtails other possible interpretations and dissuades the viewer from looking further into the vista, thereby making the caption *anterior* to the image. Yet, on the other hand, by deploying the language of news photography, he persuades the viewer to make further inspections of the seascape as if they can observe the event of capsizing, thereby making the caption *posterior* to the image. This temporal tension presented by the bilateral function of the caption—i.e. being both a rebus that is predetermined and anterior to the content of the photograph *and* a quotational that is posterior and activated in the act of looking—therefore, reinforces the simultaneous invitation to and exclusion from the photograph. A contradictory sense that, as I have discussed before, already reigns in the realm of the image, reflecting how aftermath photography combines the temporal suspension of the landscape genre with the pastness of photography to concurrently pull in and draw out the viewer from the photographed place. As such, owing to the temporal tension caused by the bilateral function of the caption, Kocken's photograph yields to an uncanny sense of nonbelonging in the viewer, a sense to which not only the image but the text is held accomplice as well. In this situation, it becomes perceptible that in aftermath photography the incongruous juxtaposition of different temporalities, or the originary source of the photograph's spectral presence, does not necessarily occur *in* but *with* the photograph.

Accordingly, not only Kocken's photograph can indicate how the landscape and news photography border with each other through the aftermath genre, aiming to put the viewer in relation to the internal absence of the photograph; but also, it can manifest that in this situation the meaning is itself displaced and removed from the image. In other words, in the case of Kocken's photograph, the meaning resides neither inside the image nor in the text, but as Scott notes, "in their point of convergence."[504] As he proposes, captions generally usher in the act of looking through three ways: first, "*as a destination*," as a description of what is represented in the picture; second, "*as point of departure"*, as something non-interfering that directs the viewer "and then leaves the image to do its work"; and lastly "*as a parallel but displaced commentary*, set at a distance from the picture, so that the meaning is neither in the picture nor in the title, but in their point of convergence."[505] In the case of Kocken's seascape, evidently, the caption does not explain what is in the picture nor does it function as a non-interfering element that allows the image to continue its work; for, whereupon the caption is read and the context of the image is revealed the text and the image split from each other, voicing different

[504] Clive Scott, 'Title and Caption," 47.
[505] Ibid., 47.

narratives. To be clear, if the image articulates a state of ataraxy conveyed by the stilly seaside, calling the viewer to gaze gratifyingly across the picture surface, the text projects a despondent and sombre ambiance onto the photograph, precluding the act of looking to induce any pleasure in the viewer. In doing so, the text and the image countervail each other leaving the meaning of the photographed place to be displaced and removed, wavering in-between them without being located in neither of them. As a result, the caption merely functions as a parallel but displaced commentary about the photograph, which by distancing itself from the image and unsettling the photograph, signifies that the meaning is neither in the image nor in the text but in their very spatial conjuncture. In this situation, the text and the image gain sheer equality in their collaboration, pointing to their point of convergence or, as theorist of visual culture W.J.T. Mitchell notes, to their "site of struggle" where the meaning of the photograph resides.[506]

Observing the relationship between the text and the image in photography, Mitchell argues that the "overlapping between photography and language is best understood, not as a structural matter" but as a mode of "resistance."[507] To gain a better understanding of the nature of this resistance, he suggests, that we need to know what values have motivated it.[508] That is to say, for Mitchell in photography the relationship between the text—i.e. the Barthesian linguistic message that supplements the photograph and not the linguistic codes that reside in it—and the photograph is to be essentially understood as a kind of resistance and struggle. In order to realize the essence of this resistance, he suggests that we need to search for the underlying intentions that create the tension between the photograph and its accompanying text; or in the case of Kocken's photograph, we need to know *why* the photographer has decided to juxtapose the caption and the photograph in this particular way. To instantiate a case in photography, Mitchell discusses James Agee's and Walker Evans' photo essay called *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, aiming to unearth the underlying motivations and intentions that make the text and the image to become a "site of struggle."[509]

In their collaborative photo-essay, which was published in 1941 in the US, the American writer Agee and photographer Evans documented the lives of impoverished sharecroppers during the Great Depression.[510] This photo-essay is separated in two sections, one of which

[506] W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Photographic Essays: Four Case Studies," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 281.
[507] Ibid., 285.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Ibid., 290.
[510] This book was the culmination of Evans' collaboration with Farm Security Administration, known as FSA. In it, Evans documented a number of photographs showing the ordinary life of people after the Great Depression that took place during 1930. None of the photographs in this photo-essay was titled; instead, the entire

includes the uncaptioned photographs taken by Evans and the other half includes Agee's text, which gives generic descriptions about the photographs to foreground the devastating context in which they were taken. In the words of Agee who wrote the descriptive text: "The photographs are not illustrative. They and the text, are *coequal*, mutually independent, and fully collaborative."[511] As Mitchell argues, the main reason for the separation of the image and the text is that the authors intended that as beholders "we find ourselves drawn, as it were, into a vortex of *collaboration* and *resistance*" with the photographs.[512] That is, the authors have separated the text and the photographs to ask the viewer to collaborate in the image through the act of looking, and at the same time, given the disconcerting contextual background offered by the text, to remain distant and foreign from the images. Reminiscent of aftermath photography that deploys the image and the text as coequal to simultaneously invite and exclude the viewer from the photograph, Agee and Evans utilized the text and the image as mutually dependent in order to create a vortex of collaboration and resistance. In both cases, while the beholder is invited to participate and engage in the image through the act of looking, the disturbing contextual knowledge given by the text resists and nullifies the possibility of any collaboration, leaving the beholder in an ethical deadlock that hinders effortless access to the photograph. As Mitchell notes, for Evans and Agee the separation of the text and the image in communicating the devastating content of the photographs "is not, then, simply a formal characteristic but an *ethical strategy*, a way of preventing easy access to the world they represent."[513]

Even though Kocken's photograph and Evans' photographs have different subject matters and narratives behind them, the way they utilize the text and the image to convey the photograph's content bear a resemblance to one another. That is, they both use the image as a means of invitation, collaboration and participation and the text as a means of resistance, exclusion and nullification, constituting a vortex within which the viewer is caught in between the coequal puissance of the text and the image. With reference to Kocken's photograph, while the image encourages the viewer to look, to react and to respond to it, the text discourages the act of looking by foregrounding the poignant narrative that lingers behind the picture surface, thereby nullifying the invitation of the seascape and excluding the viewer from the image. In doing so, the coequal but counteracting forces of the image and the text impedes easy access

contextual background of the images was communicated through the accompanying text written by Agee, to explain the devastating state of life the photographed subjects had gone through.

[511] Quoted in W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Photographic Essay," 290.

[512] Ibid., 300. (My italics).

[513] Ibid., 295.

to the unsettling content of the photograph, confronting the beholder with an ethical predicament in which the meaning ceases to be neither in the image nor in the text. Instead, in Nancy's words: it "oscillates distinctly between the two in a *paper-thin space*: recto the text, verso the image."[514]

Hereupon, it can be said that Kocken's photograph conflates the temporal arrest of the landscape genre with the rhetoric of news photography as an ethical strategy, in order to thwart easy admission to the content of the photograph, thus safeguarding the internal absence within the photographed place. What is to be conveyed in this condition, therefore, resides precisely in the cadaverous space between the photograph and its caption, which can only be activated through the elongated act of looking at the image *and* reading the text, manifesting that the ghostly effect of aftermath photography takes place not in but in-between the text and the image. In other words, the content of Kocken's photograph is not in the image but *with* it, wavering in a "paper-thin space" in which "what Text exposes, Image posits and deposits. What Image configures, Text disfigures. What the latter envisages, the former faces down."[515] In this situation, as such, the content of the photographed place is not simply located in the image or in the text, but exists in their site of struggle or point of convergence, oscillating unremittingly between the two in a *lacuanry space* in which the beholder is held at an ethical impasse between resistance and collaboration, invitation and exclusion.

At this point, having discussed how in aftermath photography the incongruous juxtaposition of different temporalities takes place at the spatial convergence of the text and the image, I will further discuss what the implications of this spatial juncture are for the viewer and how it can convey the content of the photograph. To recall, the content of Kocken's photograph refers not only to the particular locality that is visible in the image, but also to the event that had taken place in that location, which being projected by the caption onto the frame remains as the internal absence within the photograph. In the following section, I will indicate how the spatial vortex generated by the temporal suspension of the landscape genre with the rhetoric of news photography can communicate the content of the photographed place. To this end, by retaining my focus on the aftermath genre, I will deploy several Agambenian concepts to foreground how the internal absence within the photographed place can be communicated, and what this communication, in turn, demands from the viewer. However, communication not as something that can necessarily make visible the photograph's content through the lacunary

[514] Nancy, "Distinct Oscillation," 78. (My italics)
[515] Ibid.

space where the viewer faces the ethical dilemma of collaboration and resistance, but in Agamben's words, communication as a way of making a "gesture."

6.4 The Exigency of the Photographed Place

> A good photographer knows how to grasp
> the eschatological nature of the gesture.
> Giorgio Giorgio Agamben, *Judgment Day*
>
> Spectrality is a form of life.
> Giorgio Agamben, *Uses & Disadvantages*
>
> Exigency … does not precede reality; rather,
> it follows it.
> Giorgio Agamben, *The Second Day*

In Agambenian philosophy, the term "gesture" refers to how a communicative act can convey something without articulating it, that is, without making the content of the communication visible. Instead of making evident the content of an expressive act, Agamben writes, a gesture "makes expression possible precisely by establishing a central emptiness within" the communication.[516] For Agamben, in every expressive act—e.g. presenting a photograph that aims to convey a specific content to the viewer—there is a part that is communicated as "the central emptiness within" it, which essentially remains unarticulated and impalpable in the communication. As he puts it, the term gesture refers to "what remains *unexpressed* in each expressive act."[517] That is to say, although the gesture resides in an expressive act that aims to convey something, it remains as the unexpressed part of the expression, and therefore it does not aim to produce nor make visible the content of the communication. Instead, "what characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being *endured* and *supported*," states Agamben.[518] That which can be endured and supported in a communication refers to the unexpressed aspect that can only exist as the central emptiness within it, as something that intrinsically resists enunciation in the expression. To be precise, Agamben proposes that although the gesture can become the vehicle of transmission for the

[516] Giorgio Agamben, "The Author as Gesture," in *Profanations,* Trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 66.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," in *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 56. (My italics).

unexpressed within an expression, it cannot produce nor make visible the content of this transmission; instead, it merely functions as the carrier of the unexpressed part of the communication. That is why he argues that the term gesture in relation to a communicative act essentially differs from production and praxis, because,

> if producing is a means in view of an end and praxis is an end without means, the gesture then breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, *as such*, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends.[519]

In other words, the gesture does not approach an end in order to produce something, as then it could manifest and make visible the content of the communication, nor does it refer to an end that does not ensue any methods; instead, it becomes a means, or a way of reaching something, that never approaches an end. For Agamben, hence, the term gesture refers to pure means whereby the unexpressed aspect of a communication can be conveyed, albeit nothing can be produced or acted out. That is, the gesture is the possibility of presenting a means, a method, with which the unarticulated part of an expression is endured and supported but not expressed. As Agamben succinctly puts it, the gesture is the "communication of a communicability."[520] That is, the gesture is the very possibility of a communication in which the content can be transferred without being produced or acted out. The gesture, in short, is "*the process of making a means visible as such*," states Agamben.[521]

Returning to Kocken's photograph, if the artist situates the viewer in an ethical impasse between the image and the text, it is not to embody or to produce the content of the photograph, but it is to draw the viewer's attention to what remains unexpressed in this communication—i.e. the very internal absence within the photographic frame. In other words, by entangling the viewer in between the act of looking at the image and reading the caption, Kocken constitutes a spatial vortex within which the central emptiness of this communication becomes palpable but not necessarily visible to the viewer. Having entrapped the viewer in between the caption and the photo, therefore, the artist "makes a means visible as such," a method through which the content of the photograph is communicated precisely as the unexpressed within this communication. It is when the photograph's gesture makes its first debut to the viewer, as *a*

[519] Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," 56. (Italics in original).
[520] Ibid., 58.
[521] Ibid., 57. (Italics in original).

means of remembering the internal absence within the photograph, as a method of conveying the unexpressed part of the communication. In this situation, the viewer is not only compelled to remember the absent event through the caption—the fact that 193 were drowned in the represented location—but, through the act of looking at the photograph, the viewer also remembers that there is no way to reverse time and to save the deceased.

As Christian Metz reminds us, photography has the capacity of creating "a remembering of the dead, but a remembering as well *that they are dead*, and that life goes on for others."[522] While Kocken's caption asks the viewer to remember the people who were drowned in this particular location due to the staff's negligence, the photograph announces that they are dead long gone and there cannot be any access to their world; except this very act of remembrance that implies the redemption of the dead. As art critic John Berger has pointed out, "memory implies a certain act of redemption. What is remembered has been saved from nothingness. What is forgotten has been abandoned."[523] As he further explains:

> Photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has happened. If the living take the past upon themselves, if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history, then all photographs would acquire a *living context*, they would continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments.[524]

As Berger suggests, photographs are capable of obtaining a "living context" only if the living do not discard the past as forgotten in their memory, and instead take responsibility for past events by remembering them through photographs. In other words, he proposes that if the living consider the past not as irrevocable but as retrievable, animated by the act of remembrance, all photographs can carry on their existence in time, signifying how photography can constitute a certain act of redemption. If Kocken decides to embroil the viewer in between the counteracting forces of the image and the text, it is not only an ethical approach that thwarts easy admission to the photograph, but also it is to preclude the past events to be easily forgotten: it is to make them indelible in the viewer's memory. That means, if Kocken's caption alone written on a newspaper would be easily forgotten and ergo abounded into nothingness—as usually happens to the content of newspapers—the juxtaposition of the caption with the

[522] Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," 141. (italics in original)
[523] John Berger, "Uses of Photography," in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 54.
[524] Ibid., 57. (My italics).

seascape generates a living context for the photograph in which the viewer is impelled to remember and not to easily forget the past events. To use Berger's phrase, it is this unusual juxtaposition—of the caption borrowed from news photography with landscape genre that invites a sustained act of looking—that causes photographs to "continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments."[525] Within this situation, what Derrida and Stiegler refer to as the spectral presence or the ghostly effect of the photograph, evoked by the absolute irreversibility of time that addresses the viewer without any possible reciprocity, too, gains a living context.

As Agamben puts forward, "spectrality is a form of life," although not a life that can be lived in flesh, but "a posthumous or complementary life that begins only when everything is finished."[526]As he proposes, there can be two types of spectre, one of which is always completed in time and finished per se, and the second type that does not admit that it has reached an end, and accordingly refuses to accept its condition and completion in time. Agamben refers to the latter type as the "larval spectres."[527] As he puts it:

> There is also another type of spectrality that we may call larval, which is born from not accepting its own condition, [but] from forgetting it so as to pretend at all costs that it still has bodily weight and flesh … While the first type of spectrality is perfect, since it no longer has anything to add to what is has said or done, the *larval specters* must pretend to have a future in order to clear a space for some torment from their own past, for their own incapacity to comprehend that they have, indeed, reached completion.[528]

If aftermath photography can generate a spectral presence through the incongruous juxtaposition of different times, a temporal clash that takes place at the spatial convergence of the text and the image, it falls under the category of larval spectres as this ghostly effect can be endlessly reanimated when the photograph's content is remembered. In that, being caught in the spatial juncture between the text and the image compels the viewer to remember the unexpressed part of the photograph; in doing so, it imparts a living context to what has not been articulated and made visible in this communication. This means, the photograph's content can continue to exist in time without reaching any completion, when the text is read and the image

[525] Berger, "Uses of Photography," 57.
[526] Giorgio Agamben, "Uses and Disadvantages of Living Among Specters," in *The Spectrality Reader,* ed. Edited by María del Pilar Blanco & Esther Peeren (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 475.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid., 475. (My italics).

is seen and thus the poignant content is remembered, when the living remember the past and redeem what has been forgotten and abandoned. Consequently, in this situation the spectral presence of the photograph is never perfect, as if it has nothing "to add to what it has said or done," instead, it can manifest a larval spectrality that is "born from not accepting its own condition."[529] It is as though the absentees of the photograph, all the people who have been drowned in the represented locality due to the staff's delinquency, demand to be urgently remembered and refuse to be easily forgotten. In other words, Kocken's photograph reveals how the larval spectres of different times, lingering in the spatial vortex where the unexpressed part of the photo is communicated as a gesture, announce an *exigent* demand of remembrance of the dormant absence within the photograph.

As Agamben puts forward, "exigency consists in a relation between what is or has been, and its possibility."[530] For, it says that although a life "has been completely forgotten," it "remains unforgettable."[531] Concerning Kocken's photograph, if "what is" addresses the photograph and what "has been" refers to the content the photograph aspires to express, the exigency of the photograph refers to the possibility of remembering what remains unforgettable within this representation. As Agamben further explains, "exigency does not properly concern that which has not been remembered; it concerns that which remains unforgettable. It refers to all individual or collective life that is forgotten."[532] Bearing this in mind, if Kocken juxtaposes a caption that pretends to bring news *with* a landscape that reinforces the sustained act of looking in a temporal arrest, it is to manifest the exigency of the photograph: the fact that the unarticulated central emptiness within the photograph resists being forgotten and thus cast aside. It is owing to this exigency that the larval spectres of different temporalities refuse to accept their completion, to bestow a living context on that which is not represented in the photograph. That means, if the caption alone would allow the viewer to easily forget the unsettling incident, and if the seascape alone would lead the viewer to misconstrue what this particular locality is meant to convey, their uncanny admixture renders unforgettable the quiescent absence that is buried within the photograph. Therefore, by constituting a spatial juncture in which the beholder is held in between the simultaneous invitation and exclusion of the image *and* the coequal resistance and collaboration of the text, Kocken has educed the

[529] Agamben, "Uses and Disadvantages," 475.
[530] Giorgio Agamben, "The Second Day," in *The Time That Remains: A Commentary to the Letters to the Romans,* trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 39.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.,

exigency of the photographed place: *the urgent demand of remembrance of, and judgment about, what remains unexpressed yet unforgettable within the photograph.*

At this point, it becomes possible to argue that if before the photographer turns a physical place into a photograph it is a matter of *agency*, when an actual place is turned into a photographed place through the aftermath genre it becomes a matter of *exigency*. As I have already discussed, before a place is transmuted into its representation in the photograph, it concerns the intara-active involvement of the photographer with a particular locality through the non-human elements that perfuse in-between them, wherein this relational effect inspissates the agency of the place. The agency of a place is the gravitational force that propels the photographer to a specific location and not to others, indicating how actual places in the world can actively affect the beholder in a sheer inbetweenness. However, after being converted through the aftermath genre, when the actual place is embodied as an image and its context is delivered by the text, the photographed place departs from the agency of place and instead manifests its exigency in the photograph. The exigency of the photographed place is its urgent demand of remembrance of, and judgement about, what remains latent but, nonetheless, unforgettable within a particular locality. The decisive point here is that when agency marks the way in which the photographer experiences the physical world, exigency foregrounds how the spectator participates in the photographed place as an artwork. As Agamben suggests after Aristotle, when experiencing the world means "to have a judgment" about what one involves with, artistic representation refers to our capacity "to judge" about what has been experienced.[533] In reference to the aftermath genre, if before a physical place is turned into a photographed place it demands the photographer *to have judgment* about a particular location, having been converted into an artistic representation it demands the spectator *to judge* about the embodied place through the photograph and its caption. In other words, if the physical place in the world encourages the beholder to see, to view and to gaze at a specific location, when it becomes its representation it demands the spectator to look, to witness and eventually to stare at the embodied locality, so as to judge about the ensuing events that took place therein via the spatial conjunction of the text and the image.

As such, the conversion of a physical place into a photographed place within the aftermath genre manifests how *the agency of place* in the world is translated into *the exigency of place* in the photograph, through the lacuanry space where the viewer is called to remember

[533] Giorgio Agamben, "Poiesis and Praxis," in *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (California, Stanford University Press, 1994), 74. (my italics)

and judge about the past by means of represented particular localities. However, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, this translation does not entail the explicit communication of the photograph's content, since in that case there would not have been any unexpressed part left within the photograph. As Benjamin reminds us, "translation must in large measure refrain from wanting to communicate something, from rendering the sense," as does Kocken's translation by deploying an ethical strategy that safeguards the internal absence within this communication.[534] Instead, in relation to aftermath photography, the photographic translation of a physical place into a photographed place is rather the "communication of a communicability" through which the central emptiness of a particular locality is passed on to the viewer as a gesture. This is how the medium of photography makes a means visible as such, allowing the larval spectres of different temporalities, coming from the caption and the photo and reaching the spectator in-between them, to announce that they have not, yet, reached a completion.

The judgment day, Agamben notes, is our "normal historical condition," and only our "fear of facing it creates the illusion that it is still to come."[535] To conclude this chapter, if Gert Jan Kocken has chosen to juxtapose the temporal abeyance of the landscape genre (the image) with the rhetoric of news photography (the text) to deliver the content of the photographed place, it is to inaugurate a photographic judgment day. This judgment day is *every day*, when the living take the past upon themselves, when the image is seen and the text is read thus the internal absence is summoned from within them, pointing back to our position beseeching for the sovenance of the unforgettable past.

[534] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings* vol. 1, 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W.Jennings (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 260.
[535] Giorgio Agamben, "The Melancholy Angel," in *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 113.