8

PHOTOGRAPHY

This chapter considers the complex relationship between photography and reality. It begins with a brief history and technology of the medium. It shows how it works, and how it is able to represent the real world itself in fixed, two-dimensional form. We will see how the early pioneers succeeded in capturing the image in the early nineteenth century, and how the technology of photography was developed in France, Britain and the United States. We will then see the various uses to which the new medium was put. The ease and mechanical accuracy with which photography is able to reproduce reality, however, leads us to question whether it can therefore be considered an artistic medium. In support of this argument, we will discuss the objections of Roger Scruton, who claims that photography is unable to transcend its subject-matter and so cannot be considered art. In contrast, we will then consider the role of authorship in photography; the extent to which the attitude, creative choices and technical skill of the photographer suggest that photography cannot be considered an objective reproduction of reality at all. We will use a famous depression-era photograph by Dorothea Lange to demonstrate the role of subjectivity in photography, while the work of Aaron Siskind will be used to show the creative potential of form over content. We will conclude with André Bazin's theory of the ontology of the photographic image and its special relationship with reality.

With the fine arts, people struggled long and hard to achieve the illusion of reality. With photography, the illusion is guaranteed by the process. The relationship between the photograph and reality, however, is considerably less than simple.

To understand the medium of photography, together with its relationship with reality, it is necessary first to understand how it came into being. This history of painting goes back to prehistoric times. The history of photography, however, is little more than 150 years old. Rock painting in southern Africa can be dated to around 25,000 BC, while the first surviving photograph (painting with light) was made only in about 1827. Yet to arrive at Niépce's *View from Balcony Window*, we do have to go back a little further, for it took several hundred years for the constituent parts of photography to come together and produce the first photograph. The invention of photography depended upon the confluence of physics and chemistry. Physics was required to create an image; chemistry was needed to preserve it. Of the two, the physics proved considerably easier. Indeed, the basic idea of the camera obscura had been known for centuries. Camera obscura means 'darkened room' and explains where the modern word 'camera' comes from. As early as the tenth century, it was noted that a darkened room with a small hole open to daylight would result in a 'real-time' colour image of the scene outside appearing on the wall opposite the opening. The image was, admittedly, fairly crude and appeared upside down. By Renaissance times, however, lenses were added which not only improved the image, but which also made it appear the right way up. With these improvements in optics, it was discovered that a suitably constructed box could replace the darkened room. The result was recommended as a device to help people draw and paint. The trouble was that the resulting image was still entirely ephemeral. If only it could be fixed or made somehow permanent.

The chemistry of photography goes back to the early eighteenth century, when German scientist Johann Heinrich Schulze discovered in 1727 that certain kinds of silver chemicals were photosensitive – they turned dark when exposed to light. This was a key discovery to the invention of photography, and was seized upon by people such as Thomas Wedgwood (son of the great British potter Josiah Wedgwood). Wedgwood experimented with ways to record images photographically, but although he succeeded in getting primitive, negative silhouettes of objects such as leaves, the resulting image continued to darken until everything was so dark that no discernible image remained. He was unable, in other words, to fix the photographic image, and his experiments got no further.

It is generally held that it was the Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce who produced the first real photograph in about 1827.[1] This he did by coating a metal plate with a tarry substance called bitumen of Judea and exposing it for eight hours in a camera obscura. Where the light hit, it hardened the bitumen. Where it did not, the bitumen remained soft. The result he called a 'heliograph' (a 'sun drawing'), and he discovered that he could obtain better results by using glass instead of metal as his base. The results were increasingly good, but still not brilliant. The quality was far less than what we expect today, and eight-hour exposures in outdoor sunshine made the process only vaguely practical. What really set photography alight was Niépce's subsequent collaboration with countryman Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre. They signed a partnership together, following which Niépce died. Daguerre not only ended up a very rich man, but also gave his name to the resulting photographic process: the daguerreotype. It was a hugely effective system, which was formally unveiled to the French Academy

of Sciences on 7 January 1839. The daguerreotype took the form of a highly polished layer of silver on top of a copper plate. It was sensitized with iodine to create a silver iodide surface. The plate was exposed in a camera, developed in mercury vapour and fixed in a salt solution before the whole thing was dried. The resulting image had a number of advantages over Niépce's heliograph. First, the resolution was much better – especially as the process was perfected over time. Second, Daguerre's plates could be exposed in less than a minute, compared with Niépce's eight hours. This also meant that, with appropriate lighting, daguerreotypes could not only be made indoors, but could also be used to photograph people, who, unlike objects, could not be expected to hold still for hours on end. Finally, where the heliograph had presented a negative image (that is to say, it was dark where reality was light – and vice versa), the daguerreotype (when viewed at the correct angle against the light) presented a positive, 'natural' image.

Such was the technical and commercial success of Daguerre's process that by 1853 three million daguerreotypes had been produced in the USA alone. The process could be used by small-town photographers, and those who had not previously been able to afford to commission paintings were now able to own chosen views and portraits for themselves. More than that, of course, they believed in the genuine authenticity of the photographic image. It was like owning a little piece of reality itself. Despite its enormous success, however, the daguerreotype system had a number of drawbacks. It was viewable in positive (as we have seen) only at certain angles. It was an expensive process in terms of both materials and time. The resulting image was also fragile (to say nothing of heavy – it was hardly suitable for a wallet or purse). Most importantly, though, the daguerreotype was a one-off process in which no copies could be made. This was a major drawback – especially when we think of the importance of mechanical reproduction in photography today. What we want, whether we are proud parents or commercial enterprises, is unlimited numbers of identical copies for distribution to family or customers. This the daguerreotype was unable to provide.

The solution was provided by an Englishman, William Henry Fox Talbot. Talbot had been working independently of Daguerre, and was dismayed to hear of the Frenchman's presentation to the French Academy. Talbot, too, had succeeded in fixing the photographic image, and announced his process to the Royal Academy in London just two weeks later. But instead of working on copper, Talbot had been working on paper. This he sensitized with silver chloride, exposed in sunlight and fixed with sodium chloride. By placing items such as leaves and lace against the sensitized paper, Talbot was able to make delicately intricate contact prints of the objects in question, which he called 'photogenic drawings'. The use of paper was helpful enough, but Talbot went on to make two further important developments. First, he began to use a camera instead of contact prints. In this, he matched Daguerre. But, second, he went on to invent the positive–negative process, and in so doing advanced photography where Daguerre had stopped. Talbot had turned photography into a reproducible medium.

What Talbot realized was that by placing one of his finished negative photographs over a second piece of sensitized, but as yet unexposed, piece of photographic paper and passing light through the former to the latter, the

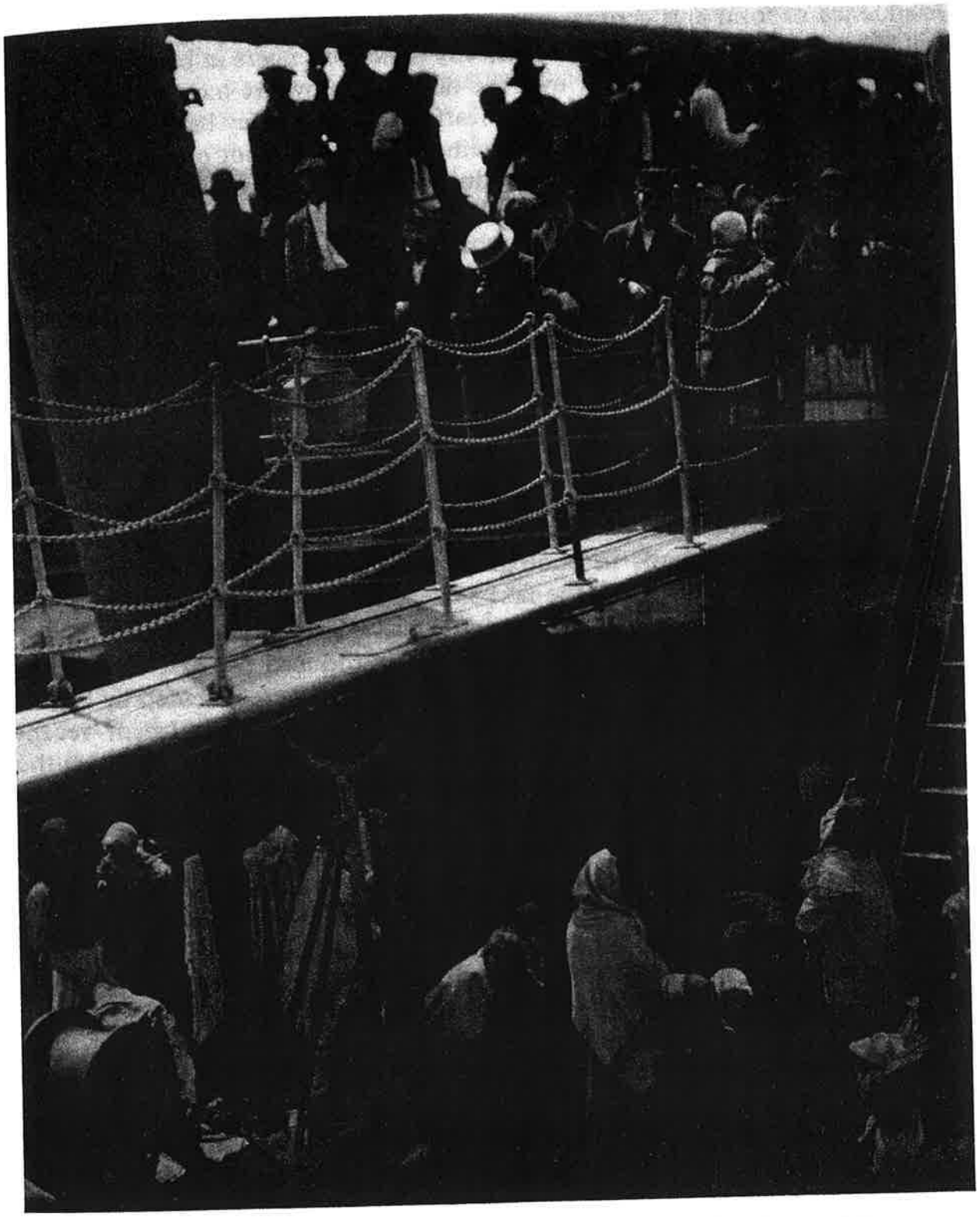
resulting print would become dark where the negative had been light, and light where the negative had been dark. So, while the negative had been the opposite (in terms of light and shade) of the original scene, this second exposure produced a consequent, positive image in which the original relations were restored. More than that, once the original negative was in place, an almost unlimited number of positive prints could be produced from a single negative.

Talbot worked at refining the process, and improved chemistry helped him reduce exposure times still further. He patented the process in 1841, and called it the 'calotype' (from the Greek *kales* (beautiful) and *typos* (impression)). He then took a crucial step for mass media by publishing the first photographic book, *The Pencil of Nature*, in six instalments from 1844 to 1846. Not only did the book contain photographs, but it also served as a seminal exploration of what photography could achieve and where it might be headed.

It is tempting to say that, with Talbot, modern photography was born. This is a somewhat dangerous claim, however, because it involves entering into what is often called the 'primacy debate'. Here, historians, often with nationalist agendas, vigorously dispute who was the first, sole and original inventor of photography (or any other new 'discovery' for that matter). It is amazing how the French tend to champion Daguerre, and the British Talbot! National agendas aside, though, it is a debate that doesn't really get us anywhere because, in reality, technological advances (and much else besides) tend to be simultaneous and the result of collaboration, if not directly between individuals, then as a result of building upon the work of common 'ancestors' such as Niépce, Wedgwood and Schulze.

Further advances in the history of photography were also built upon previous discoveries. The processes developed by Daguerre and Talbot were indeed seminal, but with them photography remained in the hands of experts and specialist commercial practitioners. Photography did not become available to the general public until the introduction by George Eastman of the Kodak camera in 1888. Now the camera was bought ready-loaded with enough roll film for 100 exposures, and it was designed for use with the minimum of fuss. Once the film was all used up, the whole camera was returned to Kodak headquarters in Rochester, New York, for processing.

The production of roll film was significant not only for the enthusiastic amateur, but also for the serious professional.[2] Previously, photography had depended on the use of photographic plates of varying sizes and degrees of fragility. Such was the chemistry required to prepare and to process them that practitioners were either confined to the studio or had to take vast quantities of equipment (often including a tent for use as a darkroom) on location with them. The whole thing was normally accomplished with the help of numerous assistants. Roll film, however, led to the manufacture of smaller, hand-held cameras which could be taken out pre-loaded with enough film for multiple exposures, and which would not need to be processed until the role was complete and the opportunity presented itself. This meant that photographers were not only liberated in terms of location and subject-matter, but were also able to work much more spontaneously, responding to the things that they saw instead of having to construct them.



34. Alfred Stieglitz, *The Steerage*, 1907, photograph; courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

This is just what happened with the celebrated photograph, *The Steerage*, taken by American photographer Alfred Stieglitz (see figure 34). In 1907, he was on board a steamer called the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* when he saw an excellent photo opportunity.[3] He raced back to his cabin, found his portable camera and got the shot, which he later published in *291* magazine. The result is a

confluence of form and content presented not from the imagination but from real life. On the upper deck, we see mostly male passengers in bowler hats and straw boaters looking curiously over the railings. Below are mostly women and children, the most prominent in headscarf and shawl. They have assembled a makeshift washing line on deck: for them the journey is not one of adventure or excitement, but one in which the drudgery of domestic life goes on. The class divisions that provide both the physical and metaphorical content of the photograph also create its major compositional element. The photograph (not unlike Raphael's *Transfiguration*) is divided into two separate yet balanced sections, one upper and one lower. Railings, booms and decking divide and frame the composition horizontally, giving it an almost 'flat' composition. Yet the panel-like construction is enhanced by three strong diagonals (a pipe, a stairway and a gangplank), which not only break up the ordered flatness, but which introduce depth into the composition. The result is one of ordered disorder in which the eye, while never quite agitated, can at the same time never settle. It is an image that was praised by Picasso in the same year that he was working on *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

Technical advancements in photography did not, of course, end with the invention of roll film. In 1925, the first 35 mm camera was produced by Leica in Germany, and this convenient format remained something of an industry standard into the twenty-first century. Kodak introduced the first colour film in 1935,[4] while the 'instant' Polaroid camera and film were invented by Edwin Land in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1947. The most important recent developments involved electronic as opposed to chemical means of storing the image, and have led to a much-trumpeted 'digital revolution' in photography. Sony produced the first video still camera (the MAVICA) in 1982, while Kodak launched a photo CD storage system in 1990. The same company claimed the first high-quality digital camera (the DCS 460) in 1994, and the mass marketing of digital cameras for consumers began in 1996. By the early years of the twenty-first century, steady increases in image quality led to digital eclipsing chemical technology and traditional film cameras in both the professional and domestic markets.

With the proliferation of cameras and consumer photography today, it may be difficult to imagine a world without photographs. We have grown up with it, and the taking and viewing of photographs has become a part of everyday life. It is important to stress, however, that in the early days photography was something wonderful and new. Once the technology had been perfected, what was this thrilling new medium going to be used for? The technology, it seemed, preceded the purpose. For the early pioneers, it was enough to demonstrate that it worked, and that the natural world could be 'frozen'. Niépce's rooftops and Talbot's leaves were more remarkable in their existence than in their subject-matter. They didn't tell us much new about the world, other than that it could now be photographed. Once the novelty wore off, however, photography began to open up a visual world as never before.

Photography was able to show people places they would not otherwise have been able to see. Maxine du Camp, for example, photographed the colossus of Abu-Simbel in 1850. Few people were able to travel to Nubia themselves

(even fewer than today), but thanks to photography, they were now able to see the wonders of the world for themselves.[5] To be sure, there had been drawings and other 'artist's impressions' of remarkable sites before, but the photograph had an authenticity that was lacking in fine art. Du Camp even included a man standing by the colossus to give the photograph a genuine sense of scale. In painting, scale could be exaggerated for effect, but, with photography, people thought they could see the genuine vastness of the colossus 'with their own eyes'.

In addition to places, people could now see people. Nowadays, we are entirely used to seeing photographic images of the politicians and the celebrities of the day. This is, of course, only recently the case. Until photography, most Americans had never seen a 'true likeness' of their president. James Knox Polk was the first sitting president to be photographed in 1849, although more people are familiar with Scots-born Alexander Gardner's famous portrait of Abraham Lincoln in 1865.[6] The British, meanwhile, were delighted to see the great engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, resplendent in his enormous hat and with a cigar clamped between his teeth, photographed against the launching chains of his ship *The Great Eastern* in 1857. In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII had felt deceived into marriage by an overly flattering painted portrait of Anne of Cleves. The photograph, it was believed, could now show people as they really were.

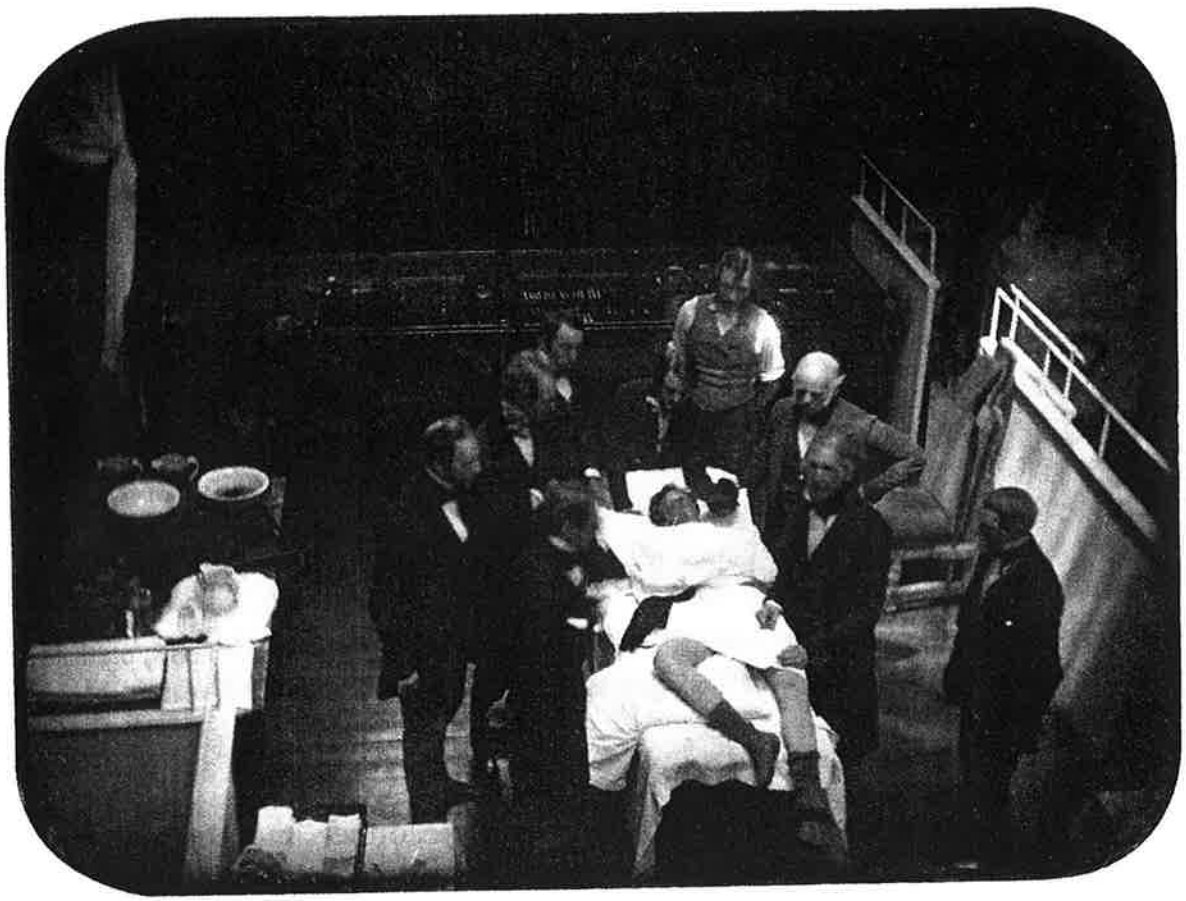
Photography brought people closer not only to people and places but also to the world of events. Again, there had been a tradition of drawing, painting and printmaking to show people both national and international events of importance. In times of conflict, for example, official 'war artists' would travel with armies to record battles and army life for the newspapers and magazines back home. War tended to look very exciting and glamorous when represented in fine art, but photography – even when not directly concerned with the harrowing details – managed to make it look, at least, slightly squalid. The Englishman Roger Fenton is thought to have been the first real war photographer, and he returned to London in 1855 with pictures of Balaclava and the Crimea, including his famous *Valley of the Shadow of Death*.[7] Fenton recorded that for the taking of this shot, it 'was plain that the line of fire was upon the very spot I had chosen', so he had, reluctantly, to move his camera 100 yards away.[8] In North America, Matthew B. Brady organized a team of photographers to document the Civil War. According to Beaumont Newhall, he was 'almost killed' at Bull Run.[9] Among his assistants was Alexander Gardner, who published *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War* in 1865–6. These photographs are very static by today's standards, but for many people they provided their first real glimpse of warfare – including the dead.[10] Gardner went on to photograph Lincoln's second inaugural address in 1865, together with his funeral procession that same year.

Photography was not only concerned with wonder, celebrity and world events, however. From its early days, the medium was also used to document social conditions and to agitate, visually, for social change. The Scottish photographer Thomas Annan documented slum housing conditions in Glasgow from 1868, while in New York, Jacob A. Riis sought to expose crime and poverty in

the tenements of the Lower East Side from 1888. These were conditions that the well-to-do would never have seen until photography provided them with the visual evidence.

These examples of the early photography of places, people, events and social conditions have all deliberately been taken from the nineteenth century not only to demonstrate the uses to which the new medium could be put, but also to show that photography represented a new way of seeing the world. It was a way of seeing based upon the unique relationship between the photograph and the thing photographed, and it had an authenticity that fine art could never accomplish. Photography, indeed, had a special relationship with reality, which persuaded people that when they looked at a photograph, they were looking at reality itself. They could say, 'this is Abraham Lincoln', when actually they were looking not at the man but at a photograph. They knew that the camera, the lens and even the original plate had been in the presence of the president, and that the resulting image had not been drawn by hand. They believed, rather, that it had appeared on the plate and then the paper without human intervention. It is in this way that Talbot, the author of *The Pencil of Nature*, was able to describe Lacock Abbey (which he photographed in 1835) as the first building 'that was ever yet known to have drawn its own picture'.[11] It is an attitude that suggests that a photograph is an unmediated medium with a direct, uncomplicated authenticity and which provides straightforward evidence of the thing photographed. As it is a mechanical recording device, it can only record the truth.

It is this argument for the mechanical authenticity of photography that, at the same time, argues against claims for photography as art. Photography, so the argument goes, is easy: so easy, indeed, that with an auto-focus, auto-exposure, auto-everything camera, even a well-trained gibbon could produce satisfactory results. If it isn't difficult, it cannot be art. This is not, of course, a terribly sophisticated argument. A more intelligent objection would be based upon photography's umbilical relationship with its subject-matter. Here, we would contend that photography is simply a mechanical record of what is already out there. It is like a photocopying machine or a security camera, which simply duplicate that which is already in front of us or point a reprographic finger at something that is already out there. In both cases, we respond not to the photograph itself, but – simply – what it's *of*. In about 1852, for example, the British photographers Albert Southworth and Josiah Hawes produced a daguerreotype of a man undergoing an operation under ether (see figure 35). It is an excellent record of what took place: we can see the surgeons in their frock-coats, a gruesome collection of bowls and knives, and the patient himself, stretched out with a happily vacant expression and a pair of woolly socks. It would provide excellent illustrative material for a lecture on mid-nineteenth-century anaesthetic practices. Moving forward to the period just before the Second World War, we find that American press photographer Sam Sphere caught a spectacular shot of the airship *Hindenburg* exploding at Lakehurst, New Jersey, in 1937. The *Hindenburg* was an 800-foot-long, German-built Zeppelin, which carried passengers by air across the Atlantic Ocean. Unfortunately, it relied on highly inflammable hydrogen for its buoyancy, and shortly before landing in the USA it exploded in spectacular style, killing thirty-six of its passengers and crew.



35. Albert Southworth and Josiah Hawes, *Early Operation Using Ether for Anesthesia*, 1847, daguerreotype, 14.6 x 20 cm (5 3/4 x 7 7/8 in.); courtesy of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Sphere got the shot at the moment it first burst into flame. It is a remarkable and dramatic photograph: we cannot help but be impressed by it. It is as though we were there ourselves at exactly the right moment. What impresses us, though (it might be argued), is its subject-matter – a subject-matter that would have been impressive in its own right if only we had been there to witness it. The photograph does not create the drama; it just reports it. That cannot be art.

Photography, according to this argument, is simply a medium through which we observe the natural or real world. If it only reproduces what is already out there, it follows that a photograph cannot transcend its subject-matter; it can only be beautiful if it is of a beautiful thing. Certainly, early photography was concerned with beauty as well as with the recording of remarkable places, people and events. Nineteenth-century photography saw an active 'pictorialist' movement, when practitioners of the new medium competed with painters in an attempt to capture 'pictorial' scenes. Peter Emerson and Thomas Goodhall, for example, produced soft and sumptuous images of rural life in the waterlands of England in the 1880s. *Rowing Home the Schoof-Stuff* (1886) shows a solitary man at twilight with a boatload of reeds, his oars hardly stirring the water in which he and the Norfolk sky are reflected with a painterly tranquillity. This is an undeniably beautiful photograph. However, it could at the same time be argued that it takes its beauty entirely from what was already a beautiful scene (see figure 36).

36. Peter Emerson and Thomas Goodhall, *Rowing Home the School-Stuff*, 1886, platinum photographic print; courtesy of George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film

This is very much the view of the British philosopher and theorist Roger Scruton, who wrote: 'If one finds a photograph beautiful, it is because one finds something beautiful in its subject. A painting may be beautiful, on the other hand, even when it represents an ugly thing.'[12] Scruton's argument is articulate, but flawed. Certainly, we have to admit the close relationship between a photograph and its subject-matter. That much is understood. It should be clear, however, that there is much more to a photograph than just its subject-matter. Most obviously, a beautiful subject-matter does not guarantee a beautiful photograph. In order to render a beautiful scene beautifully, it is necessary for the photographer to make a number of both technical and creative choices. The Norfolk scene witnessed by Emerson and Goodhall, for example, existed independently of them and would have been beautiful whether or not they had been there to witness, let alone record, it. But being there was not, on its own, enough. They began by recognizing the aesthetic potential of a photograph of a man rowing a boat full of reeds home over still water against a sunset. They could have chosen many other scenes (a tree, a gate, a heron or a rat-catcher), but they selected this. Selective choices are creative choices. They then proceeded to decide how to photograph this particular scene in terms of composition. Where would they set up their equipment in relation to the bank, the boat and – crucially – the sunset? Having agreed upon that, how would they frame the subject from their chosen point of view? What would be the proportion, for example, of water to sky? And would the boat be placed in the centre or to one side? Compositional choices are (as Roger Fry would have had no trouble reminding us) aesthetic choices and affect the form – and therefore the meaning – of the final photograph. Then there would be the vital decision about precisely when to press the shutter. How far should they allow the sun to go down before making the exposure, for example? And should (again, for example) the oars

be in the water or raised slightly above it at the decisive moment of the shutter release? Technically, they had to make sure that their subject was in focus – but how sharp did they want the overall focus to be? Did they want 'scientific' precision, or were they aiming for a 'softer', more romantic effect all round? The exposure needed properly to be calculated not just to obtain a recognizable result, but also to allow for the required range of shadows and highlights. Was the man in the boat to be in detail or in silhouette? The shutter speed had to be calculated in relation not only to the movement inherent in the scene, but also in consideration of the amount of light admitted when calculating the exposure and, consequently, when opening or closing the iris in the lens. As every (decent) photographer knows, these technical decisions all have creative consequences and directly affect the final result. A dozen of us, all standing on the bank in the fading English light, could have photographed the same scene, resulting in a dozen different results from that of Emerson and Goodhall.

The photograph is by no means completed at the scene. Once the traditional plate or film has been exposed, it is necessary to make the photographic print, and here a plethora of choices (again a combination of the technical and the artistic) influences the eventual image. Emerson and Goodhall, for instance, chose to print *Rowing Home the School-Stuff* using expensive platinum rather than the more usual silver-based chemistry. Platinum results in a softer, more subtle scale of greys than did traditional techniques, which can be used for greater contrast and more graphic impact. Emerson and Goodhall made the choice they considered most appropriate to this tranquil, pastoral scene. The printing stage offers additional choices for framing, cropping and enlargement, gradations of contrast and lighter or darker prints. A skilled practitioner can make selective changes to individual parts of the final print – even before more drastic special effects might be introduced. The eventual photograph, then, is the result of creative choices that began at the very setting up of the tripod.

We have concentrated thus far on traditional methods of photography. This is not only because our particular case study is an analogue image, but also because even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the number of traditionally made images available for analysis still considerably outnumbers those made by digital technology. That said, the vital ingredients of both technical and creative choice apply to both traditional and digital techniques. When Scruton says: '[t]he camera is not essential to that process: a gesturing finger would have served just as well', his argument is equally hard-hitting.[13] And either way, we need only a limited knowledge of the most basic photographic technique to understand that Emerson and Goodhall's idyllic scene did not, whatever Scruton says, photograph itself.

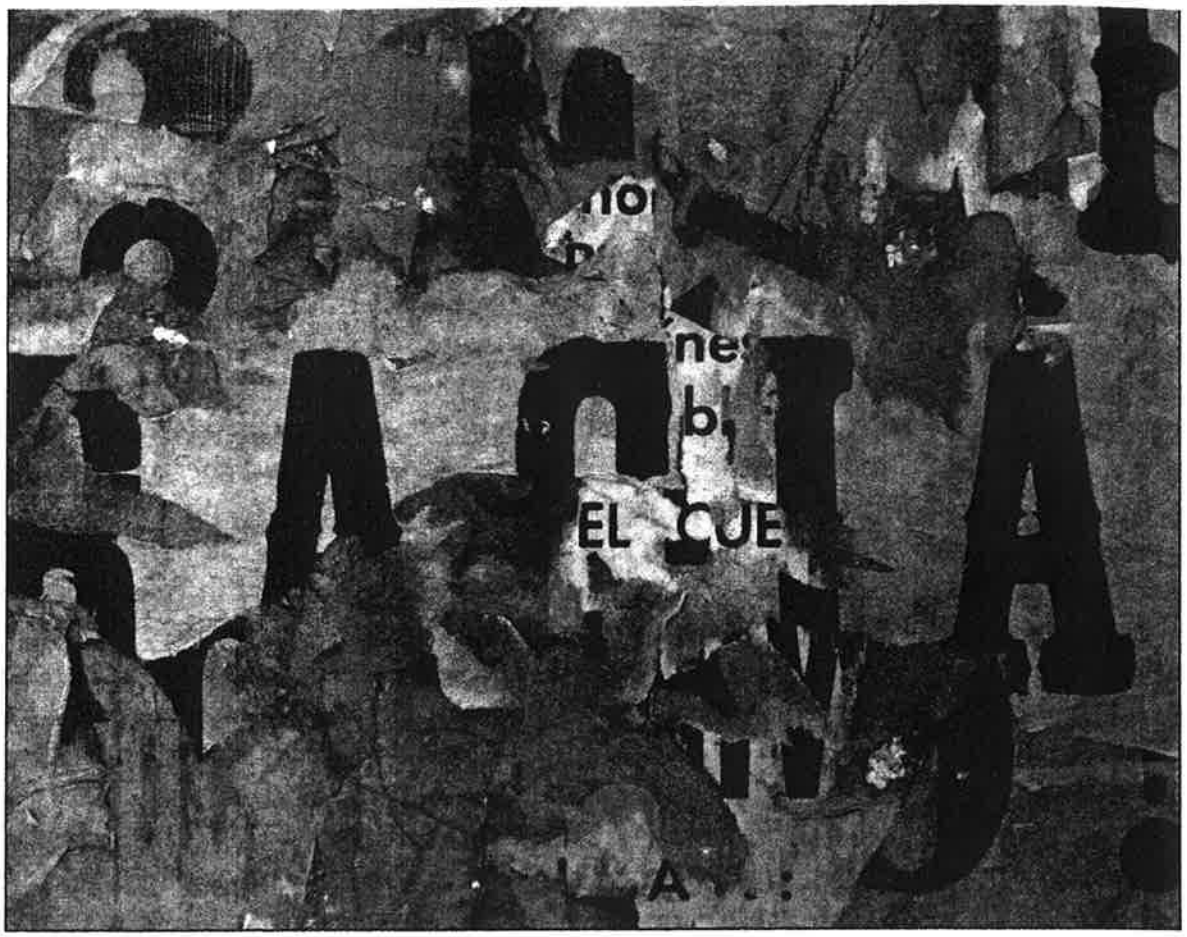
Our objection to Scruton's assertion that photography can only be about its subject-matter echoes Fry's contention that it is the emotional elements of design that carry the meaning of a work of art, and that this meaning is communicated not so much by content as by form. Indeed, it would be informative to reread Fry, substituting the word 'photograph' at every instance of the word 'painting'. The resulting argument might be much the same: what we respond to is not so much what a photograph shows, but how it shows it. We do not, we remember, respond to Impressionist paintings as a result of our fascination

with water lilies or haystacks, but because of our emotional response to form. In photography should we not, as Fry said of painting: 'give up the attempt to judge the work of art by its reaction on life, and consider it as an expression of emotions regarded as ends in themselves'?[14] A photograph, after all, has formal properties that transcend its subject-matter. This is true even of the most seemingly mundane image. Talbot's 1844 calotype of articles of china may, on the one hand, seem like the sort of photograph we might take in order to record our property in case of theft. Here, Talbot, has laid out four horizontal rows of china on vertically aligned shelves. The arrangement is not haphazard, however. It is deliberately balanced and symmetrical, and diverse individual pieces are arranged to create an ordered and balanced whole. Important pieces occupy the compositional centres of attention. Scruton might argue that the subject itself was arranged in this way, and it is that to which we are responding. He has a point, of course, but only inasmuch as he would have had a point with Emerson and Goodhall – to say nothing of Cézanne or Matisse. Fry would argue that we relegate the subject-matter, and concentrate instead on the elements of design – many of which apply to photography as much as they do to painting. The composition in Talbot's photograph depends as much on the position of the camera (and, therefore, of us the viewer) as it does on the arrangement of the china itself. We are placed dead centre, and our field of vision is almost filled. There is no attempt to create the illusion of depth. What appeals to us is not only the mass of the objects themselves, but the space between them – the 'negative space' created by the absence as much as by the presence of things. The china appears in a creamy, evenly lit hue, which almost makes it pop out from the even and indistinguishable background. Yet it is the rich mahogany brown of the even background that impresses us as much as the china against which it is contrasted, along with the even, solid lines of the shelves that divide the plane with such quiet confidence. More than that, we notice how in this print the brushwork of the hand-applied photographic emulsion has been left in place at the four edges of the photograph, so that the order of the composition emerges from the disorder of the 'outer world'. Fry would have been proud.

These examples show us that photographs are not just about subject-matter. Just like drawing or painting, subject-matter may be more or less important depending on the individual text or artist. The proportional relationship between the two, as in painting, may not always have been premeditated. But, as photography progressed, some photographers – just like certain painters – began deliberately to create images in which form was the more important of the two. Paul Strand, for example, began to photograph everyday objects in unusual ways. His *Shadows, Twin Lakes, Connecticut* of 1916 is a study of diagonals, clean edges, contrasts and strong light, which appear to be based on someone's porch or deck. It tells us very little about the deck itself because that isn't the point at all. Similarly, his *Wire Wheel, New York*, made two years later, is a study of curves and straight lines in which we become slightly disorientated when we try to make out the physical layout of the car itself. Had Strand been hired to illustrate a manual on home improvement or motor-vehicle maintenance, he would clearly have been fired. His objective, however, was never to

get us to respond to the subject-matter or even to point a Scrutonian finger at something that was already beautiful. Rather, he wanted to lend us his eyes and, in so doing, turn an object into a composition. It is an attitude betrayed by the title of his 1916 photograph: *Abstraction, Bowls, Twin Lakes, Connecticut.* Strand, of course, was not alone. Edward Weston photographed clouds in New Mexico in the 1920s, not out of meteorological fascination but because of the shapes they made. The idea was that we should respond not with 'what a great cloud', but 'what a great photograph!' It is a reaction that would have pleased Aaron Siskind, one of the most intellectual of American photographers. Siskind began very much in the documentary tradition in the 1930s, when he was a member of the socially committed Film and Photo League in New York. He joined them in documenting topics such as life in Harlem and the Bowery, but he became increasingly interested in the formal properties of photographs as opposed to their subject-matter. By 1942, he had set out on his own, concentrating on shape, pattern and texture at the expense of factual information. As his early biographer Nathan Lyons put it: 'Subject matter as such ceased to be of primary importance.' This directly echoed Siskind's own conviction that 'the meaning should be in the photograph and not the subject photographed'.[15] Or, as Siskind himself explained, a photograph, like a painting, should be valued 'as a new object to be contemplated for its own meaning and its own beauty'.[16] We have only to look at Siskind's later work to understand this. Here, graffiti, battered enamel signs, discarded gloves, peeling posters and tar-filled cracks in the road are rendered into abstraction by the photographer (see figure 37). The ugly is transposed into the aesthetic, and Scruton's viewpoint becomes untenable.

Scruton, it might be argued, is on stronger ground when it comes to documentary photography. The word 'documentary', after all, implies that it is there to document – to record – rather than to transform into the aesthetic realm. In this context, then, we are far more likely to agree with Scruton that a photograph is 'a representation of how something looked. In some sense, looking at a photograph is a substitute for looking at the thing itself.' He goes further: 'it is neither necessary nor even possible that the photographer's intention should enter as a serious factor in determining how the picture is seen.'[17] But is it? Imagine we are working for a real-estate company that has commissioned us to take photographs of a house it is putting up for sale. It will surely be our intention to make the house look as good as possible. We will probably wait until the sun comes out and, then again, until it is shining on to the most attractive aspect of the house (usually the front). We will probably try to frame our photograph to include any trees or flowers that might be in the foreground, while deftly excluding the slaughterhouse next door. If there are trash cans at the front, we will probably move them to the back before taking the full-colour shot. A judicious use of lenses will even make the property look spacious. Potential customers will almost hear the birdsong as we release the shutter. This may seem like a cynical exaggeration – but consider the real-life case of a house offered for sale in Dungeness, England, in 2009. It was marketed as a charming fisherman's cottage set in half an acre of land within the Dungeness National Nature Reserve. All this was true, as was the picture showing the little white house,

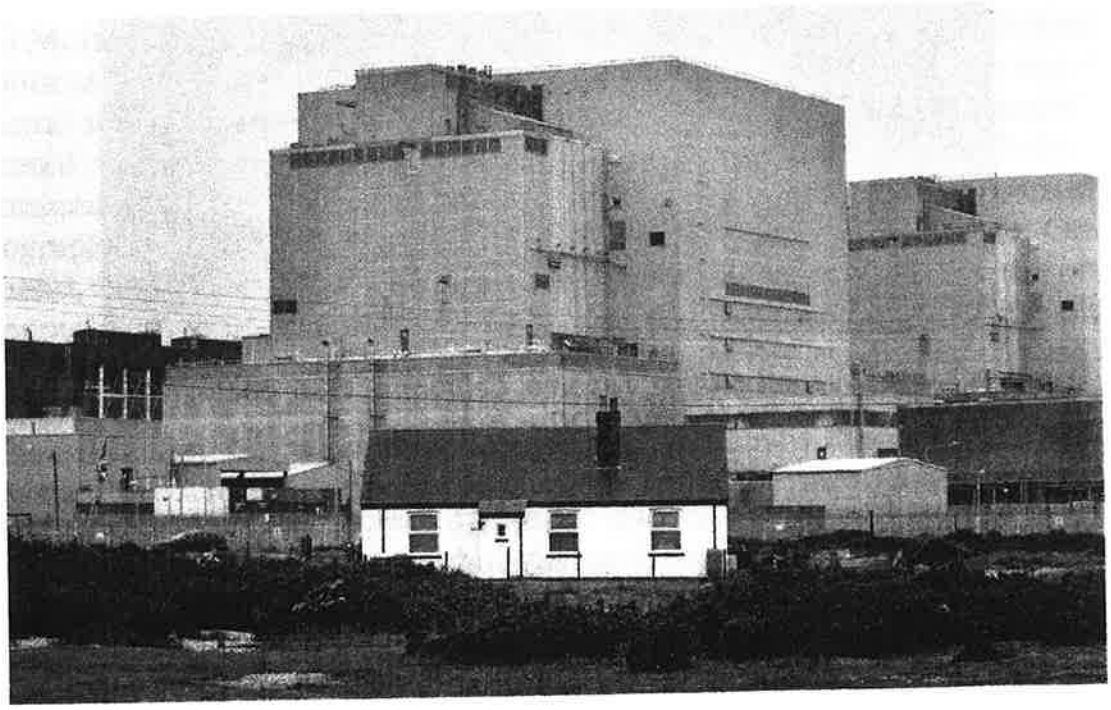


37. Aaron Siskind, *San Luis Potosi 16*, 1961, photograph, Aaron Siskind Foundation; courtesy of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona

surrounded by grassland and a broad blue sky (see figure 38). What the brochure did not show you was one of Europe's biggest nuclear power stations less than 100 yards in the opposite direction (see figure 39). It was all a question of angles. The case caused widespread merriment in the British national press with the agents previously unaware, no doubt, that their creative use of the camera was to become, quite literally, a textbook case.

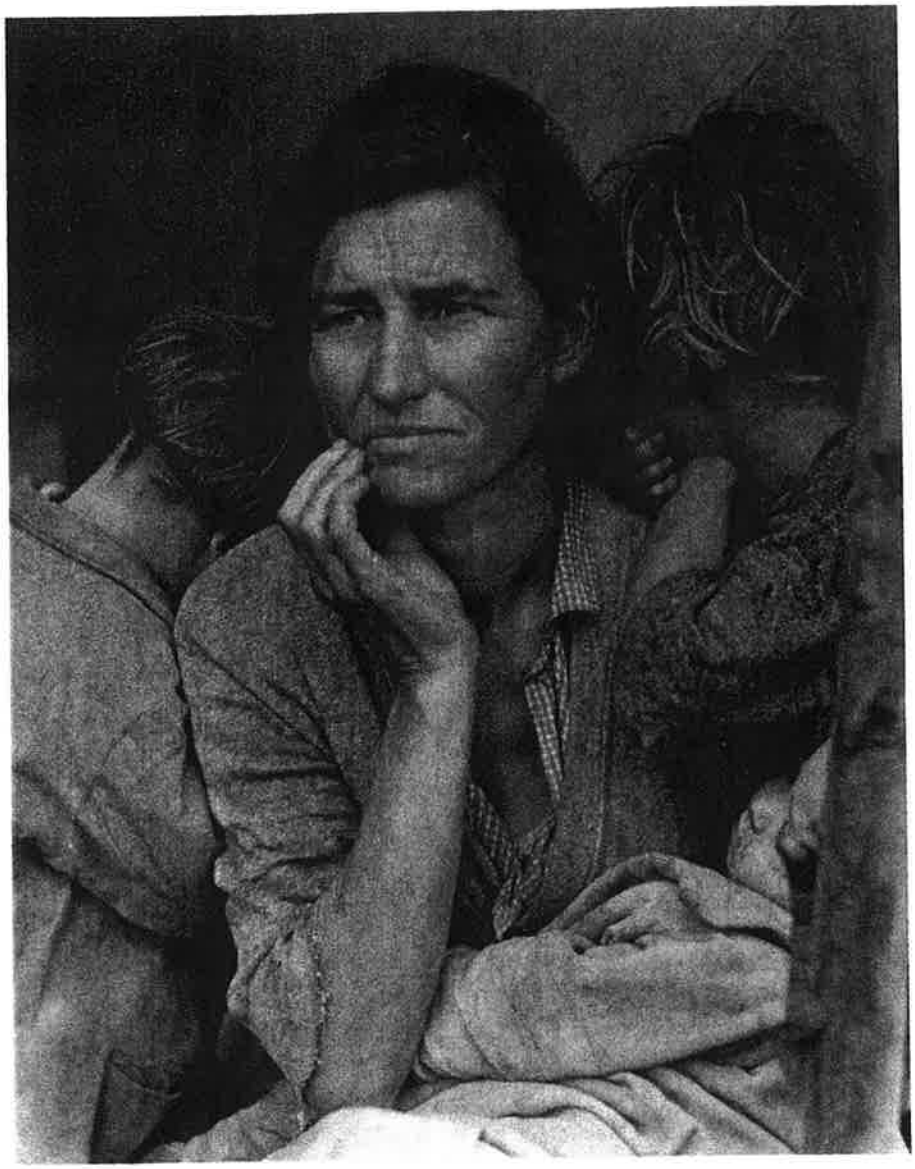
This is, of course, a fairly extreme example, but not one that we had to invent. When we take a photograph we all, whether we are working professionally or simply snapping our friends, have the intention of saying something about something. Why else would we say 'smile' when we press the button? Serious documentary photographers are just the same. They, too, have something to say, and they want people to react to the photographs they produce. The documentarians of New York and Glasgow housing conditions in the nineteenth century clearly intended to show how bad they were, and so photographed them accordingly. Even the initial decision that something is worth documenting is a subjective one, and, in practice, photographers will always bring something of their predisposition towards the subject with them. A classic example is that of the photographers of the Farm Services Administration (FSA), who were sent to document the terrible farming and living conditions the rural poor were experiencing during the American dust bowl and Depression of the 1930s. Much of

38. Sales brochure shot of a cottage for sale, Dungeness, England, 2009 Copyright Press Association



39. The same cottage (figure 38), photographed from a different angle Copyright Press Association

their work will be familiar to us today, such as Walker Evans's starkly balanced images of impoverished homes and families in Alabama, and Arthur Rothstein's memorable image of a bleached-out animal skull against the parched earth of a formerly productive land. Perhaps the most famous of all is Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California* of 1936 (see figure 40). Here, we see a poor, worn-out, furrowed-browed woman seated in worried contemplation with



40. Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California*, 1936, photograph; courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC

her hand against her chin. Her two ragged children press themselves close on either side of her, their faces deliberately hidden from the camera's view. All is not lost, however, for the image seems to remind us of Renaissance studies of the Madonna and child, and here they are transposed into the American Depression. The woman may be poor, but she is still a mother with her own dignity and her own worth.

This and the many other photographs of the FSA were produced with the deliberate intent of creating support for economic policies to ease the Depression. Just like all the other photographs, Lange's *Migrant Mother* is made with conscious authorial intent. As Susan Sontag (1933–2004), one of America's leading public intellectuals, argued in *On Photography*: '[p]hotographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings are'. In this way, the 'immensely gifted' photographers of the FSA 'would take dozens of frontal pictures of one of their sharecropper subjects until satisfied that they had gotten just the right look on film – the precise expression on the subject's face that

supported their own notions about poverty, light, dignity, texture, exploitation and geometry'.[18]

Anyone who has taken photographs with any degree of seriousness will agree with Sontag, who could also be used in support of our previous example of real-estate photography. At the same time, however, we would be very foolish to disregard the importance of subject-matter in any kind of photography – certainly documentary, and even abstract. We have used examples from the early years of photography to show how the new medium enabled people to see places, people and events they had never seen before. People then felt that they had seen Abraham Lincoln (or, today, Diana, Princess of Wales) when they had in fact only seen them in photographs. What they believed – and what we must realistically accept – is that whatever we know about selection, subjectivity, creativity and authorial intent in photography, there is nevertheless an inevitable and special relationship between photography and reality. There remains, as we have already seen, an 'umbilical' connection between the object and the image.

This special relationship between photography and reality is something that famously intrigued the French intellectual and theorist André Bazin (1918–58). Bazin was essentially a film theorist who was the founder and leading light of the influential periodical *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, which has been described by James Monaco (of whom more in the following chapter) as 'the most influential film journal in history'.[19] Bazin realized that the photographic image was fundamental to the cinema, and so the opening essay of his *What is Cinema?* was dedicated to 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image'. Here, Bazin was determined to get to grips with the ontology (we might also say 'essence') of photography. He realized, however, that this was a very complex issue. On the one hand, he acknowledged the clear, physical relationship between the object photographed and the photograph itself. 'The photographic image is the object itself', he declared, but at the same time 'freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it'. So, a photograph of Abraham Lincoln is, undoubtedly, *of* Abraham Lincoln, but while the photographed Abraham Lincoln was captured in a particular place at one precise moment in 1865, the photograph *of* Abraham Lincoln can be seen anywhere at any time. The photograph, then, is not reality itself (how could it be? Lincoln is long dead) but because of the inherent qualities of the medium, it is at the same time a technologically captured impression of reality. Bazin put it beautifully: the photograph is like a 'fingerprint'. It is not the finger itself, but a record of the thing itself made by the thing itself. So: 'The photograph as such and the object in itself, share a common being.' Yet Bazin goes even further, claiming that: 'Photography can even surpass art in creative power.' There is something surreal, he argues, in photography because, just as in Surrealist painting, 'the logical distinction between what is imaginary and what is real tends to disappear'. That is how the photograph manages to be 'an hallucination which is also a fact'.[20]

What we are left with, then, is a visual medium that has a dual nature. To some, this may be a distinct criticism of photography: it is neither wholly real nor wholly imaginary. To others, though, it is the confluence of the two that is photography's unique strength rather than its particular weakness. This is

something that was well articulated by photographic historian Mike Weaver, speaking at a symposium at the Royal Academy in London, held to celebrate the 150th anniversary of photography. Weaver argued that the photograph was like a novel based on a true story, and used the example of Nathaniel Hawthorne's celebrated novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). Here, the narrator claims that the story of the adulterous Hester Prynne is one that actually took place years ago in Puritan Salem, Massachusetts, and explains that his research and rediscovery of the past events in a contemporary town is like seeing a familiar room by candlelight. Here, our imagination may start to take over. A ghost might enter, and we might be forgiven for wondering whether it had returned from the past or had never even left. What we had, therefore, was something 'between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other'.[21]

That, it seems to us, is precisely what photography is: a meeting of the actual and the imaginary, where each adds to, rather than detracts from, the power of the other. When we view a photograph, we are stimulated by the hallucination and the fact at the same time – and receive the compounded stimulation of both. The effect is doubled, not halved. The relationship between photography and reality is, therefore, a complex one, but it is a complexity that explains the deep and articulate richness of the photographic image.

Theoretical approaches to photography are complicated by the fact that the photographic image is both reality and representation at the same time. Iconology, for example, is certainly relevant at the primary level, as the vast majority of photographs have subject-matter that can be recognized from experience. The initial stages of the secondary level can be useful, too, especially when subject-matter depends on prior, cultural knowledge for its identification. We get into potential trouble, though, with 'disguised symbolism'. In fine art, everything that is shown has been deliberately included by the artist. We may dispute whether it was intended to be symbolic, but we have to agree that nothing 'puts itself' on to the canvas automatically. With photography, the dangers of iconological over-interpretation are even greater than they are with painting because a photograph's content is often the result of circumstance rather than the artist's premeditated intent: an apple or a Volkswagen might appear in a photograph simply because it happened to be there in reality. The intrinsic level of iconology is more helpful to photography because it acknowledges that this third level is often beyond the conscious intent of the artist. As such, a photograph can be indicative of a wider, cultural way of seeing the world than the photographer had imagined.

Our investigation of 'formal' photography makes it quite clear that formal analysis can provide a useful insight to the medium. We could quite reasonably apply Fry's explanation of Post-Impressionist painting to those photographs whose prime concern is aesthetic rather than reproductive. Clearly, some photographs are more determinedly formal than others, but even the most subject-based photograph still has formal properties, whether or not form was its prime concern. That is not to say, of course, that Fry's elements of design translate literally from one medium to the other. It would be difficult to say much about the 'rhythm of line', for example, in photography. Notwithstanding, the

fact that the same subject can be photographed in many different ways endorses the fact that form is always a relevant factor in the analysis of photography.

It was one of our criticisms of the traditional history of art that it tended to be the traditional history of painting. There is no reason why, however, a narrative history of photography should not be constructed around similar concerns. As with *The Story of Art*, we could structure a chronological 'Story of Photography' around great photographers and great photographs. Such approaches already, of course, exist. Where they tend to differ from stories of painting, however, is that once the 'discovery' and development of photographic technology has been described, the story of photography fragments into parallel, simultaneous and often competing styles. This is partly because, as a reprographic medium, photography is not stylistically influenced by its Gombrichian progression towards the successful illusion of reality. With photography, perspective and proportion, for example, were mechanically achievable from the outset, so a substantial history of photography cannot be another history of verisimilitude. Photographic historians can still, however, occupy themselves with issues of context, attribution and provenance, and, with a growing market for collectable photographs, this kind of approach is likely to increase.

Photographs, just like the fine arts, are profitably open to ideological interpretation. Indeed, parts of Berger's *Ways of Seeing* are dedicated to the meaning of photographic forms. Although Berger and Mulvey were mostly concerned with class, property and gender, we can, in addition, use photographs as visual evidence of social attitudes towards anything from race and national identity to mourning and religion. As with fine art, however, we need to consider how much of the ideological content of a photograph might be the product of the individual photographer, the greater social group or even the particular interpreter. Photography also takes place within a social context, and while it is certainly successful as a commercially driven medium, the same claims for autonomy ('photography for photography's sake') could be made of the newer form.

The semiotics of photography are a far more complicated matter. This is because – unlike with language – it is very hard to argue that the relationship between a photograph and the thing photographed is 'arbitrary'. As Bazin argued, however, the photographic image both is and yet is not 'the object itself', and therein lies the root of the complication.[22] If we were to pursue this issue in depth, we would find ourselves in a metaphysical realm beyond the parameters of this introductory text. For our purposes, it is enough to focus on the difference between the literal and implied meaning of a photograph; the difference between denotation and connotation. This is where Barthes takes us when he talks about the second order of signification in which mythology takes place. A photograph of a black soldier saluting the French flag is, on the one hand, literally that: a reprographic image of a particular soldier doing a particular thing in a particular place on a particular occasion. On the other hand, its semiotic significance is about race, nation and French imperialism as a whole. Thus, we can investigate how a photograph may be semiotically constructed, while at the same time applying Barthes' notion of 'what goes without saying' to its wider interpretation.

The way in which photography can be both actual and imaginary lends itself

to a hermeneutic approach that embraces ambivalence. Just as with a scriptural text, the literal meaning of a photograph may not be its complete and total meaning. As photography becomes much more practised than fine art, both domestically and professionally, it is important that we learn to value it as a reflection of our identity and cultural values. In order to benefit from its value, we must also learn to interpret its complexities. To dismiss photography might be to dismiss our own reflection in the mirror.

Key Debate

Photography, representation and style: is it just about the subject-matter?

The ideas of Roger Scruton were given a central role in our chapter on photography. And justifiably so. The highly provocative character of Scruton's argument – namely, his claim that photography cannot be regarded as an art form since it is intrinsically unable to transcend its subject-matter – explains its long-lasting presence in theoretical debates on the subject. Much of what is said about photography, representation and art today is, to a certain degree, a response to Scruton's controversial view. So, Scruton will retain his pivotal role in this Key Debate section, in which we will look more closely into two distinct critical reactions to his position.

We will begin with the more traditional criticism presented by William King in his analysis of Roger Scruton's perspectives.[23] This relatively conventional line will then lead us to an essay by Nigel Warburton, who claims that King's response to Scruton is 'weak', 'ultimately unconvincing' and based upon a misinterpretation of Scruton's main thesis.[24] Warburton's very critical response to King's views should not, however, be taken as a defence of Scruton's claims about the mechanical, causal and transparent nature of photography and its impossibility as an art form. It is actually a fierce attack on such a view, simply using a different and perhaps more lethal theoretical weaponry.

William King takes issue with Scruton's perspective by asking an apparently very simple question: why do we look at photographs? The apparent simplicity of the question should not obscure the importance of our answer to it. If our reasons for looking at a photograph coincide with our reasons for looking at its subject-matter, then Scruton is right. If, on the other hand, we look at a photograph driven by an interest that does not entirely coincide with our interest in its subject-matter, Scruton is wrong. The first answer suggests that a photograph cannot be taken as more than the transparent reproduction of its subject-matter, as Scruton claims. The second answer implies that our interest in a photograph can be captured not only by *what* the photograph shows us, but also by *how* it shows us. And we can only be attracted by *how* the photograph displays its subject-matter – photograph's 'manner of representation' – if that particular *how* is one among many other possible ones. This in turn means that the photograph is more than just a surrogate of its subject-matter; it is a result of the photographer's intention, a notion that just does not make sense in Scruton's view.

Before taking this argument further, let us return to King's initial question: why do we look at photographs? Using a transcript of reasons given by a survey of actual viewers, King organizes the remarks into five basic types of answer to his driving question.[25] As you will see, the four initial sets of remarks do not contradict Scruton's basic assumption that photographs cannot elicit aesthetic interest. It is the reason manifested in the fifth and final set of remarks that directly challenges Scruton's view.

The first set of viewers quoted by King say they look at photographs because they are interested in the subject shown. Imagine someone asks you why you are interested in (say) your parents' wedding photographs. You would probably give that same reason yourself. If so, your remarks would be obviously consistent with Scruton's perspective. King's second set of remarks highlights the evocative power of photographs. Think of the photographs taken during the trip you made last summer. They are interesting in that they have an emotional impact; they trigger memories and make you relive a situation. It is still all about the subject, which means that Scruton's argument has not been challenged so far. The third set of responses emphasizes the cause of the photograph's formal appearance and expresses interest in technical aspects of the process. Comments about the effects of excessive exposure or of the use of a given lens, for instance, fit this category. Since the remarks of this kind are limited to technical aspects – they do not actually touch the aesthetic dimension of photographs – they too cannot be regarded as a challenge to Scruton's view. What if the remarks are not directed to the technical causes but rather on the effects themselves, that is to say, the actual formal appearance of a photograph? Would that be a challenge to Scruton's perspective? Not really, King claims. Remarks about purely formal features of a photograph – patterns of light or colour, for example – seem to challenge Scruton's argument about the incapacity of photography to transcend its subject-matter. But there is still nothing in such remarks that relates them to the *specific* experience of looking at a photograph. They can be made about anything at all. Anticipating these kinds of remarks as a potential challenge to his ideas, Scruton himself points out that we can have a purely abstract aesthetic interest in any visual object. Photography's alleged *specific* limitations cannot therefore be questioned by evoking the interest of the viewer in abstract formal features.

We have to wait until we are presented with King's fifth set of remarks to see the real challenge emerge. That only happens when and if the attention to the formal features of the photograph is, in the viewer's eyes, merged with an interest in such features as representational devices. Can photographs be the object of that kind of attention; can they 'elicit a second type of aesthetic interest' involving an interest in 'manners of representation'?[26] This is the crucial point where Scruton and King diverge. Clearly opposing Scruton, King claims that photographs can express the photographer's particular 'way of seeing' and that such aesthetic interest in representation might constitute a reason why we look at them, a reason that simultaneously transcends the viewer's simple interest in the subject-matter and in the purely abstract features of a photograph.

But that, according to Nigel Warburton, is a weak response to Roger Scruton's argument.[27] In his essay about the possibility of individual style in

photographic art, Warburton says why he believes King's objections are 'weak' and presents what he considers to be a 'strong', alternative position to Scruton's views. Warburton reminds us that Scruton's essay is about *ideal* photography, about the distinctive optico-chemical process that differentiates photography from other visual media. The weak critical reply, Warburton argues, is sustained by the analysis of *actual* photography, thus missing the target and facilitating Scruton's counter-response. Scruton acknowledges that actual photographers do produce intentional and aesthetically significant actual images. The point, he claims, is that they can only do it insofar as they move away from ideal photography and contaminate it with procedures imported from other visual media, including from painting.[28] A strong response to Scruton should therefore be given within the limits of ideal photography. That is Warburton's ambitious aim. To achieve it, he concentrates upon the matter of individual style.

The notion of individual style usually refers to what is distinctive about an artist's work. Warburton uses the term in a more precise way, referring 'not just to what is distinctive but to those aspects of it that exhibit an aesthetically significant intention'.[29] This brings us back to the decisive idea of intention. As we have seen, the allegedly weak rebuttal of Scruton's position also put forward the intentional nature of photography. We have also seen that the weak reply to Scruton identified human intention with the manner of representation. In other words, intention would be manifested in *how* a given subject is visually represented in a photograph, with that *how* depending on aesthetically relevant choices made by the photographer. Accordingly, a pattern of aesthetic decisions, enabled by the photographer's control over the medium and expressed in a particular manner of representation – a special 'way of seeing' – would constitute individual style.

Warburton does identify a problem in this approach. Although he concedes that new photographic technology has further increased the photographer's control over the medium, he shares with Scruton the sense that intentional control over the photographic image is essentially very limited. Such limited power of selection, which sharply reduces the available manners of representation, becomes clear when contrasted with the much wider spectrum of considerably more sophisticated choices made possible for the painter.

Scruton emphasizes the lack of intentional control to claim that individual style – in the sense of a particular set of aesthetically significant decisions expressed in a particular manner of representation – can never be achieved in photography. Since individual style is the form of intentionality that ultimately defines a work of art, it follows that photography cannot be art. This would seem to be the end of it. And it would be, if Warburton did not raise an additional question: accepting that the limited manners of representation fatally associated with photography leave no room for individual style, can we find it somewhere else within the photographic process? His answer – his affirmative answer – contains the core argument of his strong reply to Scruton's position.

In order to find photographic style within the manner of representation, Warburton suggests we look for it beyond what is visually given in an individual photograph. Unlike painting, where individual style can be achieved and perceived within an individual work, photography does not allow us to identify

individual style in a single image. It requires us to take a panoramic view and consider the *repertoire*: 'It is only in a series of photographs that a photographer's choices can be made clear.'[30] Even if we agree with Scruton and accept that a single photograph cannot be much more than a piece of information about its subject-matter, the situation radically changes when we insert that individual photograph in the context of a photographer's work as a whole. Through that process of contextualization, the stylistic features emerge, the intentions become discernible, and photography achieves the status of 'a medium which has the capacity to embody important and aesthetically relevant intentions'.[31] In other words, the photograph can now be seen as a work of art.

Further Study

Library and bookshop shelves contain no shortage of material on fine art. Photography, on the other hand, is less generously served. This is not to say, however, that further study is made correspondingly difficult, and photography's relatively short history is well served in terms of quality, if not in quantity.

The early history of photography is well covered in volumes such as Newhall's *The Daguerreotype in America* and Mark Haworth-Booth's edited *The Golden Age of British Photography*.[32] That said, a general history of photography is a very good place to begin with a broad grounding. Compared with the histories of fine art, photographic histories tend to be less chronologically structured once the earliest discoveries have been described. Photography falls less easily into successive schools and periods, and developments in this medium are grouped much more into parallel approaches. They are far less dependent upon the milestones, monuments, masterpieces and even masters than traditional histories of fine art. Among the introductory volumes, Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography* is something of a classic text; it is well illustrated and clearly explained. The only (understandable) weakness is that while claiming to trace photography up to 'the present day' it in fact stops at the start of the 1980s.[33] Michel Frizot's edited *A New History of Photography* is more up-to-date and takes a less narrative approach – which makes it a useful companion to Newhall.[34] The substantial catalogue printed to accompany the 1989 international touring exhibition *The Art of Photography* comprises some very useful scholarly essays by experts in the field, along with potted biographies and further reading suggestions for all the photographers included. It also has the advantage of first-class reproductions of more than 450 important photographic images.[35] The importance of looking at photographs (and not just reading about them) cannot be over-emphasized.

The social and cultural issues surrounding photography are capably introduced in Jean-Claude Lemagny and André Rouillé's edited *A History of Photography*.[36] Pierre Bourdieu, whom we met in chapter 4, published *Un Art moyen* in 1965; this was translated and published in English in 1990 as *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*.[37] Here, Bourdieu investigates photography as a widespread and everyday social practice. This is important because, of all the media considered

in this book, photography is the one that falls most easily into the hands of the general public. Aaron Siskind's socially committed documentary work with New York's Photo League is featured in *This Was the Photo League*, which also includes the work of photographers such as Arthur Rothstein, Berenice Abbot and Lewis Hine.[38] Siskind's break with the Photo League and his espousal of abstract photography is covered in Richard Howells's 'Order and Fantasy: An Interview with Aaron Siskind' and Carl Chiarenza's *Aaron Siskind: Pleasures and Terrors*, which is the most comprehensive and authoritative biography of Siskind to date.[39] The work of Aaron Siskind has been highlighted in this chapter because of its particular relevance to theories of realism and representation in photography. There remains, however, much scope for the further study of other photographers, just as there is with painters and others in the more traditional fine arts.

Among theoretical works on photography, Susan Sontag's *On Photography* is of course recommended, as is Bazin's hugely important essay, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image'. Introductions to both have already been made in this chapter, along with Roger Scruton's *The Aesthetic Understanding*. Roland Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* is also recommended, especially along with his compendium of reflections on photography, *Camera Lucida*. John Tagg's *The Burden of Representation* tackles theoretical issues with an emphasis on documentary, while Stuart Hall's edited volume, *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, contains essays on both representation in general and photography in particular. Especially recommended are Hall's own essay: 'The Work of Representation' and Peter Hamilton's 'Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography'.[40]

For a sophisticated approach by an author also extensively cited in our iconology chapter, see *The Reconfigured Eye* by W. J. T. Mitchell.[41] Two further recommended introductions to photographic theory – which like Mitchell also have the additional advantage of including digital imaging – are Liz Wells's *Photography: A Critical Introduction* and Terence Wright's *The Photography Handbook*, which is less of a practical guide than its title might suggest.[42] For a clear and approachable guide to photographic practice, see Barbara London and John Upton's *Photography*.[43] This is recommended not because it is suggested that all visual theorists should also be skilled practitioners. Rather, it is because (at least) a working knowledge of photographic practice helps both explain and underline the significance of authorship, mediation and control in photographic representation. Moving from the practical to the much more philosophical, we recommend Nelson Goodman's work on a semantic theory of art. His *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, first published in the 1970s, is now a classic text.[44] This, in turn, can be usefully complemented by 'Photography as a representational art', a concise essay by Robert Wicks published in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*.[45]