la science impossible de l'être unique

A lever for the Image/Text

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Contents:

"mais la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver, elle, était bien essentielle, elle accomplissait pour moi, utopiquement, *la science impossible de l'être unique*" (110)

"but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*" (71)[1]

The Problem of Multi-Media Comparison

W.J.T. Mitchell, in his book *Picture Theory,* rejects the "strategy of systematic comparison/contrast" that he asserts "ignores other forms of relationship, eliminating the possibility of metonymic juxtapositions, of incommensurability, and of unmediated or non-negotiable forms of alterity" (87). In commencing a comparative paper across mediums, I propose to employ a structured approach that remains sensitive to the problem Mitchell outlines within comparative work. Focusing particularly on the interaction between text and art objects, Mitchell further laments the practice of these comparisons for their tradition of comparing and contrasting, and canonizing "purist" notions of each medium as independent of the other (Mitchell 96). Mitchell argues against what he views as the norm for higher academic learning:

> "The corporate, departmental structure of universities reinforces the sense that verbal and visual media are to be seen as distinct, separate, and parallel spheres that converge only at some higher level of abstraction (aesthetic philosophy; the humanities; the deans office)" (85)

To solve the problem of overly *purist* and reductive multi-media comparison, Mitchell proposes his theory of the *image/text.* This theory holds that the practice of comparison is not futile if the practitioner finds a moment of interaction—the "image/text"—between

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[1] Richard Howard's 1980 translations of *La Chambre Claire*, titled *Camera Lucida* in English, will be provided as footnotes throughout this thesis. Howard was a friend of Barthes, and has translated several of the author's other works (Batchen 15). He is celebrated poet, essayist, and literary critic, in addition to his prestige as a translator.

the mediums and uses that concept as a lever to pry open the meaning of these interactions. Mitchell writes that his approach, "offers the figure of the image/text as a wedge to pry open the heterogeneity of media" (100).

While this paper will not use Mitchell's *image/text* practice of comparison, I will remain faithful to the problem that his theory points out: where to start comparing texts from different genres and mediums. This paper will propose a new method of responsible multi-media comparison through the lens of Object Oriented Ontology. For my comparison, I will use two theoretical texts: Roland Barthes' 1979 *La Chambre Claire: Note sur la photographie,* and Timothy Morton's 2012 article, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry".

Roland Barthes and *La Chambre Claire*

After *La Chambre Claire'*s publication in 1980, critics wondered how to categorize this strange, autobiographical odyssey to find the "*noeme",* or essential meaning, of photography (Batchen 18). Critics often categorize this text as part of Barthes "subjective turn" towards the end of his life, which also is said to include his autobiography *Roland Barthes,* published in 1977. To do so, however, runs the risk of discrediting the stylistic qualities of the text as sentimental or overly subjective. In his anthology *Photography Degree Zero,* Geoffrey Batchen opts to include only essays that address *Camera Lucida* alone, independent from any comparison with Barthes' other works. Batchen asserts that doing so will generate the most comprehensive dialogue about the text itself. In order to mitigate the sentimental pitfall, I will adopt Batchen's strategies and address *La Chambre Claire* independently from the other texts in which

Barthes discusses photography, most notably his essays "the Photographic Message" (1961) and "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964).

La Chambre Claire is a vibrant text, reflective as much of the photography it seeks to uncover a "*noeme",* or essential meaning, for, as it is of the characterization of the narrator "Barthes'" grief for his mother[2]. Rife with the grief at the passing of his mother in 1977, Barthes' text wavers back and forth from a theoretical discussion of a series of famous photographs (mostly taken from the November 1977 issue of the *Nouvel Observateur* journal), to a meditation on a single photograph, *La Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver* (The Winter Garden Photograph) of his mother at age five. This photograph was, for Barthes, "comme la dernière musique qu'écrivit Schumann avant de sombrer, ce premier *Chant de l'Aube,* qui s'accorde à la fois à l'être de ma mere et au chagrin que j'ai de sa mort.... la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver, elle, était bien essentielle" (110)[3]. For Barthes, this photograph is at once his mother's essence and the pain of her absence. It represents, for him, the essential nature of his mother and of photography, in one. While he does not represent that photograph within the text, the print edition of *La Chambre Claire,* originally published by Cahiers du Cinema, is prefaced with Daniel Boudinet's photo, *Polaroid,* of 1979. While this photograph is never explicitly referenced within the

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[2] Henceforth, this paper will denote the distinction between Barthes the author, and "Barthes" the narrator in quotation marks. The need to differentiate between the Barthes-as-writer and the Barthes-narrator is predicated by my later discussion of the character, "Barthes", as an object within the writer, Barthes', text, and is with respect to Barthes own post-structuralist text, "La Mort de l'Auteur". In that text, Barthes argues for the separation of author and text, in order that the text stand alone. The stylistic adoption of quotation marks is borrowed from Margaret Olin's text, "Touching Photographs", which will be discussed later.

[3] "like the last music Schumann wrote before collapsing, that first *Gesang der Frühe* which accords with both my mother's being and my grief at her death… the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential" (70)

text, scholars like Diana Knight have observed that Barthes' reference to the color of his mother's pupils—blue-green—is also the dominant palate of Boudinet's image. Knight asserts that Boudinet's photo is the counterpart to *La Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver,* another essential photograph that dominates the text through its absence. Knight writes, "Barthes' reference to Schumann's *Dawn Song* is surely related to the Daniel Boudinet polaroid that opens the text….Boudinet's dawn polaroid is certainly an integral part of Barthes' symbolic narrative" (138). The *Dawn Song* that Knight references is the *Chant de l'Aube* quoted above. The narrative of *La Chambre Claire* is defined by the dual relationship between an image that is continually referenced but is never represented, and an image that is prominently represented but never referenced. The absence/presence relationship between these two photographs defines the experience of reading *La Chambre Claire.*

La Chambre Claire is structured around two parts. The first part contains photographs lifted from the journal, *Nouvel Observateur*, while the second part, Barthes' "*palinodie*" is less didactic and framed around *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver* (LCC 95). Each of the two sections contains twenty-four chapters and twelve photographs, labeled in appendices, but not titled within the main body of the text. The experience of reading the text is both mechanical and disorienting—each chapter (only a few pages at most) is boldly numbered, creating a progressive, regular effect, yet the reader must continually turn back to the gloss to uncover the name of the section.

In the *palinodie,* or second section, each of the twelve photographs are brought up in service of what they aren't—*la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver*, which is never represented. Barthes writes that the photographer who took *la Photographie du Jardin*

d'Hiver, "avait été le médiateur d'une vérité, à l'égal de Nadar donnant de sa mere… l'une des plus belles photos au monde" (109)[4], a photograph which he represents in the text on the opposite page (70). By representing a photograph of another mother, Nadar's, and equating it to the unrepresented photograph of his own mother, Barthes mimics the experience of loss and discovery. The reader (at last!) catches a glimpse of what *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver* must mean to Barthes through the potent beauty and nostalgia readily apparent within Nadar's photograph. But just as the "essence" that Barthes finds in his *Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver* does not bring her back to life for him, so the reader feels the same sense of absence in Nadar's photograph; it is not the photograph to which Barthes continually refers, just an analogous one. When Barthes writes that in *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver*, "*the impossible science of the unique being"* has been "utopically" achieved, his claim seems yet more utopically impossible under the partial experience of the reader.

This contradiction between essence and appearance of *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver* brings to light another contradiction: between an object and its appearance in a photo. Barthes laments:

> "Au gré de ces photos, parfois je reconnaissais une région de son visage, tel rapport du nez et du front, le mouvement de ses bras, de ses mains. Je ne la reconnaissais jamais que par morceaux, c'est-à-dire que je manquais son être, et que, donc, je la manquais toute… Je la reconnaissais différentiellement, non essentiellement" (La Chambre Claire 103)[5]

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[4] "had been the mediator of a truth, as much as Nadar making of his mother… one of the loveliest photographs in the world" (70)

[5] "According to these photographs, sometimes I recognized a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands. I never recognized her except in fragments, which is to say that I missed her *being,* and that therefore I missed her altogether… I recognized her differentially, not essentially" (66)

Within these photos, who predate his discovery of *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver*, Barthes only identifies "morceaux"—or fragments of his mother's appearance—rather than her whole self, "son être". Each sentence within this quotation shares the verb "reconnaitre", alternating between positive and negative uses; in the first sentence, "je reconnaissais", in the second "je ne la reconnaissais jamais", while in the third, Barthes writes "je la reconnaissais". In wavering from positive to negative meanings of "Barthes'" recognition, the verb "recconaitre" alternately asserts and contradicts the presence of these fragments of his mother's essence. As soon as the fragments of Henriette—her face! her hands!, small touches of the woman Roland Barthes loves—are established in the first sentence, they are contradicted as, "jamais que par morceaux", or, never but fragments. The negative verb introduces the presence of Henriette—"Je ne *la* reconnaissais jamais"[6]—alongside the negative phrase for "never", *jamais*. Henriette is "never but fragments", and even in her presence, she is absent. The fundamental issue of photography, revealed through Barthes search for Henriette, is its relationship with the objects it represents. Does photography capture anything about the object it reproduces? Where does the *object* of the photograph exist in its representation?

Timothy Morton and "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry"

Timothy Morton's 2012 text, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry", provides the tools for understanding how the photographic object functions. Timothy Morton is a member of the contemporary philosophy movement, Object Oriented ontology (OOO). A Professor at Rice University, his work blends the concepts of OOO with ecological

[6] The *la* pronoun refers the feminine noun in the sentence preceding: Henriette.

studies. He typically focuses his work on "Hyperobjects", objects of such vast presence that they shirk localization, such as climate change (Morton, Hyperobjects 27). As chair of the English department, a majority of his scholarship has been upon Percy Shelley. A synthesis of these interests, Morton published the article "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" in 2012 in the journal *New Literary History* alongside several of his OOO peers.[7] I am selecting this text to analyze for its unique theoretical interventions in OOO, as well as its literary subject matter.

To return to the questions brought up by *La Chambre Claire*, I will demonstrate how Morton's text provides a solution to both Mitchell's problem of the image/text, and the perennial question surrounding Barthes' *La Chambre Claire*: representation of the object. In service of this goal, I will take the objects interacting within and around Barthes' text—the photographs, the text, the objects Barthes references, and Barthes himself—and re-read them through Morton's key theoretical concepts, *translation* and *causality.* Although Barthes' death predates the advent of Object Oriented ontology, the terms that he introduces to discuss photography correlate with those Morton introduces to discuss objects. As we have seen, Barthes frames the photographs in *La Chambre Claire* with sensitivity to a rift between an object's essence and its appearance; Barthes differentiates between the "morceaux" and the "etre" of his Mother in the photographs.

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[7] Graham Harman's "A Well Wrought Broken Hammer" (referenced in this text) was published alongside Morton's "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" *New Literary History.* Volume 43, no. 2 (2012). There was a response to those articles, "Systems and Things: A Response to Graham Harman and Timothy Morton", written by Jane Bennett in the same publication. In that text, Bennett points out the political implications of the term "object", asserting that the term leaves out the stake of the different objects. She proposes the term "bodies" as a term more sensitive to the politics of equating objects. This is a valid and oft-repeated critique of Object Oriented Ontology; talking about objects independent of their contexts ignores the potential implications of each object.

Object-oriented ontology is a body of theory created around the same concerns of essential and aesthetic qualities of objects. This paper will briefly explain the theory of OOO before moving into a discussion of Morton's critical interventions within it, *translation* and *causality*. My analysis will take Morton's theories of *translation* and *causality* as objects themselves and apply them to Barthes' *La Chambre Claire* in light of that text's preoccupation with the "*impossible science of the unique being".* I will then turn again to Morton's text, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry", this time as an object of study. I will demonstrate that the same strategies of OOO interpretation are relevant across theory texts of different mediums. Through this discussion, I will argue that these theory texts produce objects through their very discussion of them. Further, I will conclude that object oriented ontology provides a new way to responsibly talk about the complex text objects produced by multimedia and interdisciplinary interactions, after the apt concerns of W.J.T. Mitchell.

Object Oriented Ontology and Timothy Morton

Object Oriented Ontology: A Brief Introduction

Object oriented ontology, a subset of the philosophical body, Speculative Realism, focuses on the 'being', or *ontology,* of objects and complicates a straightforward understanding of how they function within and without the boundaries of human perception. The central problem approached through the schema is post-Kantian philosophy's division—and limitation—of the world into the things that we can experience, and the things as they exist "in themselves" (*Ding an sich*)[8]. Quentin Meillassoux, considered a forerunner of Speculative Realism, points out this limitation of knowledge and defines it as *Correlationism* (Harman, Broken Hammer 185). Meillassoux's correlationism refers to the tradition of philosophical thought that limits human knowledge to the correlation between thinking and being (or subjectivity and objectivity), excluding the consideration of either term independently (Meillassoux 5). What this means, is that neither a purely subjective, nor purely objective world can be considered independent of the other.

Object oriented ontology (OOO) intervenes here with a model of reality, distilled from many points on the philosophical realism-idealism spectrum, that is, in Graham Harman's terms, "far *weirder*" (Harman, Lovecraft 184). OOO circumvents the problematic thinking-being correlation by extending Kant's "rift" between humanity's perception of objects and the objects' nature *Ding an sich* ('in itself') to cover the interactions between *all objects.* Rather than the split nature between an objects aesthetic

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[8] Kant introduces *Das Ding an sich* in his Critiques, particularly the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The "Thing in Itself" is a part of Kant's larger frame, *noumenon,* or a posited object that exists without the intervention of the senses. *Noumenon* is typically used in contrast to *phenomenon,* or an object that is perceived through the senses.

interaction and that object's *Ding an sich* reflecting a problem of *human* interaction, this interaction, for OOO, is the essential nature of all objects (Harman, Broken Hammer 185).

With the addendum of "weird" to reality, Graham Harman thus introduces object-oriented ontology. OOO provides a way to navigate the realities of objects as they exist outside of human perception, suggesting that the essence of all objects is that they are beyond access to each other, and even themselves. Objects, for the object oriented ontologist, encompass items as diverse as people, emotions, concepts, apples, cupcakes, billiard balls, or texts. The field is predicated on the elimination of the subject-object dichotomy. No longer simply a function of subject-object perception, all objects, whether conscious or not, interact and withdraw from each other and themselves in the same manner (Harman, Broken Hammer 185). This manner of *being* for objects is constituted through several factors: allusion, withdrawal, and an infinite capacity to be *other* than what their appearance suggests.

Harman asserts that all objects have an independent agency that "alludes" to their endless potential of thing-ness. Moments of "allusion" happen when something occurs to question the object's ostensive function[9]. Harman's draws on Heidegger's example of a broken hammer[10] to illustrate his own point of allusion. When using a hammer, Harman

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[9] Guerrilla Metaphysics, 141-144 (among others), Harman's "A Well Wrought Broken Hammer" p 187.

[10] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time.* 1927. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper (1962). Harman draws upon Heidegger's famous example of the two functions of a hammer. For Heidegger, the two functions are: pick it up and use it, or contemplate it from afar. In *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects,* published in 2002, Harman first takes on Heidegger's classifications of tools. This paper references Harman's later article, "The Well Wrought Broken Hammer", of 2012, for this discussion of the moment of *allure* of the broken hammer.

assumes that the typical interaction would be a *correlationist* one between thinking and being; the person's perception of the hammer as a tool to hit nails defines the hammer's being as a tool for human use. The hammer in the correlationist scenario is bound by its function as a human tool; it doesn't exist independently of its usefulness to the human subject hammering in nails. Harman's OOO point of "allusion", enacted when the hammer breaks, removes the hammer from its function as a human tool, and in doing so, makes obsolete the dependence on the correlation between perception and being. Harman writes, "The fact that the hammer can break proves it is deeper than my understanding of it" (Harman, 186). Harman does not intend, in contrast to Meillassoux and Kant, to discover what this "deeper" understanding of the hammer might be, rather, he is attempting to show that the essential nature of the hammer is that it is (and always will be), "deeper" than any other object's understanding of it. Allusion is the moment where an object indicates its potential for "depth" to another object.

The object is not only alluding to its potential within human interactions, as in the example of the hammer. Objects within OOO are constantly *withdrawing* from their interactions with themselves and other objects (Harman, Lovecraft). It is the interaction, or "gap" between their withdrawing essence and their aesthetic manifestation that is the interest of object oriented ontology, not the agency and perception of a subject in the face of an object (Harman, Lovecraft). These moments of allusion for Harman represent a "gap" between the sensual, or aesthetic qualities of an object—accessible to the subject—and its real qualities, that are endless and withdrawing. The objects of OOO are "far *weirder*" than previously accepted.

I now turn to the intervention of Timothy Morton in the field of OOO, particularly through his article, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry".

Translation **and** ***Causality***

In this section, I will discuss Timothy Morton's critical introduction of two ideas, *translation* and *causality,* to the theories of OOO. I will define the terms initially, and then begin using them throughout the rest of the text. Morton's article, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry", intervenes in OOO with a strategy for approaching poetry as an object with the same capacity for intervention within reality as any other object. He concludes that an object-oriented defense of poetry is the best defense of poetry, with reference to Percey Shelley's 1821 *A Defense of Poetry*. For Morton, poetry is an *aesthetic* interaction between objects ranging from the poet, to the paper, to the objects that the poet writes about. All these objects aesthetically interact, without reference to their essential nature. For Morton, aesthetic is simply, "having to do with appearance" (Morton 205) and he uses the terms to refer to object-interaction.

Morton terms aesthetic interactions of any kind, *translations.* For Morton, *translation* is the *aesthetic* interaction between any object—the sound of the wind in the trees is the tree translating the wind. The tree translates the wind just as the wind translates the tree. Morton further asserts that human consciousness is an aesthetic translation between the human-object and the world. Because all objects can only aesthetically interact, human consciousness is no more essential that the wind in the trees. Human consciousness, for Morton, is simply a function of object interaction. The human ear hears the wind, the tree is tossed by it; both exist apart from any intervention of

"subject". Human consciousness and the wind in the trees are both moments of *translation*, simply between different objects. This move follows OOO's rejection of the correlation between subjective and objective interaction. By equating consciousness and tree-wind, Morton's concept of *translation* eliminates the mediation of human perception as a constructor of the world. Kant's Transcendental Idealism, or human perception as a determinant of the human world, separate from the inaccessible object world, is simply a human interpretation of what all objects do when they interact, or *translate* each other.

Morton divides objects into two parts, in the same way that Kant and Meillassoux did before him, yet for Morton, as an OO ontologist, the "rift" between the two parts is the essential nature of object-being, rather than the problem of human access that it was for Kant. The tension between these two parts, *essence* and *appearance*, defines the experience of object-hood (Morton 210). Translation, or the interaction between objects, is an interaction between the *appearances* of objects—not their *essences*. As the two critical parts of an object, the nature of object-hood is created through the contradiction and coexistence of appearance and essence.

Appearance is the aesthetic dimension of an object, constituted by the qualities that interact with other objects. The essence of an object, however, that intangible quality that makes that object that object is never accessible to other objects. The ultimate inaccessibility of essence is what constitutes the nature of an object, and it is also the driver of withdrawal and allure. Morton writes, " 'Exist' just means 'withdraw from access'" (Morton 210). *Aesthetic* is the adjective that Morton and this paper employ to talk about the accessible qualities of objects, within the field of *appearance.* When the wind translates the trees, it is the aesthetic qualities of the two that interact and produce a

sound, rather than their essential natures. Nor is the human ear that interprets the sound interacting with an essential quality of wind-in-trees, either. All are objects *translating* each other in turn, and whilst the translations look very different—for instance, the person who hears the wind, or the branches that move—there is no essential difference between these examples of *tranlation*.

Morton's distinction between the different qualities of an object refers back even to John Locke's distinction between the secondary qualities and primary qualities of objects[11]. Synthesized through Meillassoux's text, *Apres la Finitude,* the impulse to qualify objects and their qualities is an important part of OOO[12]. Primary qualities refer to the aspects of an object that can be mathematically derived, and forms the basis of his thesis countering the post-Kantian problem of *correlationism*. In a primary quality's dual existence both as an empirical fact, and a facet of human perception that derived the fact, Meillassoux can argue against *correlationism* as the only way of perceiving the world; mathematically derived (by human application) facts bridge both the subjective and objective perceptions of objects. Locke's secondary qualities, bridged to correlationism in *Apres la Finitude*, become important in Morton's text through the idea of *causation*. In differentiating between essence and appearance, and establishing the terms of aesthetic

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[11] Although it can be traced back even to Renée Descartes before Locke. The primary texts that discuss this distinction are Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy,* and *The Principles of Philosophy.* Locke's significant distinction appears in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Obviously, Locke and Descartes were not employing these distinctions in the way that they are taken up by Meillassoux and later, by Speculative Realism, but it is important to acknowledge that these distinctions predated the comparatively newer work of OOO.

[12] For more on this point, see Harman's text *The Quadruple Object,* and Morton's distinction of *Hyperobjects* in his text by the same name.

interaction, Morton's OOO follows in a tradition of differentiation that predates OOO, and even post-Kantian philosophy's turn.

Causation is the second concept I will use from Morton's text. *Causality* is typically defined as the result of a cause-effect relationship between objects. Commonly used in physics, but not infrequently in philosophy, the theory of causality suggests that all relationships between objects have causes and effects[13]. Morton tweaks that understanding for OOO by asserting that this relationship of *causality* is fundamentally aesthetic. When Morton defines causality, or causation, as aesthetic, he is reinforcing the OOO idea that objects only interact on the level of appearance. To say that the interaction between my pen and paper is *causal* is to say that the product of that interaction is also aesthetic, and therefore also a complex object. Morton's use of causality adds something more to object oriented aesthetic interaction—the product of object interaction is causality, just as causality itself is object interaction. The implications of this contradiction allow Morton to make the claim that "A poem directly intervenes in reality in a *causal* way… An OOO approach to poetry shows how poems do something as physical as what happens when my car scrapes the sidewalk" ([my emphasis] Defense of Poetry 206).

Morton's key terms introduced in his "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry", *translation* and *causation*, are related in a suggestive way. Morton's car scraping the sidewalk is an instance of object translation. The car translates the sidewalk as the sidewalk translates the car. The resulting car-sidewalk object, or scratch, however, is the

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[13] Green, Celia (2003). *The Lost Cause: Causation and the Mind–Body Problem*. Oxford: Oxford Forum. Includes several chapters on causality in physics.

causal dimension of their translation. Applied to poetry, Morton's key takeaway is to distinguish the *translations* within a poem from the *causation* of the poem itself. Morton asserts that both forces are as strongly at work in a poem as in a car accident.

I now turn to an analysis of these problems at work within Morton's OOO text, and the stylistic tools that Morton uses to circumvent them.

Textual Translations of Objects

The central problem with the construction of OOO theory texts, like the ones previously referenced, is the text-nature of the discussion. Whenever an object oriented ontologist references an object within their texts, that object is translated by the writer into the context of the text itself, and is newly dependent upon the rhetorical and literary devices used to construct it. To illustrate this point, I will take Morton's subject of analysis, Shelley's *A Defense of Poetry,* as my own, to demonstrate the impact that Morton himself has upon that object. Ironically, Morton doesn't acknowledge the impact that he has upon the poetic object he discusses in his text. I will use one of Shelley's more well known quotes from his Defense:

> "It were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet" (514)

In the following analysis, I will demonstrate how this quotation implicates both the experience of poetry that Morton references, and the experience of OOO texts that Morton's "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" creates: the *translation* of objects.

While Shelley points to the folly of "transfusing" poetry across languages, his problem could well be found in poetry itself. Through Morton's logic, poetry is already a

work of *translation*—across objects, rather than languages. The violet's "colour and odour", when *translated* in a poem reflect only those aspects of the violet-object of that are relevant to the Shelley-object. A worm's translation of the same violet would comment on the qualities of the violet that are relevant to it, such as taste, or its nitrogen production. The worm's translation accesses the essence of the violet no more than Shelley's does, but the two translations of violet are almost unrecognizable as the same object. The aesthetic interaction between Shelley and the violet is based purely on the *appearance* of the violet that Shelley interacts with.

The experience of the violet, then, is the aesthetic *causal* interaction between Shelley and violet. The aesthetic product, the Shelley-violet is actually a new object that "intervenes in reality in a causal way" (Morton 206). The worm-violet would be a different *causal* object that intervenes in a completely independent way. The product of Shelley's *translation* of the violet is a new, causal object. Yet the object produced carries the essence of neither Shelley nor the violet; it is the product of a purely aesthetic interaction. Here, then, is the primary concern of OOO, the rift between the aesthetic interaction of the object and the object's essence. The "transfusion" that Shelley references is not only a concern of language translation, it reflects the fundamental nature of all object interaction: the absence of essence. Appearance or aesthetic is the most a poem can translate. While OOO limits a poem to the aesthetic interaction, each *translation* also creates a new object, the informed reader, with its own withdrawing essence and appearance. When *I* read Shelley's prose, *I* in turn cannot access the essence of the Shelley-violet, just as Shelley could not access the essence of the violet. The

importance of this analysis is to reconsider the presence of a subject—following OOO logic there is no hierarchical difference between the Shelley-violet and the "real" violet.

OOO texts use established techniques, such as Latour Litanies, to construct their discussions of objects. When Shelley writes about the violet, the Shelley-violet he produces is limited by constraints and possibilities of language and text. A literary *translation* of an object will always be a different object from, say, Morton's sidewalk scratch, although no more essential. A Latour Litany, named by Ian Bogost after Bruno Latour's practice, is a random, written list of objects that underscore the OOO theory of "democratizing" objects[14]. Morton is employing a Latour Litany when he writes about "all objects, from perfume bottles to Popes to plutonium pellets" (Morton 214). By listing, or "litanzing", these objects, Morton levels them and avoids the trap of "overmining" or "undermining" certain objects over others. Overmining and undermining are Graham Harman's terms to refer to the problem of prioritizing certain objects over another—either giving them too much importance, overmining, or too little, resulting in undermining (Harman, QO chapter 1). By employing lists of objects, the object oriented ontologist can stylistically enforce the "democracy" of objects. Bruno Latour defends his particular use of lists in his book, *Pasteurization of France*:

> "the rhetorical power of these rosters of beings stems from their direct opposition to the flaws of current mainstream philosophy… The best stylistic antidote to this grim deadlock is a repeated sorcerer's change of the multitude of things that resist any unified empire" (206).

Bryant gather's the "stylistic antidote" and "rhetorical power[s]" of OOO together in his text *Alien Phenomenology*. He declares that Latour Litanies "perform real philosophical

[14] For more on the idea of a "democracy" of objects, see: Bryant, Levi R. *The Democracy of Objects.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2011. Print

work" (39). Acknowledging the role of the writer in *translating* and mediating these litanies has a profound impact on the text and the set of relationships between the objects created.

The role of the writer can be seen clearly in the example from Morton's "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" represented above. In this example, the objects aren't textually random—they all start with the letter "P", and are translated by the same object: Morton. Morton, as a writer, is *translating* these objects in the only way that he, as a writer, can—through text. When "Popes" and "plutonium pellets" are juxtaposed, they share not only their letters, but the *causal* interplay between themselves and the Morton-object.

Morton, when he references objects in his text, produces a new set of objects. Like the Shelley-violet and the violet, Morton's text produces objects through its own subsequent interaction with the objects he discusses. The next section of this paper will address the causality of another theory text, Roland Barthes' *La Chambre Claire,* and demonstrate how this text *translates* objects into text. I will also show how Barthes' own terms, *studium* and *punctum* in the context of photography, translate and produce objects in the same way as Morton's OOO theory of poetry.

La Chambre Claire

I will introduce this section by demonstrating how the language of *La Chambre Claire* is already sensitive to what OOO scholars call the "rift" between an object and its essence. Barthes muses on *La Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver*: "Je ne puis montrer la Photo du Jardin d'Hiver. Elle n'existe que pour moi. Pour vous, elle ne serait rien d'autre qu'une photo indifférente, l'une des mille manifestations du 'quelconque'"(115)[15]. The negation structure of the two negative verbs—"n'existe que" and "ne serait rien de"—reflects the split relationship between an object and its essence. The negative phrase "ne…que" relies on the noun directly following it to derive its meaning. Even as the existence of the photograph is negative, "n'existe que", the phrase "que pour moi" equally invokes the positive. The photograph does not exist, but for Barthes, who it does exist for. The next verb phrase too, contains both positive and negative constructions; Barthes writes "elle ne serait *rien d'autre qu'une* photo indifférente". The photograph is *nothing* but itself, and therefore contradictorily, *everything* but itself, a part of the thousands of ordinary photographs. This photograph is hung between negative structures that define presence even as the verb negates that presence. The "rift" between the photograph's absent essence, and "mille manifestations" of its presence, is what constitutes this photograph for "Barthes". The language of *La Chambre Claire* reflects the same concern of essence and appearance that drives object oriented ontology.

The *Studium* and the *Punctum* as *Translation* and *Causality*

[15] "I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the 'ordinary'" (73)

The *studium* and the *punctum* are the essential concepts around which Barthes bases his exposition on photography. Barthes' *studium* is the cultural and academic field of recognition in a photograph, while the *punctum* is a chance detail that "pierces" him and makes the photograph come alive (LCC 49). Similarly to the co-presence of an object's essence and appearance that define an object in OOO, the *studium* and the *punctum* together create the category of photographs that Barthes explores in *La Chambre Claire*[16]. He writes, "La Photographie appartient à cette classe d'objects feuilletés dont on ne peut séparer des deux feuilletés sans les détruire"(17)[17] defining photography as split between "feuilletés" even as the leaves are fundamentally inextricable. For Barthes' photography, everything from the physical composition of the photograph, to the two parts of the text, to the concepts through which he explains photography's essence, are structured around contradictory and intrinsically related co-presences. Barthes establishes himself as the "médiateur de toute la Photographie" (22)[18], and his basic structure of photography contains a Spectator, the person who interacts with the photograph. Barthes himself is the Spectator for the photographs he discusses, and this paper will henceforth use the term Spectator to refer to the viewer of the photograph. The personal mediation of Barthes as Spectator, and his scholarly aims towards defining the ontology of photography are equally at war within the two parts of the text. The first part contains several famous photographs lifted from a compilation in a scholarly

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[16] While not all photographs have a *punctum,* the photographs that Barthes attempts to classify all have one for him. This paper is interested in the photographic object that contains both a *studium* and *punctum*; other photographic objects can be discussed through many other terms— see Wiley's *Photographic Theory: An Historical Anthology* for a range of different approaches.

[17] "The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both" (6)

[18] "mediator for all photography" (8)

magazine, while the second part is presented in comparison to an absented, and very personal, photograph of Barthes' recently deceased mother in her youth. The tension between polar structures within *La Chambre Claire* provides the context for an OOO interpretation of the text.

The *studium* is the base level of academic and cultural interaction that Barthes implies builds the groundwork for the later potential for a photograph's *punctum*, or piercing quality. *Studium* is a Latin term, borrowed under Barthes need for a word that expresses the "moyen" (48) / "average" (26) effect of human interest. Barthes paraphrases the Latin definition of the *Studium* as "l'application à une chose, le goût pour quelqu'un, one sort d'investissement général, empressé, certes, mais sans acuité particulière"(48)[19]. Barthes qualifies this Latin word for his purposes:

> Le *studium,* c'est le champ très vast du désir nonchalant, de l'intérêt divers, du gout inconséquent: *j'aime / je n'aime pas, I like/ I don't.* Le *studium* est de l'ordre du *to like,* et non du *to love*; il mobilise un demi-désir, un demi-vouloir; c'est la même sorte d'intérêt vague, lisse, irresponsable, qu'on a pour des gens, des spectacles, des vêtements, des livres, qu'on trouve "bien" (50)[20]

In these two quotes, Barthes describes the location of the *studium.* Unknowingly, however, he roots these definitions in the space of object interaction—what Morton would call *translation. Studium* is "l'application à un chose", and follows with the Litany of "chose" to which the *studium* is applied: people, entertainments, clothes, books. The *studium* is determined by the objects that the viewer likes, but doesn't love; a set of

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[19] "the application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity"(26)

[20] "The *studium* is the very wide field of unconcerned desire, or various interest, of inconsequential taste: *I like / I don't like.* The *studium* is of the order of *liking,* not of *loving*; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition; it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds 'all right.'" (27)

objects that are in turn determined by the Spectator's cultural experiences. The Spectator (who is also an object) interacts with the objects of a photograph, and *translates* those objects to "l'order du *to like*", which determines the *studium* of the photograph.

The *studium* is another term for the experience of an aesthetic interaction, or *translation* between the Spectator and the culturally specific objects in the photograph. This translation happens on many levels in *La Chambre Claire*; the Barthes narrator, the text, the Reader, the Spectator, all these objects translate a photograph's *studium* in disparate ways. Even the event of the emotional impacts experienced by the Spectator when looking at a photograph—recognition, memory, loss, happiness—are objects as well. In part one of *La Chambre Claire*, when discussing the *studium*, Barthes represents and discusses a photograph of conflict in Nicaragua. Barthes writes of Koen Wessing's 1979 image, *Nicaragua*, "Je feuilletais un reveue illustrée. Une photo m'arrêta… Cette photo me plaisait? M'intéressait? M'intriguait? Pas même. Simplement, elle existait" (44)[21]. The Barthes narrator *translates* Wessing's image in a way encrypted by his cultural and academic context, possible only because of his participation within a society that allows him to be ignorant of the reality of the war in Nicaragua. He writes, "puanteur? clandestinité? Je suis innocent, je ne connais pas les réalités de la guerilla" (46)[22]. This privileged interpretation, and relegation of the image to the aesthetic field of "*to like"* of the *studium*, would almost certainly be different from the translation of a Nicaraguan Spectator of the image, or anyone familiar with the horror of this kind of warfare. Because of "Barthes'" cultural experience, he can be "innocent" of these

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[21] "I was glancing through an illustrated magazine. A photograph made me pause… Did this photograph please me? Interest me? Intrigue me? Not even. Simply, it existed" (23).
[22] "stench? Secrecy? I have not idea, knowing nothing of the realities of guerrilla warfare" (25)

realities. Even the verb, "feuilleter", that Barthes uses to narrate his discovery of the photograph is culturally rooted—it is both in reference to his introduction to a photograph as, "cette classe d'objects feuilletés", and also, to *feuilletés* as a dominant type of French pastry cooking. The verb "feuilleter" is used as frequently to leaf through pages, as it is to fold and leaf the puff pastry *feuilletés.* The "Barthes" narrator, as a product of a specific cultural setting, *translates* the photographs into text through his own experience.

The process of aesthetic object ineraction is what "Barthes" terms the *studium*, and what Morton terms *translation*. As part of his explanation of translation, Morton acknowledges that the interaction is a universal experience of all objects. Morton writes, "I anthropomorphize… I cant help anthropomorphizing everything that I handle....My back maps out a small backpomorphic slice of this tree I am leaning on. The strings of the wind harp stringpomorphize the wind" (207). In short, every object -pomorphizes itself. Anthropomorphize is a word for what humans do in their encouters with objects. While not all objects *anthro*-pomorphize, all objects –pomorphize in the ways that they can. The Barthes-object does the only thing that he can do when faced with Wessing's photo object outside of his experience, he *translate*s it to his experience; he Barthespomorphizes Wessing's photograph. Barthes and Morton use the separate terms, *studium* and *translation* to talk about the same phenomenon of object interaction.

Punctum, Barthes' second part of a photograph, is defined in two ways across the text. The first part will be discussed here, while the second part, the *punctum* of Time, will be discussed later. In the first part of Barthes' definition of *punctum*, the concept is established as the presence of a chance detail that overwhelms the *studium* of the photograph. If the *studium* is the field of cultural knowledge, the *punctum* is the concept

which breaks through that field (LCC 49). A *punctum* expands and becomes representative of the photograph for the Spectator; it is a kind of metonymy of imagery. Barthes writes about the *punctum*, "ici, la photographie se dépasse vraiment elle-même: n'est-ce pas la seule preuve de son art? S'annuler comme *medium,* n'être plus un signe, mais la chose même" (77)[23], identifying the effect of the expansive *punctum* detail. The *punctum* is a detail that allows the photograph to transcend representation and actually become an object itself, "la chose même". If the *studium* grants the photograph its existence as a *translation* of culture, then the *punctum* is a moment that implicates the photograph an *object* of that culture.

The *punctum's* reliance on a detail insists on the importance of objects within the photograph. The details that "Barthes" experiences as his *punctums* range from "le linge… (pourquoi ce linge)" (45)[24]; to "les souliers à brides" (75)[25]. Barthes writes of another photograph, "Je congédie tout savoir, toute culture… je ne vois qui l'immense col Danton du gosse, la poupée au doigt de la fille"(83)[26]. Each *punctum* snags an object fragment from the photograph as a whole and declares that object to lend meaning to the entirety, shattering any cultural or academic pretensions.

The effect of the *punctum* corresponds with Morton's theory of *causation.* The *punctum* refers to the moment when a photograph alludes to its withdrawing nature as "la chose même"/"the thing itself". The *studium* is the aesthetic translation between viewer and photograph. When the *punctum* intervenes to "pierce" the viewer and, in the viewer's

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[23] "here, the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as medium, to be no longer a sign but the thing itself" (45)
[24] "the sheet…(why this sheet)" (24)
[25] "the strapped pumps" (44)
[26] "I dismiss all knowledge, all culture… I see only the boy's huge Danton collar, the girl's finger bandage" (50)

eyes, allow the photograph to become "the thing itself", the effect is recognizable as that of *causality.* The event of the *punctum*—the event when the Spectator experience the "prick" of *punctum*—is itself a new, causal object. All the experiences of the photograph are new objects in themselves. Recall the Shelley-violet; when Shelley writes about a violet, his *translation* of it actively causes a *new* object to be created—that of the Shelley-violet. While Barthes uses the term *punctum* instead of *causality,* both refer to the moment where a new object is produced by the *translations* of other objects. When "Barthes" looks at "les souliers à brides" and experiences that detail as the entire photograph, it is no different than when Morton's car scrapes the sidewalk and produces a scratch. The scratch, and the photograph when it "se dépasse vraiment elle-même", are both new causal objects.

While equating *studium* and *punctum* with *translation* and *causality* changes the meaning of each slightly, doing so allows a new reading of *La Chambre Claire,* sensitive to its multimedia relationship between photos and text, to take hold.

Photography and the problem of *Indexicality*

A photograph has a unique relationship with the objects it features within its *feuilletés.* Walter Benjamin, in his 1931 paper, "A Little History of Photography", writes about the new difference he observes between photography and painting:

> "The painting[s]… if they last, do so only as testimony to the art of the painter. With photography, however, we encounter something new and strange: in Hill's Newhaven Fishwife… there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in 'art'" (276)

Benjamin observes that a photograph, in contrast to a painting, has a new relationship to its subject. Where, after a few hundred years, a painting will remain a testament to its painter, a photograph is uniquely tied to its subject, the "unruly" object that it represents. Much of photography theory centers around the relationship of a photograph to the thing that it represents.

Contrary to the objects of OOO, which are "ever-changing, built from swarms of subcomponents, and accessible only through oblique allusion", a photograph is often viewed as an indexical measure of its subject[27] (Harman, Broken Hammer 188). The concept of an index belongs to the work of Charles Peirce. An index, in opposition to an icon, represents an object through contact; for instance, a thumbprint is an index of a thumb. Indexes are often considered more 'true' than their counterparts, icons, which represent through resemblance (Peirce 102). As the narrator Barthes muses in *La Chambre Claire*, "Toute photographie est un certificate de présence" (135)[28]. While Barthes doesn't use the term index explicitly in his photographs, his noème of photography in *La Chambre Claire*, "ça-a-été"/ "that-has-been" follows the concept that photographs, like thumbprints, are indexically related to the objects they represent (LCC 120, CL 77). Margaret Olin, in her paper, "Touching Photographs", asserts that Barthes uses the terms metaphor and metonymy to take the stead of Peirce's concepts icon and index. Olin interprets Barthes' *noeme* of photography, "ça-a-été"/ "that has been" to be a

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[27] The consideration of photography as an *index* of its referent is a widely held position. Carol Armstrong, writes in her book, *Scenes in A Library*, published in 1998, that "The photograph is first and foremost an indexical sign—that is, an image that is chemically and optically caused by the things in the world to which it refers" (2). Rosalind Krauss, too, uses the Peircian index for a discussion of art in: "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America." *October.* Vol. 3 (1977): 68-81.

[28] "Every photo is a certificate of presence" (87)

case for the text's indexicality. Olin writes that the essence of the photograph, for Barthes, is in its indexical verification that what it represents has at one point, existed exactly as it appears.

The tradition of understanding this unusual text as a loosely indexical study of photography, however, is an unsuccessful approach towards capturing the nuances of the photographs within the text. In the 70's and 80's, when Barthes was writing *La Chambre Claire,* indexicality was the critical debate in photography. To present a case against *indexicality,* I quote James Elkins: "It could be argued that the use of the index in isolation from the symbol and icon is a misuse of Peirce's theory, since he was adamant that every sign includes elements of all three. Hence calling a photograph indexical, or saying its most important property is indexicality, is misreading Peirce" (131). Looking at the correlations between Barthes' *La Chambre Claire* and Morton's theory of OOO provides a new approach to replace the tired, indexical, reading of the text.

Other theorists have discussed the photograph as an object. Susan Sontag, in her seminal book *On Photography,* writes that "To collect photographs is to collect the world… with still photos the image is also an object" (3). Even more recently, Paul Kaplan has pioneered Object Oriented Photography as a "practice of encountering objects" within photography. This paper, however, is interested in the *translation* of text and image as an object, as opposed to just photography or text.

Timothy Morton's "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" maps a strategy of translation for objects into text that remains faithful to the object-hood of the text itself. When applied to *La Chambre Claire*, these *translation* strategies provide a way of exploring the text that is more sensitive to the complexity of the photographic object

itself, and doesn't relegate it to the fixed status of *index.* Through the correlation between *studium* and *punctum,* and *translation* and *causality,* I will explore the causal effect of both the text-object and the objects it represents. With respect to Morton's claim that "the best defense of poetry is an object-oriented one" (206), I will now turn to an analysis of *La Chambre Claire* to reveal how an object oriented defense of that text is the best one.

An object-oriented defense of *La Chambre Claire*

The Barthes-object *translates* photographs into his text in the same way that Morton's car did the sidewalk, with the same causal intervention into reality. Just as the new object of Morton's car's *translation* is the scratch on the sidewalk, Barthes' text, *La Chambre Claire,* is the resulting product of its own translation. An indexical approach to looking at these photographs misses the way the byproduct of their interaction—the new text—intervenes in reality. Barthes writes,

> "Pour 'retrouver' ma mere, fugitivement, hélas, et sans jamais pouvoir tenir longtemps cette résurrection, il faut que, bien plus tard, je retrouve sur quelques photos les objets qu'elle avait sur sa commode, un poudrier en ivoire (j'aimais le bruit du couvercle) un flacon de cristal à biseaux, ou encore un chaise basse que j'ai aujoud'hui près de mon lit" (101)[29]

As Barthes acknowledges in his narration, his search through old photographs to find his mother's "etre", or being, is futile. What he does find, the objects of her life—the ivory powder box, the cut-crystal flask, the low chair—are, for him, merely supporting objects for his mother. These objects, for "Barthes", are "fingerprints" for the life of Henriette

[29] "In order to 'find' my mother, fugitively alas, and without ever being able to hold on to this resurrection for long, I must, much later, discover in several photographs the objects she kept on her dressing table, an ivory powder box (I loved the sound of its lid), a cut-crystal flagon, or else a low chair, which is no near my own bed" (64)

Barthes; they are figured as *indexes,* rather than vitally independent objects in their own right.

Yet even within the space of this same quotation, "Barthes'" presumed stability of these object-images as *indexes* is undermined through the co-presence of the images and the text. While for Barthes, the low chair is an object through which he verifies the presence of his mother, to the Reader of his text[30], the box is also important to Barthes the narrator. The Reader has *two* translations of the low chair; it is an object that lies next to Henriette Barthes' dresser in the photos that Barthes examines, but at the same time that Barthes writes about the photos, it is also the same object that "Barthes" has placed next to his bed. This analysis is intended to introduce the reader to the instabilities of Barthes' interpretation of photography; as much as his photographs are certificates of what has been, "ça-a-été", even within his catalogues of them, these objects elude the narrator's fixation. Barthes' text moves away from pure *indexicality* though the relationship between the Reader and the objects Barthes discusses. While the photographs he looks at may be *indexical* in their qualities for him, as he translates them into his text, the photo-objects' allude to an essence apart from "Barthes'" interpretation.

This de-stabilized reading lends the Reader the vocabulary and framework to both discuss the objects as they appear to "Barthes", but also to be sensitive to how the product of his *translation* of them *causally* intervenes in the present reality of the reader. The very experience of reading about the narrator's "chaise basse" adds a new dimension

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[30] I will henceforward use the term "Reader", capitalized, to talk about the figure of interpretation, or the object interacting, with the text. In *La Chambre Claire,* Barthes designates to the Spectator, or interpreter of the photograph, an actual role in the experience of the photograph. In kind, I am adding the "Reader", as a facet of the textual experience, to my analysis of these texts.

to the text—every time a reader *translates* the text, a new object is created; the reader-text. *Studium* correlates to the same field of object interaction that Morton calls *translation,* while *punctum* reflects the *causality* of the new object created from that interaction. When Barthes allies photographs and text in *La Chambre Claire,* the new "La Chambre Claire"-object causally intervenes within reality in the same way that the scratch of Morton's car on the sidewalk does.

The application of Morton's concepts *translation* and *causality,* to *La Chambre Claire* both correlates with Barthes' own terms, *studium* and *punctum,* and provides a fresh way to discuss Barthes' theory text while being sensitive that that text's intervention in the reality of the reader. It is not only in Barthes' theory text that Morton's concepts have a home; I will now take as the object of my analysis Morton's *own theory text* to reveal the relevance of his theoretical approach to theory texts across mediums. For this discussion, I will turn Morton's own theories, *translation* and *causation,* back upon his text, "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry". The next section of this paper will demonstrate where and how Morton creates objects within this text.

Taking "An Object-oriented Defense of Poetry" *as the object*

Morton's own *translation* and the objects it creates

When Morton refers to objects within his text, he draws upon them to challenge the reader on their sense of these object's place in the real world. For instance, when he discusses his car scraping the sidewalk in service of causation, he is producing an image of a crash, an object apart from the event of the crash. When the Reader encounters those lines, the image is employed in service of his discussion, a world apart from the real interaction that he is discussing. What Morton's paper refers to as appearance, or aesthetic interaction, is the process by which objects translate each other (Morton 212). In drawing upon objects, such as his car and the sidewalk, ironically, the Morton-object himself is translating these objects as well. In making his point about aesthetic translation, I assert that Morton causally intervenes in reality with his textual object in the same way of the causal poem-object he discusses[31]. Morton produces new objects in his discussion of poetry.

A central part of Morton's translation of objects in his text is his use of negated, metaphoric images. These negated images mirror the two major difficulties of discussing objects within OOO. When Morton writes about an object in his text, he is *translating* that object for the reader, without acknowledging it as part of his thesis. The resulting image is a causal interaction between Morton and the object: a new, textual object for the reader to interact with. Whatever object Morton draws upon for his image, then, will not

[31] The play of metaphorical objects rooted in language, in contrast to their 'real' counterparts, has been taken up by Harman in his 2005 book, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things.* "Carpentry" is Harman's exploration of the strategies of talking about his OOO objects interacting.

be the same *translation* that the reader-object encounters within his text. The secondary problem facing objects within an OOO text is the inherent contradiction within OOO, the "rift" between essence and appearance. The rift between essence and appearance is the central characteristic of objects. As we have already seen, objects withdraw, even from themselves. Morton identifies this withdrawal as the "essence" of object-hood (Morton 210).

Morton use of negation avoids the characteristic of objects embodied by Shelley's quotation—how to reference an object without creating a new one. His negation functions to qualify and enforce this relation in two ways, firstly by creating a negative image, one that the reader knows the object to which Morton refers is NOT, and secondly, by creating a contradiction that mimics the contradictory essence of object-hood. Humans are as "Aeolian wind harps", Morton quotes, but he uses this image to make the point that Aeolian wind harps are actually as humans (205). The two objects here, Aeolian wind harps and humans, occupy a dual and contradictory space—each statement is the other's negation. Morton writes later, Art without OOO is "candy sprinkles on the dull cake of reality"(204). The metaphor of candy sprinkles and cake draws upon the cake-object, but in a way that instantly negates it. By prefacing that image with "without", Morton introduces a weird object that both is and isn't within the text. The cake is within the text, through his reference, but the object is destabilized through the negation "without". Morton again claims that OOO objects are *not* like "billiard balls on a green baize table". In the suggestion, ripe with apophasis, that objects are not like billiard balls, Morton enforces the central contradiction of objects. In claiming that an object's appearance is not its essence, the essence is already a negative.

Appearances are not the true nature of objects. In order to reflect this contradiction, the reader of Morton's billiard balls is forewarned that the billiard ball image is in support of the opposite of Morton's point. This description of objects is the most faithful to the OOO philosophy that objects are never fully present. OOO objects can only be what they are not, because it is impossible to access the withdrawing essence of the object. An unchanging, un-contradictory image in the text would negate Morton's discussion of the object rift; just as OOO objects are contradictory and unstable, so too are the objects that appear as images in Morton's text. When Morton writes, "An apple is a nonapple", he obliquely approaches the problem of *translating* objects in a text—how to retain that object apart from the writers translation of it (210). The apple that the reader experiences is already absent even as it is present. Contradictory and negated images translate the object from reality into text while remaining faithful to the "rift" that Morton proposes to discuss them.

Although Morton does not acknowledge this, "An Object-Oriented Defense of poetry" enacts its thesis through its representation of object images within the text. Despite the rift between the translation of these objects in Morton's text, and objects as they exist in the wild, unwritten world, Morton's approach to the "rift" reflects the same considerations as the infinitely withdrawing OOO rift between an object's aesthetic and essence. An object and its translation in a text; an object and itself; both are examples of typical object interaction and *translate* each other in a way that reflects the central concern of Morton's OOO. Morton's text; the images in his text; the objects in real life that he discusses; all are examples of individual, independent objects that causally interfere with reality.

Time: An Object's Dimension

"Form generates time"

"*appearance is the past, essence is the future"* (Morton 221)

As we have already seen, causality is the intervention of object-interaction, or translation, in reality. Taking both *La Chambre Claire* and "An Object-oriented Defense of Poetry" as the objects of my discussion, I will demonstrate how the strongest defense of those text's intervention in reality is through an examination of their temporality. I will again differentiate between the theories of Morton's text, and my own analysis of that same text.

Morton-as-theorist writes, "form generates time", declaring that the act of reading a poem, is the act of generating, and thus intervening with, Time (214). According to Morton, when I read a poem, I am at once bridging past and future—the future of the poem is its meaning, which I will determine when I finish reading, and the past is my interaction with the poem. The present, then, is an amalgam of these two tenses; Morton writes, "Presence is hollowed out from the inside by 'past' and 'future'" (Morton 220). Each reader's interaction with a poem intervenes within reality in a different way. When I read a poem, its future—or its meaning—will be determined (later) by the processes of my interaction with it. When I return to the poem years later, however, its meaning will be different, and therefore its *presence,* its interaction between past and future, and therefore its very temporal existence, will also be different. When Morton says, "form generates time", he is speaking about a poem's transaction between tenses. In creating a weird temporal bubble, poetry intervenes within the temporal reality through the *translation* of Reader and poem.

Levi Bryant explores the relationship of Time and objects through Harman's concept of "withdrawal" in his paper, "The Time of the Object: Towards the Ontological Grounds of Withdrawal". Drawing on Derrida's connection of Time and *différance,* Bryant argues that all objects are withdrawn *prior* to their interactions with each other, and thus are already temporally intervening with the interactions of their worlds. Bryant references Derrida's definition of *différance* as, "the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time" (Derrida 8). *Différance*, the deferral and difference of meaning, includes both space and time as part of what constitutes the intrinsic differences of sign activity. By arguing that the displacement of meaning, that Derrida terms *différance,* affects Time, Bryant makes the connection with object withdrawal. Objects defer essential or stable meaning as their essences constantly withdraw (Harman, Broken Hammer 187). Defending withdrawal through the terms of Derrida's *différance* allows Bryant to defend withdrawal through the terms of Derrida's temporal defense of *différance.* Bryant concludes that Derrida's conception of Time and *différance* provide the strongest defense of objects as temporally. Withdrawal, one of the basic functions of objects, is a function of the Time of objects (Bryant 9). As objects withdraw, they temporally intervene.

I will now take Morton's assertion that "form generates time" as the theory to apply to both *La Chambre Claire* and Morton's "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry". Both Morton and Bryant provide compelling defenses for the Temporal dimension of objects. For Morton, temporality is related to form. For Bryant, temporality is a very function of object withdrawal. I will start by looking at a photograph in *La Chambre Claire* and a metaphor in Morton's "Defense of Poetry" through Levi Bryant's and

Timothy Morton's emphasis on the temporality of objects. Through those analyses, I will then be able to conclude my discussion of *La Chambre Claire* by demonstrating how both the text itself, and the figure of "Barthes", are objects that temporally intervene in reality as well.

The Photograph as Time

Each photograph in *La Chambre Claire* is an object in its own right, one that withdraws and writhes in the balance between its essence and appearance. Barthes term *punctum* explicitly assigns Time to the experience of the photograph, responding to the same impetus as Bryant and Morton did over thirty years later. To conduct this analysis, I will trace one of Barthes' *punctums* explored in the second part of his text, the *palinodie,* to show how a photograph, read in Barthes terms, temporally intervenes with "Barthes". In the *palinodie* of *La Chambre Claire,* Barthes returns to his *punctum* and tweaks it to encompass the temporal experience of looking at a photograph. In Alex Gardner's 1865 *Portrait of Lewis Payne*, represented within the text, Barthes is struck by the figure, photographed manacled in his cell hours before his execution. He writes,

> "La photo est belle, le garçon aussi: c'est le *studium.* Mais le *punctum,* c'est: *il va mourir.* Je lis en même temps: *cela sera* et *cela a été*… En me donnant le passé absolu de la pose (aoriste), la photographie me dit la mort au futur. Ce qui me point, c'est la découverte de cette équivalence" (150)[32]

The *punctum* of Time bridges past and future through the uncanny present of the photograph. "Barthes" reads Death into this intermeshing. About a later photograph of two girls, Barthes writes, "comme elles sont vivantes! Elles ont toute la vie devant elles;

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[32] "I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*… By giving the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence" (96)

mais aussi elles sont mort (aujourd'hui), elles sont donc *déjà* mortes (hier)" (150)[33]. "Barthes" reading of death into these photographs is unsurprising given their relationship with *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver.* Within the *palinodie* section*,* every photograph is discussed in relationship with that essential, absent photograph of Barthes' mother. To finish his discussion of the photo of Lewis Payne, Barthes writes: "Devant la photo de ma mère enfant… je frémis, tel le psychotique de Winnicott, *d'une catastrophe qui a déjà eu lieu*" (150)[34] [35]. This catastrophe is the death of his mother, but the reference is in comparison to the Payne photo. Barthes reads both life and death in the photograph of Lewis Payne, and terms the co-presence of life and death the Time *punctum.*

The location of a temporal contradiction between presence and absence in photography, what "Barthes" explores through the terms of life and death, has been taken up in scholarly research as recently as 2015. Christopher Morton[36], in his article "The Ancestral Image in the Present Tense" explores the relationship of "presence in absence" when the Aboriginal peoples of Australia view archival historical photographs of their land and ancestors (253). Christopher Morton draws upon research conducted by

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[33] " how alive they are! They have their whole lives before them; but also they are dead (today), they are already dead (yesterday)" (96)

[34] "In front of the photograph of my mother as a child… I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, *over a catastrophe which has already occurred"*(96)

[35] "Winnicott's patient" is a reference to a seven-year-old patient of the prominent 20th century psychologist, Donald Winnicott, found in his 1971 text, *Playing and Reality*. The patient, a young boy, would turn to playing with string (tying things together obsessively, carrying it around with him) whenever he felt separation, or distance from his severely depressed mother. Winnicott was a leading Object-relations theorist, interested in what he termed, the "transitional space", between the internal and external worlds of the patient where objects and patients interact in "play". Object-relations theory is predicated on the idea that traumatic events of childhood are carried through the child's development as objects, rather than events. Suggestively, this theory has much in common with OOO; in both theories, events, or traumatic interactions, are considered *objects.*

[36] Not to be confused with the OOO scholar Timothy Morton, also referenced in this paper.

anthropologists on the indigenous peoples of Runia to support his later research on a series of archival photographs in a museum exhibition on the Aboriginal cultures of Australia. Christopher Morton asserts that, for the Aboriginal viewers, the archival photographs bridge past and present, and absence and presence, in the manner of Barthes' Time *punctum* (256). For Christopher Morton, the shared sense of place between these photos of the past and their viewers in the present, discredits the use of a linear time in appreciating photographs. He writes, "The profile of the Perth Hills does more in this moment of recognition than locate the image, it emplaces it, connects ancestor and descendant through ongoing relations to country" (255). Christopher Morton's notion of photographic emplacement for the Aboriginal people viewing this exhibition is specifically related to that people's historical relationship with land and place. For these viewers, Land is a temporally disruptive object. The land object in the photograph is withdrawn temporally prior to the photograph's present in the museum, and thus predicates the relationship between the Aboriginal viewer and the object. The land represented in the photograph temporally embodies both the absence and presence, and past and future, of the scene (255).

When Timothy Morton claims that "form generates time", he is referring to poetic form. It is clear, however, that Barthes' Time *punctum* as a formatted element of the photographic medium, generates time as well as poetic form. In aligning these two theories, the *objects* that generate them are vitally important. For Christopher Morton, it was the landscape object within the photographs that emplaces linear relations with time for the Aboriginal viewer. For Barthes, the visual presence of Lewis Payne in Gardener's *Portrait of Lewis Payne* is what pricks him—this object (Payne), that he can see, is both

dead and alive. The photograph object, as presented by Barthes, generates Time through its form, supporting Morton's assertion that "form generates time".

When turned upon his own text, Morton's line, "form generates time" mirrors the effect of his text-object upon the reader. The Reader of Morton's text experiences the time quality of the poetic object through the repeated metaphor of the apple.

The Metaphor as Time

When the Reader bridges the two apple references in Morton's text, the apple-text *translation* reflects the same temporal distortion that "Barthes" experiences with Gardner's *Portrait of Lewis Payne*. Morton references the apple twice, first in service of a discussion of the "rift" between essence and appearance (210), and second, in service of his discussion that "Objects are Liars" (212). At first, Morton describes the apple as "round, juicy, sweet, tart…", in order to demonstrate the withdrawing multiplicity of object ontology; the apple is essentially multiple through the range of qualities it embodies (Morton 210). In this multiplicity, however, lies the apple's withdrawal. Like Shelley's violet, the apple can have many qualities for a human *translation*, but at the same time it can have infinite other qualities though the other moments of *translation* between other objects. Objects all translate each other differently. The withdrawing essence of the apple, the facet that allows the apple to be different for different objects, generates a temporal bubble. By Bryant's logic, the apple's withdrawal is *prior* to any interaction, or *translation* it has. Thus, the *translations* of the apple are all temporally rooted, in contrast to the apple's eternally "prior" existence.

In the second reference, Morton doesn't describe the apple through a list of aesthetic qualities that it is more than; it is now an "abyss… even to look at the apple, to speak about it or write a poem about it, is to plunge into the abyss" (Morton 212). Putting aside the point he is making, for the moment, allows us to examine the experience of the apple-object alone. In these two references to apples, Morton conjures up images that are rooted in their aesthetic qualities, yet completely different in their *translation* of the apple-object. The series of adjectives in the first instance (round, juicy, sweet, tart) are replaced by a metaphor of an abyss in the second; both, however, are literary tools, adjective and metaphor. Morton's style choices are the constituents of a literary *translation;* when objects appear in texts, they are a translation between reality, language, and the writer. The apple, however, is none of these things, and all of them. The series of apple adjectives and the metaphor of the abyss are both aesthetic properties of the apple object. The essential apple is not changed because Morton writes about it, but because Morton writes about it, the new Morton-apple has a *causal* impact on the reader.

This *causal* impact of the apple intervenes particularly through the aesthetic property of Time. Morton writes, "What is called *space* and what is called *time* are just aesthetic properties of objects" (214)[37]. Without reference to each other, the apple appears in two different temporal and spatial instances in the text. The apple literally has a spatial relationship across the breakdown of sections within Morton's essay. The first apple reference (with its adjectives) appears within a section on the "rift", the apple as an

[37] This connection was Harman's idea originally, taken in turn from Petr Horava. For more on Harman's and Horava's discussion of the space/time of objects, see Harman's *The Quadruple Object,* and Horava's "Quantum Gravity at a Lifshitz Point". I will stick to Morton's discussion of the relationship, as he is speaking in terms of a text-object, which is more pertinent to my thesis.

abyss appears alongside on of the two explicit analyses of poetry within the section called "Objects are Liars". If, as Morton says, "form generates time", then the form of his repeated apple image is temporally rooted as it bridges two different spatial sections across the form of the text. The act of reading the image of the apple is the act of bridging past and future; the reader's future is the second apple reference, their past is the first reference. This temporal bridge is an experience of reading the text's *translation* of the apple object—there is still no accessible essence of the apple object. Instead, the reader experiences a recursive progression of time, from which the essential object is absented. Morton's discussion of the OOO relationship between aesthetics and time is mirrored in his *translation* and representation of the objects in this text. Morton asserts that "*appearance is the past, essence is the future"* (221). Turning his theory upon his own texts, the correlation between Time and the object reveals the intervention of the apple metaphor as an object.

We have looked at the temporal intervention of a photo object and the temporal intervention of the metaphoric apple-object. I will now turn to the discussion of *La Chambre Claire* as a multi-media text-object, and demonstrate the impact of its temporal intervention.

***La Chambre Claire*'s Temporal Intervention**

The text, *La Chambre Claire,* itself intervenes in the temporal reality of the reader through its structure, not just through the temporal "emplacement" of the photographs within its pages. Much like how Morton's apple discussion temporally and spatially distends the apple-object by revisiting and recasting the object, so the experience of

reading the *palinodie,* the recantation of the first part of *La Chambre Claire,* too, distends time. I will demonstrate this argument by looking closely at Barthes' discussion of a single photograph, *Portrait de famille,* of 1926 by James Van der Zee, that is referenced twice within his *punctum* argument, before looking at the structural experience of the *palinodie*.

Barthes writes, "Très souvent, le *punctum* est un 'détail', c'est-à-dire un objet partiel" (73)[38], reaffirming the relationship between the *punctum* and the objects that inhabit the photograph. He supports this pronouncement through his first representation of Van der Zee's portrait; he writes, "ce qui me point, chose curieuse à dire, c'est… *ses souliers à brides"* (73)[39]. This is as far as Barthes goes in analyzing the photograph for this first instance. He connects the *punctum* to an object, identifies that object, and moves on with his analysis to a new photograph, William Klein's 1954, *Le Quartier Italien*. Four chapters later, however, Barthes revisits Van der Zee's photograph:

> "je croyais avoir repéré ce qui m'émouvait: les souliers à brides…plus tard j'ai compris que le vrai *punctum* était le collier qu'elle portrait au ras du cou; car (sans doute) c'était ce même collier (mince cordon d'or tressé) que j'avais toujours vu porté par une personne de ma famille" (88)[40]

In this moment, Barthes is not only correcting his interpretation of the *punctum*, he is actually misreading the necklace worn by the woman; the woman in the photo is wearing a pearl necklace, rather than a braided gold one. Margaret Olin asserts, in her paper, "Touching Photographs", that it is through "Barthes'" own experience that the *punctum*

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[38] "Very often the *Punctum* is a 'detail,' *i.e.* a partial object" (43)
[39] "What does [prick me], strange to say, is…her strapped pumps" (43)
[40] "I thought I had discerned what moved me: the strapped pumps…later on I realized that the real *punctum* was the necklace she was wearing; for (no doubt) it was the same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family" (53)

changes, she writes, "perhaps Van Der Zee's portrait only reminded him of having seen the photograph of his aunt's family, and even the jewelry shut up in the family box had itself lived, for Barthes, only in a photograph" (107). Yet Olin's analysis leaves out what this mistaken reading means for the text itself. When the text wavers between the objects of *punctum,* it discredits the prioritization of one object over another. What creates a photograph for Barthes, the *punctum,* is first the strapped pumps, and then the gold necklace that is actually a pearl necklace; the *punctum* objects are allusive and unfixed, just as all objects are. This analysis suggests that the role of the *punctum* for the reader of *La Chambre Claire* is not just a simple *translation* between the Barthes-object and each of the photograph-objects he addresses—these objects of analysis transcend Barthes' translation of them and operate independently of his interpretation within the text.

Across the changing references to the *punctum* of James Van der Zee's photograph*,* the reader experiences the same productive, temporal distortions as with Morton's apple image. While it is through Barthes' mediation that the Reader experiences the photograph, it is through his mistaken identification of the *punctum* and the type of necklace that the Reader's temporal experience is distorted. When Barthes recants the *punctum* and tenor of the text in his *palinodie,* the text itself reoccupies a new temporal reality.

This phenomenon is not just a feature of the *punctum* discussion. By recasting the entire first part of the text through the second *palinodie* (an ode retracting a previous poem), the temporal experience of reading *La Chambre Claire* distends and emplaces the text object, just as do Christopher Morton's Australian landscape, and Timothy Morton's metaphoric apple. The future of these objects is their meaning within the text, and when

the meaning changes across the text, so too does the present of the Reader. The experience of reading these theory texts distends and recasts the object of Time and *causally* intervenes in reality.

The Pose: An Act of Time

> "Since objects produce time, time… must be *a certain version of time* produced by a *certain set of objects*: digital clocks, Greenwich, Pope Gregory, the stock market, CNN" (Morton 215)

In this quotation, Morton creates a Latour Litany of objects that produce Time. Barthes, for his part, does the same: "Pour moi, le bruit du Temps n'est pas triste: j'aime les cloches, les horloges, les montres… les appareils, au fond, étaient des horloges à voir" (32)[41]. Each of these two quotations construct Time differently, yet the heart of the matter is the same: Time is an object constructed by objects.

Objects produce an object-specific time. In *La Chamber Claire, "*Barthes" muses on his experience being photographed—the name of the chapter is "Celui qui est photographié"[42]. He writes, "Je voudrais en somme que mon image, mobile… coïncide toujours avec mon 'moi' (profond, comme on le sait); mais c'est le contraire qu'il faut dire: c'est 'moi' qui ne coïncide jamais avec mon image" (27)[43]. In this analysis, we have

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[41] "For me the noise of Time is not sad: I love bells, clocks, watches… cameras, in short, were clocks for seeing" (Barthes 15)

[42] Richard Howard's translation of the chapter title is "He Who Is Photographed". I think this title misses some of the nuance of the French counterpart, for reasons that I will explain later in the body of the text.

[43] "What I want, in short, is that my (mobile) image… should always coincide with my (profound) self; but it is the contrary that must be said: "myself" never coincides with my image" (12)

the heart of object being—the desire to reach an essential being, but the fundamental inability to interact beyond the aesthetic.

When Barthes is represented in a photograph, the Barthes-object recasts time through the experience of posing. Barthes writes, "je me constitue en train de 'poser', je me fabrique instantanément un autre corps, je me métamorphose à l'avance en image" (25)[44]. In this quotation, Barthes bridges Time; he is constituting himself in the present, while transforming himself in *advance* for the image. This anticipation of the future bridged with the present is almost another Time *punctum,* unaddressed by Barthes, but with the same temporal bridge as the *Portrait of Lewis Payne.*

Barthes writes, "Photographie transformait le sujet en objet" (29)[45]. In the moment of the shutter, the "bruit du Temps", a photograph reveals the iterability[46] at the heart of object being—the endless aesthetic *translations* between subject and camera*,* and the withdrawing object essence. The *causal* interaction of the photograph object captures the ultimate sense of the "rift" between essence and appearance. When Barthes claims that the subject of a photograph becomes an object, he is getting at the essence of object-hood: limitless aesthetic interactions, tempered by a fundamentally withdrawn essence.

The chapter title, "Celui qui est photographié", reflects this ambiguous, continually shifting and ultimately "rifted" dynamic between subject and object, between "Barthes" and his photographic image. "Celui qui" is a *pronom démonstratif* followed by

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[44] "I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (10)
[45] "Photography transformed subject into object" (13)
[46] The term "iterability", proposed by Derrida in his 1971 essays "White Mythologies" and "Signature Event Context", refers to the repetition of signs. For Derrida, "iterability" is the function of signs that enable them to appear infinitely with an equally infinite amount of meanings. It is the quality of a sign that means that it can never have only a single meaning.

a *pronom rélatif* that can either mean “he who” or “the one who”. The noun given in a previous clause or sentence determines whether these pronouns take the masculine or the general “it”. As a chapter title, however, the noun to which the pronoun of this phrase refers is unclear. The wavering ambiguity of the “celui qui” from “he” to “the one” reflects the nature of the person being photographed in their shifting relationship between subject and object. Barthes, a “he”, is constituted, through the act of posing, into a “one”. The absence of a referential noun for the pronouns “celui qui” only enforces the “rift” between Barthes and his photographic representation.

The “rift” between essence and appearance, between the “essential Barthes” and his appearance as translated by the camera, generates the temporality of Barthes’ description. Morton writes, “*appearance is the past, essence is the future*”, and when Barthes poses in anticipation of his photograph, the anticipation for the future implicates his essence (221). His appearance and essence, when they tangle in the complicated moment before a photograph translates his appearance, *causally* produce a new temporality. The reader of Barthes text, for this moment when he narrates “Celui qui est photographié”, interacts with Time and the Barthes-object to create *their own* present Time.

In Conclusion

The Causality of the Thesis

Through the lens of Object Oriented Ontology, all text objects are multimedia, because of the presence of unstable and productive objects that continually *translate* within the pages. *La Chambre Claire* and "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" are multi-media texts that exist in a complicated relationship with the objects they discuss (images, photographs, violets), interact with (Morton, Barthes, the Reader), and produce (new objects, informed readers). This cycle of production is sparked by an aesthetic interaction between the qualities, related to appearance, rather than essence, of each of these objects *translating* in turn. In the ways that I have outlined above, these texts function as any object, with the same withdrawing tension between their presence, and their essence.

A resulting *translation* of all these interactions is my thesis. This final product is, to revisit Harman, "mortal, ever-changing, built from swarms of subcomponents, and accessible only through oblique allusion", and to that, I will add Barthes line on *la Photographie du Jardin d'Hiver*, "partiellement vraies, et donc totalement fausses" (103)[47]. In writing this thesis, I am producing a text that *causally* interferes with the real world of objects that interact with us, as us, and in our absence. Geoffrey Batchen writes, in the introduction to his collection of essays on *Camera Lucida,* that his contributors and himself desired to, by writing more essays, "bring *Camera Lucida* back to life or, better yet, get it out of our systems altogether" (4). In doing so, Batchen and his cohorts responded to the impulse to wrangle an object, *Camera Lucida,* into a stable relationship

[47] "partially true, and therefore totally false" (66)

with the objects it interacts with, them. *Camera Lucida,* however, defies categorization and confinement, because of the sensitive ways in which Barthes' writes about the objects in his text, and creates objects through that act. The OOO scholar will never be able to "get beyond" (Batchen 1) the influence of *any* object, as Batchen aspires to; *La Chambre Claire* is simply an object that, to the *anthropomorphizing* reader Batchen, aesthetically withdraws through its very structure.

My paper is a *translation* of text-objects, with the intent to demonstrate the result of these translations. As I discuss the causal impact of *La Chambre Claire* and "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" on the world, my text too, causally interferes with these texts as well, while creating readers who in turn, will causally interfere with my text.

A Lever for The Image/Text: Object Oriented Ontology

W.J.T. Mitchell claims that, "The image/text is neither a method nor a guarantee of historical discovery; it is more like an aperture or cleavage in representation" (104). What Mitchell, too, unknowingly strives for, is to recast the "object" in multi-media comparison. The image/text is "not a template… but a lever" (106). Metaphorically, he puts his multimedia comparison in terms of a physical tool—the lever—just as Graham Harman before him put object oriented ontology in touch with a metaphorical hammer. For the OOO outlook, a template too, is an object, but Mitchell's impulse to locate objects within multi-media comparison is what I am bringing to light, as a way to responsibly compare theory texts.

When conducting a cross-medium comparison, an effective and responsible approach looks for moments of *translation* between objects, and roots the comparison through the terms of the objects that constitute the texts. *La Chambre Claire,* and "An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry" are two theory texts that discuss different mediums, yet can be effectively, responsibly, and productively read together through the terms of object oriented ontology.

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