Myth, ruin and self-exposure: Roger Ballen and the afterlives of images

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In memory of my father-in-law, Gert Botha (1945-2010)

The departure point for this article is photographer Roger Ballen's series *Boarding house* (2008), which is explored partly in terms of the antediluvian creature, Odradek, in Franz Kafka's short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919) and in terms of melancholia. Odradek, as the Thing that outlives us and illuminates obscurely, is an allegory of ruin. Incomplete, ambiguous, and mortifying like a photograph; it is also intricately related to the dialectics of melancholia (meaning both heaviness and inspiration). In Ballen's geologically petrified photographs, the piling up of fragments and ornaments produces the grim heaviness of mythic fate and guilt. I want to open up the possibility of the elucidation and reversal of myth in Ballen's work by contrasting a strain of ambiguous photographic stereotypes (including by August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo and Zwelethu Mthethwa) with examples of critically inflected photography and with a found image.
Key words: myth, ruin, melancholia, self-exposure, Roger Ballen, afterlife

Mythos, Verfall und Selbstenthüllung: Robert Ballen und die Nachleben der Bilder
Ausgangspunkt dieses Artikels ist die Serie "Boarding house" (2008) von Fotograf Roger Ballen, die einerseits unter Hinweis auf das vorsintflutliche Wesen, Odradek, in Franz Kafkas Kurzgeschichte "Die Sorge des Hausvaters" (1919), andererseits mit Bezugnahme auf den Begriff Melancholie untersucht wird. Odradek, dasjenige Ding, das uns überlebt und dunkel illuminiert, ist eine Allegorie des Verfalls. Lückenhaft, zweideutig und verletzend wie ein Foto, steht es auf komplizierte Weise in Beziehung zur Dialektik der Melancholie (hier mit der Bedeutung von Schwere und Inspiration). In Ballens geologisch versteinerten Fotos bringt das Anhäufen von Fragmenten und Ornamenten die grausame Schwere von mythischem Schicksal und mythischer Schuld hervor. Ich möchte die Möglichkeiten von Erläuterung und Umkehr des Mythos in Ballens Werk, mittels der Kontrastierung von einer Reihe ambivalenter fotographischen Stereotypen (wie bei August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo and Zwelethu Mthethwa) mit Beispielen der kritisch flektierenden Fotografie und ein "found image", darstellen.
Stichworte: Mythos, Verfall, Melancholie, Selbstenthüllung, Rogert Ballen, Nachleben

This article[1] forms part of a book I am completing titled *Thinking photographs: Art, history, time, and reproducibility*; it also relates to previous articles I've published, which explore the relationship between photography, posing and staging, authenticity and falseness, the ethics and aesthetics of photographic portraits of the other, the aura and disaster of reproducibility, and the deathly force of photographic flattening, including in the work of South African photographer Pieter Hugo. These and other articles will also appear as chapters in my book on photography.

The departure point for this article is photographer Roger Ballen's series *Boarding house* (2008), which is explored partly in terms of the antediluvian creature, Odradek, in Franz Kafka's short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919), brilliantly visualised as "only a broken-down remnant" (Kafka 1954: 137) in Jeff Wall's digital photograph *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* (1994) (Figure 1 & 2) and in terms of melancholia.

Figure 1
Jeff Wall, *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994*
(1994, transparency in lightbox, 229 x 289 cm, Frankfurt aM, Museum für Moderne Kunst).

Figure 2
Jeff Wall, *Odradek, Táboritská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994* (detail).

Odradek, as the Thing that outlives us and illuminates obscurely, is an allegory of ruin.[2] Incomplete, ambiguous, and mortifying like a photograph; it is also intricately related to the

dialectics of melancholia (meaning both heaviness and inspiration). In Ballen's geologically petrified photographs,[3] the piling up of fragments and ornaments produces the grim heaviness of mythic fate and guilt.[4] I want to open up the possibility of the elucidation and reversal of myth in Ballen's work by contrasting a strain of ambiguous photographic stereotypes (including by August Sander, Diane Arbus, Pieter Hugo and Zwelethu Mthethwa) with examples of critically inflected photography and with a found image.

Let me begin by describing a picture (Figure 3). It is grey toned. A girl in a white dress is looking anxiously at a runny, spray-painted spot on a bare wall; her left hand is lightly touching the wall; her right hand appears on the brink of grasping something in the air. There are several such spots and other spray-painted marks and drips on the wall she is facing. Except for its greyness, the wall could be part of one of Cy Twombly's paintings. Traces of damp mark the wall's bottom periphery, suggestions of distant mountain ranges in Chinese landscape paintings. The edge of the girl's shadow falls across the division of carpeted floor and wall, crossing the vertiginous boundary separating the horizontal and vertical; the real and illusory; the solid and ghostly; body and no-body. The carpet is old; its mottled pattern brings to mind the worn-out carpets of decaying hotels. On the wall to the left and behind her, there are more spots and marks, as well as a smiling face drawn on a piece of paper, perhaps by a child or the photographer himself. Below the smile the artist has scribbled "Me" in a child's hand.

Figure 3
Roger Ballen, *Girl in white dress, from Boarding house*
(2002, silver gelatine print, 50 x 50cm, courtesy of the artist).

This self-marking is created *en abyme*; to quote Andy Warhol, there is nothing behind it. Rather than mark identity and sense, this drawing, like the other traces, *traits*, contours, *orli*, and *splendores* in Roger Ballen's photographs — what the American art historian James Elkins calls nonsemiotic elements — remains ambiguous. All that is visible is grey surface; readable and unreadable ornament (cf Menke 2002: 268). "[T]he whole thing looks senseless enough", as Franz Kafka (1954: 137) writes of the creature Odradek, in his short story "Troubles of a householder" (1919), "but in its own way perfectly finished".

Still, no answers are forthcoming; it therefore seems fitting to recall that the Latin phrase *in camera* means "in a chamber" — that is, in private. While Ballen's photographic room of perpetual decline appears to reveal or expose its subject, its meaning remains private; obscure. This is what gives it its atmosphere and texture of imperviousness; even futility.

The girl in a white dress is trapped in an accursed cave, a depressive shadow chamber, an apocalyptic corner haunted by a Thing without representation. What is this Thing, which persists here and elsewhere in Ballen's *Boarding house*? The French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva defines the Thing as "the real that does not lend itself to signification, the center of attraction and repulsion." Following the French Romantic poet Gérard de Nerval, Kristeva describes the Thing as "an insistence without presence, a light without representation: the Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time" (Kristeva 1989: 13). The Thing is not an object, but a shadow, which the depressed narcissist or melancholic mourns.

The Thing obscurely illuminates Ballen's serial *tableaux*, like a black sun. It is bright and dark all at once, but figures greyly. It is insinuated by a dripping spot on the wall, a piece of wire or twisted string, "not merely knotted but tangled together" (Kafka 1954: 137). Like Kafka's Odradek, the Thing survives the decaying room and its inhabitants. Hardly visible, it is a mute presence of absence, a broken doll, a scrawl on a bare wall, or rusting piece of metal. Kafka (1954: 137) describes it as "only a broken-down remnant".

The Thing shadows the melancholics and depressives pinned and cornered in these rooms in *Boarding house* and elsewhere in Ballen's oeuvre. It is mostly imagined, but insistent. A light without representation, it has paradoxically inspired a long lineage of art making and interpretation in which exposure and ruin are inseparable.

One of Roger Ballen's depressive forebears is the American photographer Diane Arbus; although Ballen's deliberate staging, specifically in his recent work, signals a break with her.[5] *Boarding house* is more overtly constructed than earlier suites such as *Platteland: Images of rural South Africa* (1994) (Figure 3), which appropriate a "documentary mode" reminiscent of August Sander (Figure 4), Diane Arbus (Figure 5) as well as Pieter Hugo's "matter-of-fact" images in which "fractured, freakish",[6] marginalised sitters face us blankly. The photographer and his apparatus are all but absent, and the mise en scène (staging) and denotation is naturalised in such a way that they appear as truth (Figure 6).

Figure 3
Roger Ballen, *Dressie and Cassie, twins, Western Transvaal*, from Platteland, 1993, gelatin silver print, 36.2 x 36.2 cm (source: http://www.artnet.com/artists/lotdetailpage.aspx?lot_id=B6A543CD655CF76C2A910D9BA81AC9BB).

Figure 4
August Sander, *The foster mother*
(c. 1930, gelatin silver print, 26 x 19.6 cm , London, Anthony d'Offay).

Figure 5
Diane Arbus, *Russian midget friends in a living room on 100th street, NY*
(1963, gelatin silver print, 39 x 37.5 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Figure 6
Pieter Hugo, *Pieter and Maryna Vermeulen with Timana Phosiwa*
(2006, c-print, 202.5 x 168.5 cm, Cape Town, Michael Stevenson).

Yet these "documents" are deliberately, rhetorically moody; their logic and naturalness have a form, a structure (cf Barthes 1977: 279 & Grootenboer 2005: 12).[7] By formalising it, *Boarding house* arguably magnifies the suffocating aura of "distance, however near it may be" (Benjamin 2003c: 255) that characterises Arbus's photographs; the distance of class and art. What kind of private fantasies are Arbus and Ballen living out, in these moody, atmospheric framings and manipulations of the forlorn and distanced other — the marginal, the entropic, the oblivious?[8]

Take Arbus's famous *A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, NYC* (1966) (Figure 7). In 1968 in a letter to Peter Crookston, deputy editor of the *Sunday Times* colour magazine, where Arbus's photograph was about to be published, she said of the family in the photograph: "They were undeniably close in a painful sort of way" (Jobey 2005: 68). Her choice of words is revealing. The family is "undeniably close", which is how they seem to someone looking at them from a cool distance. Describing their closeness as "sort of" painful only underscores the distance, the sense that, thank God, they are there and we are here (cf Sontag 1979). Both closeness and distance turn out to be false: the former is patronising; the latter is a trick of aesthetic framing and appreciation (cf Atkinson 1999 & Azoulay 2008: 14).

Figure 7
Diane Arbus, *A young Brooklyn family going for a Sunday outing, NY*
(1966, gelatin silver print, 39.2 x 36.7 cm, Santa Monica, RoseGallery).

Arbus's photographs continue August Sander's documentary human atlas project, *Antlitz der Zeit* (*The Face of Our Time*) (Figure 8); only now the subject is less everyman, than freak.[9] Like Sander, Arbus sets out to objectively and matter-of-factly record the "overlooked" of society. Similar to Sander's *Sisters* (1927), Arbus's *Identical twins, Roselle, New Jersey* (1967) (Figure 9) are framed where they are found: no torture chamber or throne room; no studio lighting or props.[10]

Figure 8
August Sander, *Sisters*
(1927, gelatin silver print, 33 x 24.5 cm, New York, MoMA).

Figure 9
Diane Arbus, *Identical twins*, Roselle, New Jersey
(1967, gelatin silver print, The Estate of Diane Arbus).

At first glance, this translates as the elimination of the stifling atmosphere of aestheticised aura and artificial distance that Benjamin deplores as the mark of bourgeois studio photography from the late nineteenth century (Figures 10 & 11). In the absence of authentic experience predicated on absorptive distance and the return look (cf Benjamin 2003d: 338), bourgeois portrait photography simulates authenticity by way of the pose, the exotic, and the blank stare (cf Benjamin 1999b: 518, 526 & 2003d: 340, Costello 2006 & Schoeman 2011).

Figure 10
***Portrait of man and child,* Atelier of Robert Wallich**
(c. 1895, Berlin, Einholz Collection).

Figure 11
Anon, Portrait, late 19th century, hand-coloured American tintype
(Photo: <http://arts.jrank.org/pages/11555/tintype.html> "Tintype – carte de visite, in situ, The Cyclopedia of Photography", accessed 20 February 2011).

Yet, despite its potentially self-aware thematising of photography as twinning, doubling and copying, Arbus's picture is nothing if not stifling. The twins seem enveloped in a fog of maudlin nostalgia and solipsistic fantasy — the photographer's. Arbus's photographs have the aura of a fabricated childhood encounter with the fascinating, risky, exotic other, perhaps in a travelling circus of freaks.[11] Like so many grainy flashbacks in movies, their false air of sadness makes them grotesquely sentimental. For all their supposed honesty, the photographs aestheticise their subjects, preserving them as if in milky formaldehyde.

Arbus's artistic fantasy of the other is debilitating and depressive; hardly a civic or ethical challenge to the viewer's subjectivity (cf Azoulay 2008, Costello 2006, Sontag 1979 & 2004). The photographs revel in the repetition of the same, the ideology of artifice for the sake of artifice. They lack the critical edge of reason, cunning, awakening, enlightenment or self-reflexivity. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), Paul Ricoeur (1991: 486), Terry Castle (1995) and others have shown in different ways, reason is embroiled in myth, precisely when it claims to rule over it. But it can also clear the ground of the nightmare, phantasmagoria, oblivion, and eternal recurrence of fate, madness, and depression. Benjamin articulates it perspicuously in his *The arcades project*:

> To cultivate fields where, until now, only madness has reigned. Forge ahead with the whetted axe of reason, looking neither right nor left so as not to succumb to the horror that beckons from deep in the primeval forest. Every ground must at some point have been made arable by reason, must have been cleared of the undergrowth of delusion and myth (Benjamin 1999a: 456f).

But Benjamin's evocation of reason and clearing away is dialectical rather than triumphalist. It involves a subtle form of self-critique rooted in the awareness that anti-ideology is another form of ideology. Exposure thus includes self-exposure — that is, exposure of the technologies that critically frame or rhetorically naturalise the image. If self-exposure is absent in Arbus, what about Ballen's work? The photographs from his previous book and exhibition *Shadow chamber* (2005) (Figure 12), as well as those from *Boarding house*, bear traces of American photographer John Divola's work from the 1970s (Figure 13), of which writer and artist David Campany writes:

> Divola explores relationships between the natural and the artificial, the objective and the subjective. In the *Vandalism* series [1973-75] he blurred the distinction between found evidence and constructed performance. The marks recorded by the camera appear intentional yet their meaning is elusive. Has the camera 'encountered' them or have they been made especially for it? The photographs preserve the ambiguous status of the traces. In fact Divola had himself broken into these condemned buildings, which he 'vandalised' creatively before photographing them (Campany 2008: 88).

Figure 12
Roger Ballen, *Configuration*,
2003, gelatin silver print, 40 x 40 cm
(Source: <http://www.rogerballen.com/index.asp?page=ig_schamber-imgs>).

Figure 13
John Divola, *Untitled*,
1974, gelatine silver print, 35.5 x 35.5 cm (Source: Campany 2008: 98).

Ballen's ready admission that his photographs represent his own constructed, fantasy world, suggests that they partake of Divola's deconstruction or vandalising of meaning, stability, and transparency. In thematising inevitable decay and entropy, they act even against themselves, undoing their sense of art and semblance, authorial power, will, control, and reification. As with Divola's work, their ambiguous performativity undoes both objectivity and subjectivity, revealing the unconscious as a fictional writing pad, one we continually unmake and remake.

Ambiguously or unwittingly countering myth with myth, Ballen's work stands somewhere between the "township chic" of Zwelethu Mthethwa and the deconstructive portraits of Benin photographers Edouard Méhomé and Sébastien Méhinto *aka* Pigeon. The work by Méhome and Pigeon forms part of a unique collection of portrait photographs from Benin, mainly from the 1960s and 1970s, before colour photography had been introduced to Benin. Alex van Gelder built up the collection, which has been collated in a book titled *Life and Afterlife in Benin*.

While Mthethwa's ornamentalism (Figures 14 & 15) disguises the flattening and obliteration of the figure, which arguably further alienates and disenfranchises the sitters from the potential of their "unique interior lives";[12] the works of the Benin photographers unhinge the hardened stereotype through negation.

Figure 14
Zwelethu Mthethwa, *Untitled*
(1991, c-print, 92.5 x 129.5 cm, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery).

Figure 15
Zwelethu Mthethwa, *Untitled*
(1999, c-print, 92.5 x 129.5 cm, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery).

In Pigeon's police photograph (Figure 16), which resembles Richard Avidon's portraits in its clarity and directness, if not chic, the handcuffs dialectically reverse the stable category of colonial, racial, and gender bondage, guilt, and fate. Méhomé's half-portait of a young man (Figure 17) "staring at and beyond us with misaligned pupils" (Enwezor 2005: 10) in a mask-like face, surrealises the mythic reification of the real, unsettling the colonial gaze. Unlike Mthethwa's work, it "forces open the relationship between photography and traditional modes of representing the real in African art", to cite Okwui Enwezor (2005: 10),[13] opening up the liberating or reifying oscillation of "myth-work" (cf Damisch 1996: 119 & Ricoeur 1991: 486, 487).

Figure 16
***Sébastien Méhinto aka Pigeon*, Police photograph, n.d., 50 x 60.6 cm (Source: van Gelder 2005: 115).**

Figure 17
***Edouard Méhomé*, Studio Photo Vedette, Porto-Novo, n.d., 50 x 60.6 cm (Source: van Gelder 2005: 89).**

Méhomé and Pigeon were humble studio photographers; as opposed to Mthethwa who is a world famous artist. This is an important difference; as is the difference between a portrait displayed by someone who commissioned it and one displayed as art in a museum. Can a high-end art portrait of "the other" ever place the photographer, subject, viewer and collector on an equal footing?

With reference to Ballen's work a more lyrical, poetic forebear also springs to mind — American director Jim Jarmusch's beautiful black-and-white film from 1986, *Down by law*, featuring Tom Waits, John Lurie, and Roberto Benigni. Exquisitely filmed by Robby Muller, one part of the story takes place in a prison cell. In one of the special features on the DVD, Tom Waits remarks on the cell walls, which are strikingly inscribed with graphic marks, drawings, and doodles (Figures 18 & 19). Some of these were filmed as found, while others were drawn especially for the film. The lucid, graphic marks on these cell walls anticipate the marks and faces drawn on the walls in Ballen's photographs, while their clarity, elegance and lightness suggest a possible transformation of the burden of unrepresentable and inevitable affliction, guilt, depression, nightmare and ruin staged in these rooms of a fictional boarding house. I am reminded of Benjamin's (1999: 816) words about Kafka: "Whether it is a man or a horse is no longer so important, if only the burden is taken off the back".

Figure 18
John Lurie, Robert Benigni and Tom Waits in *Down by law*, director Jim Jarmusch, 1986
(source: <http://www.enclavedecine.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/down-by-law-1986-02-g.jpg>).

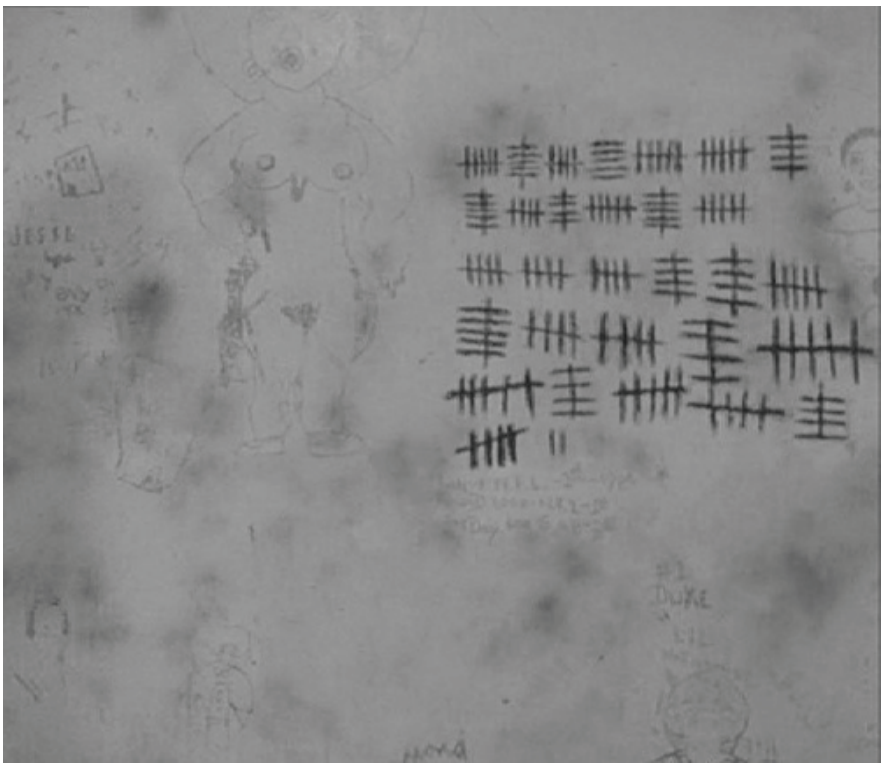

Figure 19
Prison cell wall with graffiti in *Down by law*, director Jim Jarmusch (1986).

Like the "freaks" in Arbus's work, and like the hybrid Odradek, human beings and animals in Ballen's *Boarding house* "still live under the spell of the family" (Benjamin 1999d: 799). It ornaments them with the prehistoric guilt pictured in Kafka's penal colony. Benjamin writes:

> In the penal colony, those in power use an archaic apparatus which engraves letters with curlicues on the back of every guilty man, multiplying the stabs and piling up the ornaments to the point where the back of the guilty man becomes clairvoyant and is able to decipher the script from which he must derive the nature of his unknown guilt (Benjamin 1999d: 811).

The "archaic apparatus" used by "those in power" is suggestive of a camera and camera person respectively and the notion of the clairvoyant back can be translated as the self-aware or self-critical image (cf Stoichita 1997). The latter is evoked by a torn and crumpled found identity book image (Figure 20), which I want to contrast with the art photograph (cf Fried 2008, Schoeman 2010 & 2011). While the latter disguises the status quo of power and capital,[14] the former's arbitrary reproducibility disperses it.[15] This authorless ruin, fragment or torso (cf Schoeman 2011b) has an aura of afterlife (cf Schoeman 2011a) that is unforeseen, unposed and constellated like a *Stern-Bild* or star image. I imagine it schematically as reflecting sky and earth. Its smallness protracts life; its surface ornament is polysemic, allowing "a plurality of configurations" (Benjamin qtd Menke 2002: 268) often suppressed in the reified art photograph (cf Schoeman 2010). Instead of forcing or controlling what is seen in a false totality (cf Benjamin 1998: 176), its melancholy aura of loss and separation poses nothing and lets something be seen:[16] "something that is still to come" (cf Richter 2010); a lucid, untrammelled afterlife.

Figure 20
Found identity book.

Notes

1 This is an expanded version of a paper I presented at *Other views: Art history in (South) Africa and the global south*, a colloquium organised by South African Visual Arts Historians (SAVAH) under the aegis of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA), History of Art, Wits School of Arts, Wits University, 12-15 January 2011. My thanks to the session participants for their observations.

2 I am taking my cue from Walter Benjamin who writes in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: "In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (Benjamin 1998: 177f).

3 Besides being a photographer Ballen is a trained and practicing geologist. The ossified patina of his photographs is suggestive of the geologist's study of the deep time of earth, rock, mountain, ground, stratification, slow shift invisible to the human eye.

4 Cf Benjamin (1998: 178): "For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and, in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification". The tomb-like rooms, clutter and claustrophobia in *Boarding house* are reminiscent of the baroque, as is the aura of ruin and mortification.

5 In an interview in 1999 with former art critic Brenda Atkinson, Ballen claimed that he "never set up the photographs; if I did they wouldn't have the plasticity that they have. You can't dictate the event or contrive the spark of the extra moment" (Atkinson 1999). But time and the plurality of the event are always artificial in a photograph and in both Arbus and Ballen the encounter with the subject is carefully engineered (cf Jobey 2005: 73). Both Arbus's and Ballen's photographs may be products, in part, of fluid time, but their overall effect is contrived and they derive, like all photographs, from the mechanical or technical obliteration of the flow of time and the plurality of the event. In *Thinking Photographs* I will return to the question of

Barthes's *punctum* and Benjamin's aura, "the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now" (Benjamin 1999b: 510); the prick of death, which occurs after the fact, after the moment and after looking, *après-coup*, *après-mort*. The here and now of the photograph, which comes after the lived moment, pricks us with the knowledge of death, which has already happened and is yet to happen. Death and the photograph are entangled with what comes after life: the afterlife.

6 To quote Atkinson 1999 writing about Ballen.

7 With reference to Roland Barthes's 1977 essay "Rhetoric of the image", Dutch art historian Hanneke Grootenboer writes: "The presumed 'logic' the image thus presents, its naturalness or its 'truth,' is brought about by form, a structure, in which all the elements seem to fit, and that is called the rhetoric of the image" (Grootenboer 2005: 12).

8 Cf Atkinson (1999): "Above all, I want to believe that all of these subjects knew what they were getting into. I want to, but I don't".

9 Susan Sontag (1979:60) detected "class condescension" in Sander's purportedly neutral project: "Sander's eclectic style gives him away. Some photographs are casual, fluent, naturalistic; others are naïve and awkward." Her criticism of Sander is also aimed at Arbus.

10 Benjamin (1999: 515) describes photographers' studios of the late nineteenth century as occupying an ambiguous place "between execution and representation, between torture chamber and throne room". Cf my forthcoming article "Photography's aura: Re-reading Walter Benjamin and Michael Fried against the grain of visual colonialisms".

11 Sander's *Circus people* (1930) pre-empts Arbus's attraction to circus performers.

12 Contrary to Sontag, John Szarkowski wrote of Arbus in 1967: "Her real subject is no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed". See Jobey 2005: 72.

13 Enwezor writes: "The portrait is challenging not least because its aesthetic power forces the viewer to think beyond the formal nature and clarity of the picture. It is a photograph that calls for a consultation with a medical researcher, which may then place the image in another archive, namely that of tropical diseases. There is of course in traditional African sculpture a genre of masks devoted entirely to exploring aberrations in human physiognomy. This portrait, perhaps unintended to be read as such, forces open the relationship between photography and traditional modes of representing the real in African art".

14 Benjamin (1999b: 184) writes in the series of fragments titled "Central Park": "That things are 'status quo' *is* the catastrophe".

15 Cf Benjamin (1998: 184) who writes about "that arbitrariness which is the most drastic manifestation of the power of knowledge".

16 Martin Heidegger (qtd Maly 1989: 189) wrote: "*Das Wesen des Bildes ist: etwas sehen zu lassen*" (the nature, being, essence or root-character of the image is to let something be seen).

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