

1A: William E. Parker, Lecture at Visual Studies Workshop, 1977

Notes on the transcription: Comments made by Parker during the reading of texts are set in () Additional information set in { } Inaudible or gaps in tape indicated by ... Parker laughing indicated by {laughs} Students laughing indicated by {laughter}

Transcription by Bob Martin

Reel 1A: Introduction, Ontological aspects of the photographic image and process:

I did want to say a few things about the approach I am going to take, or at least why, and some of the material is available and some is not available. I am positive that many of you have had...advanced courses in the history of photography, some have not, that makes no difference whatsoever...I promise you that I am certain that anything I will emphasize has not yet been introduced in any text, a great deal has been written peripherally relevant to the issues I am about to discuss in relation to aspects of the mimetic tradition, but I think it is important to look at this in reference to some of my own interests. As an undergraduate student I was involved in design and art history, and when I say design, this was an early 50s type of trans-migrated Bauhaus... it was during that time that I became avidly interested in photography...and I have pursued my work primarily in painting and art history and I taught photography, it was so long ago I don't want to even think about it, during the time when I was in the service and I would say over the years...I became increasingly interested in photography and I pursued the interest consistently for the last 20 years...But my interests are primarily in trying to synthesize certain relationships that have occurred in philosophy and literature and particularly the so-called fine arts of painting and sculpture relative to photography... I have a kind of star-struck interest in the fact that Photography seems to be very necessary to people, very vital, and tragic, I will end my lecture series with that, it seems to be the only medium that is reminding us that the world is still there, and I think it quite tragic that we have to have a medium to remind us of that... I would like to stress that I don't teach the history of photography, I really meant that when I said I start with the Paleolithic period. I don't see photography as a physio-chemical, or a necessary tradition of formalism that emerged, I see it definitely emerging out of a fundamental series of linkages that extend into the past. I will try to articulate in whatever division or period we are looking at and for tomorrow's session you will be bombarded with a basic tracing of what is called the mimetic tradition in relation to various periods of art, from the Paleolithic period to the nineteenth century. We are not dealing with photography today, we are not dealing with photography in the nineteenth century, we will close with

issues that you are quite familiar with, perhaps...but I will make parallel relationships in our discussions and show you how even an idea happening in the sixteenth century, or the eighteenth century, is apparent not by what we call direct influence or adoption by a photographer, but how certain image issues are apparent in photographs today, that show their extension and send their tentacles or roots into the past...I was pleased when someone called to my attention to...recent studies...It had to do with commentaries on either nineteenth century photographers, particular ones... speaking of certain practitioners either the nineteenth or early twentieth century as informed by the snapshot approach, and we take ultimately image issues of today and graft them into the past. I do not do that. I promise you, I never have. I see things evolving out of a tradition, however. And I do see the validity of comparative analysis. That is to say that when a person works, even if it is not within their internationalist approach to the development of their work, there can be parallel relationships between what they are doing and something that has happened in the past. We can talk about a unit idea that has been amplified in the present but its basic archetype, and I don't mean that necessarily in the Jungian sense, I mean it is a basic archetype or prototype...or precursor, any word you wish to choose that indicate, and according to the Bible, that there is not a great deal new under the sun, all we have are better or lesser embellishments...of human consciousness...this leads me to what is the distinction that I what to make in this little introductory session between the title of this course, well in the first place, it is aspects, and I am going to bombard you with a series of units, informational units... for you to prove with your own reading skills independent of me. I say a lot of things which are grounded in a thorough amount of research and a lot of research that I did not include until I have the proper checks and balances going, somehow I trust that intuition and usually I find that it is confirmed...much of what has happened in philosophy or science as William Faulkner once commented about reading James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, I approach it with the kind of faith of a fundamental bible belt minister, that even if it you weren't sure or read the various commentaries or the aids to reading something, sometimes we find that we can discover things rather naturally, and that approach has informed certain areas of my studies. In other areas I have trained...a period at Hunter College and at Columbia doing graduate work in nineteenth century art and particularly ancient art. So the sense of the mimetic tradition implies, it is a very simple term, the term is taken from literature. There is a recent issue...commentary by Susan Sontag...This thing is rather remarkable, she mentions Eric Aeurbach's *Mimesis*, it is a study that includes a series of prime or unit examples, you can think of them as basically archetypes or pneumatic examples that are central to various periods of time in which writers had declared an interest in the world about them and want to imitate that world, to mimic as in mime as in theater...but you have to give the mimetic tradition a greater sense of definition than that. Aeurbach concludes with a series of excerpts from various, classical through the 19th century, units of writing, and

on each unit he chooses he introduces a commentary, and I really think that anyone involved in any sense with history or criticism should encounter this at some point in their life...It has nothing whatsoever to do with photography, its history, or criticism of photography, but by implication it has a great deal to do with understanding the various modes of mimesis. I want you to note in his concluding remarks that he states he refuses to establish a whole field of mimesis as a system, he refuses to articulate a kind of critical system that he is using simply because he says that mimetic portrayal has a wide number of possibilities in terms of its application as well as recognition...to mimic the world may be no more than developing a very controlled rendering for an illustration... or could be taking a photograph...and mimesis I think has to bear a greater burden than interpreting certain areas over others. There is a little book, it is one of those synchronicity things, Richard McGuire... it is called *Passionate Attention, An Introduction to Literary Study*...my wife works at the University library...the word is derived from the word mimesis, which means imitation, however it has come to mean something more specific when applied to literary inquiry...and applied to art history in the late 60s...mimetic criticism is that which... to any of the worlds to which it is related possible mimetic approaches in connection to the work and the time it was written." So obviously, the first word that the term mimetic has to bear is that it is the idea that it is applicable within a context...we can see something as being mimetic, but your eye does not see what you know as a beast or a creature or person, place, or thing. However there may be mimetic themes, let's say, if you can bear this term, universalisms that might be apparent within a culture, or 'weltanschauung', or world view, the form itself may not at all bear a relationship to observable reality, however the...content we may find a distinct relationship that this factors into that localized to the spirit of a particular period or the grand worldview that may be pervasive within a culture. Mimetic possibility may extend into the concern with the emotive relationships or the mimicking of emotional states, and of course we can also think of many other categories Mimesis may also relate to the mimicking of psycho-emotional identities, whether expressed through formal constructs or through semiotic or symbolic devices, and while we are on that, let me say a word on that because we are going to use that a lot. Most people confuse the meaning of the term symbol and at least you will know my vocabulary to clarify: anything that is reductively interpretable, such as, stop sign means stop, red light means go, American flag... or any unit in which you can trace, by reduction, the signal to its meaning. Whether that will vary from cultural or societal context to another, it is reducible to a specific term that is called *semiotic*... Now anything that is semiotic, and we can speak of a semiotic motif, the semiotic language signal like in linguistics, this means it is reducible to a specific meaning.

Student: This is not a symbol?

It is not, in fact, when you read in a literary text..."and there she was in the hidden chamber of the earth and was visited by a shower of gold" And then you read footnote one, you find out about Danae who is locked in prison by her mother...and Zeus, as he was often want to do, visiting people in various disguises...appears in the form of a shower of gold coins. Now, if the footnote says, this reference: the girl imprisoned in the earth, in a crypt beneath the earth in which the girl...we know this is reducible to something specific, we can say the semiotic motif of that line has to do with Danae and her visitation by Zeus. Now we also know that we can carry this a step further, we can say that if the footnote continues to state that this is basically a personification of, or a signal for a way of describing an ancient fertility idea, such as, the gold coins, the reflection will represent sun. Danae and her crypt beneath the earth represents the seed, waiting, latent. The coins are in essence semiotically reducible to the idea that they not only represent energy but light. As they fall into the crypt, imagine a grating on the street, and fall upon Danae, and of course this is Zeus having his way in various guises, like with Leda as a swan, Ios as a cloud, he has all sorts of forms, sneaking through the back door... but at any rate, if we know that this represents an even further stage that had to do with solar and fertility mythologin, and we can say that this means, specifically the visitation of sunlight into the earth to fructify or fecundate the seed which then will germinate growth. We are still dealing with a semiotic motif because it is reducible. However, if we start spinning this into the realm of the abstract... that which is not immediately coherent in application to some specific event, thing, object, person, place, past, present, or what have you, then we might start seeing the symbolic guise begin to emerge. Now let me explain to you what I mean by that, if I were to say, "Above effects (causes) and affects what is below." The idea of Zeus visiting, the logos, mind... the celestial visiting in the form of sunlight, the gold coins, visits the seed one, the nascent possible birthing figure who will grow and in essence give birth to a new progeny...if I start extending this idea until it becomes a postulate, such as above affects below, then I have to be able to justify this as something specifically or reductively known, does that makes sense to you?... Maybe we should back up a little... let's look at the root for the word symbol: *syn* meaning together or with. And *bolein*, meaning to throw. Now a symbol is basically something that is thrown together with something else, and there is one thing very clear as I trace the etymology of the term symbol, I do this because in many cases I use words rather liberally, application and the background of the word symbol is not in this level to be confused with this level, the reductive should not be confused with this, what you would think of as a metaphor as in a poem, or simile, is simply not symbolic, it is reductive...in film criticism...it is the only way I have to understand a great deal of what is happening in French linguistic philosophy... and American linguistic philosophy, Noam Chomsky and others. This area still belonged to that nasty category called metaphysical... for the simple reason that it will forever allude simple understanding. A symbol, in the first place, requires that

something is thrown together with something else, if I walk up to a person, and I use the form of shaking their hand, now that meaning would be semiotic, to show friendship, if I were to think of that link or bond between myself and another human being as having some spiritual dimension, or some meaning filled with the inexplicable that the greeting does not bear witness to the conclusion that I feel, then I am in the realm of the symbolic. Because in the first place, the other person may understand the connection between the handshake but not understand the motive for it...For a symbol to occur, as I said, one thing has to be thrown together with something else. Think for example if a person looks at a painting or a photograph. Obviously that formal or physical or image-construct is thrown together with their mind in essence a dialogue takes place between the two, the object and the perceiver. And the encounter that occurs between the receiving subject and the formal object with its varied levels of content, can establish a type of dialogue that is not reduced to the idea of attention given, and internal attention given to that object. How often do we hear something and then we find ourselves, it pops back into our head at a later point, and we find ourselves applying it to something else, symbolic strains work that way, they don't stop in their definition...

Student: Can I bring out two illustrations for you to build on...Rembrandt's painting of Danae being showered by the gold, and Rubens' painting of Christ crucified with the... storm in the background, basically using the same two personages but in terms of the painting, what does the painting...and in terms of the crucifix, which we think of as a symbol, using again a pictorial image that Rubens uses, how would you elaborate?

Rubens did do a Danae, I was thinking of Titian...{laughs}...I had in my mind...one can talk about, let's say, a cross, if I see it in Ruben's painting, if I am able to, on the first level, identify factual information, in other words, what common sense and culture permits us to know...certain meanings, I would speak of that in a semiotic sense the instrument upon which Christ was crucified, and I can point to that thing and say, cross, if I have that contextual background. You are not required to necessarily know a semiotic motif, but it is reducible and could be communicated to you as reducible to a specific meaning, we say it is semiotic.

Student: The viewer viewing that painting by Rubens takes it only on the level of its factuality: oh there is a picture of Christ being crucified 2000 years ago...that on the part of the viewer then is a semiotic response?

...If the viewer speaks of the not...obvious factors: wood, or cross, Christ...but of divine love, now that is not directly communicable. Because that depends on the dialogue, the throwing together of the psychological and the response of that individual to that painting, do you see what I mean? And the dialogue begins to occur linking between it

and something else, it opens up beyond the specific and becomes psychological or philosophical...in extensa, it does not...that becomes a symbolic response. The symbol is never going to be understood in the reductive sense, Ernst Cassirer, and Jung, and Ira Progoff, and dozens of others, Lancelot Law Whitehead, trying to get to the symbolic dimension, it is... it is not hierarchical unless it operates its functions within the extended sense so that links occur, and that may well leave the original subject... goes from the Rubens to divine love, and then finds that their cake turns out well when they cook it in the oven, and suddenly that link occurs...I'll talk about signs and I'll talk about symbols. Now interestingly enough, that doesn't mean we can't discuss symbols, we can't invent one, at least as far as I know...you can certainly invent signs, but symbols are very hard to come about for the simple reason that they require, obviously, a field of operations...how many of you know the paintings of Giorgio DeChirico? He did the surreal things of tilted up perspectives and railway stations and architectures and mannequins and things of that nature. No? How many of you know the paintings of Jackson Pollock, everyone knows Jack the Dripper {laughs} Now Pollock...he entered into Jungian analysis in 1942. He had been influenced by not only Thomas Hart Benton and a regionalist semiotics in terms of imagery, he did at one time paint cowboys and he was also influenced by what we call the Regionalist Neo-Baroque, all the swirling Thomas Hart Benton type motifs. He also was very much influenced by Navaho Indian art, particularly sand painting, and a great deal of Mexican art, Orozco and others. And these elements appeared in his work prior to 1942. And some appear after. But the main thing is that most of the work did have motifs that we might call reducible to at least their formal sources, it was not only what they meant to him, they were reducible to formal sources: you can find Arp, you can find Miro, you can find Benton, a great number of reducible images as well as reducible forms. Now in 42 because of his alcoholism and a great deal of difficulties he went into analysis...with Joseph Henderson. You may have seen the exhibition called *Pollock's Psychoanalytic Drawings* at the Whitney several years ago. And Henderson worked with Pollock for a period of a few years, but did nothing but let Pollock bring in work... And he would speak of his work, but he would bring drawings to Henderson and that is the way the analysis moved. Now in the course of this, Henderson felt that something was being developed or revealed that obviously the man could never understand analytically or intellectually, that it was only in the progress of the work that he would know where he was going...He had no way of being self-cognitive, it had to be a projection of cognition through his work, and cognition I mean in the broader sense. And as a result, he symbolized with Henderson. Now Henderson went to California, and Aniela Jaffe who worked with Jung at the Zurich Institute worked a great deal with Pollock. And there are a number of major articles...in which people have commented upon the nature of this man who had to do the work in order to know what he was about, it didn't help a great deal I might add... with his fundamental basic life problems...a man who could do work that was a testament to

totally new dimension...I use this as an illustration because the most recent commentary...on Pollock is by Lawrence Holloway, in a newly published *Topics in Modern Art*, and he discusses the whole issue of the background of his work, and the analysis, and the conclusion...and that it really makes no difference about the nature of whether he was helped or harmed, or whether Henderson was selling the work, or was it an invasion of professional ethics...states that Pollock was a person inevitably charged from within...the teleology of Pollock's work was inescapable, that is to say he wasn't so much defining the work as he was the midwife for certain forces or energies in his own psyche and they had been projected into the work, and he did not know what it was about. And the tragedy of his death, which was purportedly suicide, if you look at the last painting of Pollock, the American Dream, we have the male and the female head on the opposite side, not identifiable actually, here he was trying to return a semiotic motif, a Pablo Picasso male and female head, and on the left side he has the lineal, calligraphic elements. And this is a gigantic painting in the Museum of Modern Art and indicates the difficulties of a man who really could not synthesize in his development, and shortly thereafter he was consumed by...at least according to the most recent biography insisted that it was indeed a suicide. The point I am making is that it is as though he could at an earlier period relate himself and his work to a series of reductive motifs...when he reached the symbolic level he constantly complained...and I know having met him three times before his death, and also knowing people who knew him well...and I can say emphatically that the man did not have a clue as to why his interest {in Jungian ideas} was evident but he felt it served him well, because he had someone speak about where he was going though he would have never done it before the fact, it always had to be after the fact it was recognized in the development of his work. So in essence he was involved in a symbolic process...when he wrote, "I only know what I am about when I am *in* the painting," This is not a man...who has a pre-cognitive approach to what he is going to define, here is the canvas stretched the length of this room, on a barn floor in Long Island, and a man dripping paint off the end of brushes, or sticks, or slapping his hand into the surface of the painting, dropping his cigarette butts, tacks, nails...if there ever was a better definition of what I would call an undifferentiated definition of form, I don't know what it is...yet it became symbolic of a denial... of subject matter and painting from that point on became distinctly phenomenological...and there would not have been the developments that we associate with Color Field, with no reference, but primarily the phenomenology of paint, action, the physical involvement and so on. When I use the term in relation to the semiotic, I am talking about something that involves contextual evidence, because intentionalist aspects of an artist, or groups, intentions: this means that, then we are talking on the semiotic level of meaning. When we talk symbolic level, again, all we can do is talk about comparative evidences. For example, in our first presentation of slides for this afternoon, one of our issues will be to deal with some aspects of the Paleolithic period.

Well, you might say...you're just projecting this back onto that period when we obviously had no writing... while we have some suggestive constructs surviving from the Neolithic period. But folks, we do have comparative evidence. We have people as you remember in the Philippines just four years ago who rushed into the new Stone Age... we have constant evidences from various imagistic and...textual developments that emerge from the pictographic into the written word. We have the behavior that sociologists and anthropologists and ethnologists constantly define for us...that we have a repetition, although we project the present upon the past, but we do know that can at least come close, not to fully understand, not be able to reduce a motif to a specific type of meaning, but we know the actions took place. The first thing I want to do this afternoon is to show you some visual markings, hand markings, that is often described by the term "macaroni." On the walls of caves...and I will say nothing to you about what they mean but I will tell you exactly what they are: because here you are talking about a period anywhere from 50,000 to 6000 BC...and continues even to today, this type of activity, even children do it, I remember my daughter making macaroni drawings...Kellog's studies of children art...but the thing we can be certain about in the first place is the marks were made into something moist, moist clay. We know there are still impressions of fingerprints...and we find their appearance in certain precincts...and that is all we know. But we can make certain inferences on the basis of that evidence alone...reductivist, or typical late nineteenth century positivist, that these are...snares or serpents. The utilitarian complex leads people always to the semiotic. They refuse to accept the fact that something...involves just a gesture, and the type of medium the gesture might relate itself to, and that will be amplified considerably...a relationship to the whole thesis of the mimetic tradition and its relationship to photography. So therefore, this is a long winded way of returning back to the beginning, when I say aspects, we are going to be dealing with a major emphasis upon the visual continuums, from the Paleolithic period up to the nineteenth century, it is obviously very selective, I think I'll show you more than you probably saw in your art history class, any of you enrolled in an advanced art history program? How many of you have had a survey...we don't have time to deal with textual evidences as such, but what I can do is point the way to certain books that you might want to explore on your own...what we'll do is discuss the developments that occurred in philosophy to reconfirm what I have established in terms of the visual modes, and then talk about some of the applications in terms of...photography...like I said, we are not dealing with a course that deals with photographic images as such...the mimetic tradition I am talking about, it applies to the development of photography, but photography is phenomenological, so that we don't see photography as being mimetic, it is the culmination of a mimetic tradition. We have a series of levels... thematic, formal, psychological, cultural, whatever it may be, and then we have the advent of photography which becomes phenomenological. I might add that it is the first medium that is phenomenological without the intervention of human

involvement...many of you have read Bazin, Stanley Cavell, Susan Sontag... ontological concerns of the photograph, What is a photograph? How does it behave? How do we respond? I think these are good issues... but not so much to contemporary photography or even nineteenth century photography, it really applies to the art and to the modes of thought that lead to the advent of photography, and that is where we find ourselves concerned with ontological issues. This idea of the being of a photograph will not be my emphasis at all, however we might encounter some material of the way some people think photographs behave, some of that will be on the bibliography...how many of you have read Bazin's *What is Cinema?* You must. Let me read you something...let me show you some of the audacity this marvelous human being had-- this was published in 1945..."this production by automatic means has radically affected our psychology of the image. The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all picture-making. In spite of any objections that our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, (not represented but RE presented), set before us, that is to say, in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction."...You know how often people talk about the credibility of the photograph. Nathan Lyons introduces it in his introduction to *Photographers on Photography*. Ivins on a number of occasions, it is not that that is a catch-all, but it is time to start finding out if people really did believe it was credible or not, in context...when he says, it is not just re-presented, that is to say in time and space, the photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space... once negative, print, once there before your eyes, subject to your perceptions, we say it is freed from the conditions of time and space that originally governed it, no matter how fuzzy, distorted or... no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be it shares by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model for which it is a reproduction, it IS the model." {laughs} That is like saying, hey folks, that Weston pepper IS the pepper. But see what people leave out, when they... to Bazin, even read the editor's commentary on what he is saying, that this is an untenable viewpoint. But they always fail to read that one line, that one little snippet, and it is not easy, when he says, by the process of its becoming, it is the model. And it is true, and yet when I start waxing on about this and try to attempt to confirm at least for our...that this issue is true, that it is the model by the virtue of the process of its becoming. And yet I hope you don't think I am negating the photographer, (laughs)... hurt egos, how dare you, it is not the camera it is the man behind the camera, as if someone is announcing a polemic against humanity or creativity, that has nothing to do with the issue, that is just not a problem. Of course it is the person behind the camera, of course it is the sensibility and sensitivity of the individual who selects, but that is not what Bazin is talking about. When he said, no matter how fuzzy or distorted, how evident or inevident, and of course the ultimate Bazinesque photograph would be taking

a sheet of enlarging paper out of the box, holding under the light and throwing it into the developer, he would say yes, that is true, it is the model. It is the model re-presented. And he is obviously talking about the light. He is talking about the autonomous nature of the medium, which in so far as it is photography...the issue of photography relating to the use of some instrumentation, it doesn't necessarily have to be a camera, or some use of.. Insofar as the image is dependent upon the effect of light, and arrests itself on some light-sensitive material that we would speak of as being authentically self-governed. That is the form of this medium is self-reflexive, or that is not the right pronoun, *itself*-reflexive. Light reflects off something, it is accommodated through the lens of the camera, it impresses its effect upon some type of silver halide or some other kind of light sensitive material... and no matter whether a horse trips the shutter heading backwards,{laughs} or a human being does...I don't want to even deal with the issue of who selects the subject, that is not the issue here, the issue is simply light is what does the recording, the light is what basically starts the teleology of the image formation going, not the human being. Because the human being can push the shutter but unless there is the light and the light sensitive film, there is not going to be any image. It really does... people's belief in the credibility of the photographic image... and in all these commentaries that we read... in Gernsheim, or in Talbot's title, the *Pencil of Nature*... Well if we spend some time trying to look at certain unit sources we will find that a great deal of this is so true according to our way of physiologically and psychologically perceive...Bazin makes a very good point that it has been confused for a number of years. That is why someone like Stanley Cavell brought somewhat up to date, although he too has problems with trying to determine... a closure principle on certain ideas that really could be justified in relation to a number of media, not just photography. We'll get to more of that later...Now what I have done, I brought with me to establish these preliminary concerns a series of commentaries...let me go over what they are in this grab bag of tricks here. This is another problem of mine, you'll often find me going into suitcases...I don't have the patience to xerox everything...now since the class doesn't deal with the nineteenth century but primarily all periods as well as western consciousness, certainly in the twentieth century we would have to deal with eastern consciousness and Orientalism and so on...but I think it is wise that we at least understand certain fundamental principles that relate to nineteenth century philosophy...if this were a seminar we would be dealing with special topics and doing a primary source research...this is more of a development of a series of ideas that relate to the theme of the mimetic tradition...This young man, Dennis P. Grady, I don't think his conclusions are necessarily important but he has got a very simplistic summary of the differences between the metaphysical idealism and positivism as it occurred in the nineteenth century...and I'd rather you approach it that way so that we all have common ground...the second one is a commentary...I treasure *Scientific American*, and *National Geographic*, don't ever knock them, they are extraordinary magazines, and I always say

please look at them often, and I am an avid collector of information that confirms not only certain intuitions we all have or that I have and I don't have to have the proof of science to confirm it, but I do like certain background evidences... because I don't have time to get involved with advanced biochemistry or microclimatology, I am perfectly willing to let George Wald...and I am perfectly willing to let people who are eminent scholars in their fields write very simple fundamental articles for our attention in which we know, if we are conscious of what has happened since....then we know that there have been certain correctives...now this one is called, *Eye and Camera*...this is excellent, this man has such an extraordinary amount of wit, and he writes with such utter simplicity..."We hardly know why chickens have to roost at night..why do they roost at night?...well folks they are not endowed with receptor cells, rods, that are sensitive to grays, or value structure of light, and as a result, they can't see, so they are wise enough when the sun sets to go roost or else they'll stumble around...and he'll say things like this, "the rods provide a special apparatus for vision in dim light, and their excitation yields only neutral gray sensations. That is why at night all cats are gray." What a wonderful conclusion...and "the capacity of rods for image vision is correspondingly coarse. It is not only true that at night all cats are gray, but it is difficult to be sure that they are cats."... anyone, not just you this is...from the village idiot, and of course I often call the village idiot the consciousness of a society...this at least presents parallels to the eye and the camera...certain devices that were used, very early, to acquire {inquire?} optical relationships, not the camera...the eye as compared to certain types of reflective properties of water, or certain types of magnifications in relations to spectacles and telescopic devices in a later period, but Wald is not only so charmingly simplistic and then he gradually evolves to an understanding of the pin hole, the scanning eye. The issue in relation to creatures...and the parallels between photography, not so much the eye and the camera, but photo-chemistry...I am just a nut for things like this..."The grain of the photographic emulsion magnified 2,500 times, is made up of silver-bromide crystals in gelatin, grain of the human retina made up of cones and rods, dots at far right, semicircle indicates fovea...I'd like you to read this one second...and then we have... And this one is written in 1968 by Floyd Geisser, {?} and this is called...of vision this is an extension of the Wald commentary on the parallelism between the eye and the camera and also extends Wald's commentary in terms of how the perceiving individual are affected by aspects of culture or society... then Susan Sontag, notice how she states...I'll just read you two little fragments, when she says, "Reality has always been interpreted through the reports given by images, and philosophers since Plato have tried to loosen our dependence on images by evoking the standard of an image-free way of apprehending the real. But when, in the mid-nineteenth century, the standard finally seemed attainable, the retreat of old religious and political illusions before the advance of humanistic and scientific thinking did not, as anticipated, create mass defections to the real. On the contrary, the new age of unbelief

strengthened the allegiance to images. The credence that could no longer be given to realities understood *in the form* of images was now being given to realities understood *to be* images, illusions.”... “Photography has powers that no other image system has ever enjoyed because unlike the earlier ones it is not dependent on an image maker.” So there again, you can see the connection right to Bazin’s thesis. He is the first to articulate a theoretical construct out of which all of these ontological discussions occur. He is not the first to deal with the issue: that occurs within the first moment of the announcement of photography, the issue of light and being autonomous, an itself-reflexive medium, and I have a number of things to confirm that. She {Sontag} says, “However carefully the photographer intervenes in setting up and guiding the image-making process, the process itself remains an optical-chemical or electronic one, the workings of which are automatic, the machinery for which will inevitably be modified to provide still more detailed and, therefore, useful maps of the real.” She concludes, and this is a very fascinating conclusion...”It suited Plato’s derogatory attitude towards images to liken them to shadows: transitory, minimally informative, immaterial, impotent co-presences of the real things which cast them. But the force of photographic images comes from their being material realities in their own right, richly informative deposits left in the wake of whatever emitted them, potent means for turning the tables on reality; for turning *it* into a shadow. Images are more real than anyone could have supposed. And just because they are an unlimited resource, one that cannot be exhausted by consumerist waste, there is all the more reason to apply the conservationist remedy. If there can be a better way for the real world to include the one of images, it will require an ecology not only of real things but of images as well.” I think what she says here is that the world has become image and illusion, not fact...And the last one is...is an article by Alfred Marks on Hawthorne’s character Holgrave in *House of the Seven Gables*...my copy is strangely in error, a whole line has been left out, I checked it ...”Holgrave’s profession...the daguerreotype as it existed in Hawthorne’s time is instructive of photography as we know it today,” what he is saying is to understand the daguerreotype is instructive to the meaning of the relationship to Hawthorne’s novel...even though the novel was published in 1851 Hawthorne was preeminently aware of the psychic effects of the daguerreotype, particularly on human consciousness, and the...Marx’s commentary...this is a commentary not only by Marx who was not only a...scholar...it was published in spring 1962...he has done a remarkable job of dealing with the character of Holgrove and all the other implications of the daguerreotype image...portrait and its effect upon the human consciousness implied through these literary characters...and he deals with issues in relation to the past, and he deals with this issue of light and the automatic nature of the daguerreotype... and of photographic processes...and I will be commenting on that and this issue of the autonomous nature of photographic processing of an image. If you read those, you will see a number of connections I am making...there are distinctions made, and I consider

this all introductory so if it seems fragmented just keep in mind that things coalesce as we move into the real subject...of photography that deal with this issue of the autonomous of camera-work and the whole process...it always appears in the context of painting. I will make a very simple diagram here...we have the original subject, then we have the re-presentation of the subject...and then we have the observer. So here we have the original subject extended into the medium of the photograph, and then we have the observer...now this would apply to photography. In the case of painting, we have the original subject and we also have the painting...and then we have the observer...the idea of the presentation or *re*-presentation of something that is referential, in this case I would rather deal with something that is basically semiotic, such as a photograph of a tree, ok? Let me call on Watkins, marvelous photographs of trees, or Atget, and the same thing for painting, think of a Gainsboro or a Constable...there are different attitudinal realizations. And by that I am talking about the *entirety* of perceptual response, and I call them attitudinal responses because that not only relates the fundamental sensory responses to the medium itself that is delivering the presentation of the original subject tree, but it also has a great deal to do with not only the idea of cultural influences, but the dispositions of each individual, whether it is slight, nuanced differences in our vision, some of us wear glasses, some of you don't, I can tell you right now there is a big nuance if I take these glasses off, you all turn into an impressionist tableau... we are really dealing more with this kind of issue here: what is the response of the observer to a painting, and to a photograph? Now I am not dealing with final issues, I am dealing with just the issue that links this idea back to Bazin...and also might say what is the manifestation of the original subject into the representation or re-presentation here and here. Now many of you may have a number of strong ideas on that...we could simplify it and say, in the first case, the photograph, the observer sees the reality of the original subject as if present. The observer sees the original subject, the reality of, as if present, according to the process implication of its manifestation. In other words, according to a belief and the credibility of how it occurred, not in terms of whether it is a tree, or can be deductibly identifiable as a tree. Now in a painting you might say that Andrew Wyeth does some pretty nifty mimetic rendering of things, take your choice, I would say that the observer basically witnesses the manifestation of an invention. An invention by a medium that is not itself-reflexive. Now in the most fundamental terms it is like saying... as any fool can plainly see in a typical photographic image, there is one thing we can say that is certain: typically, I am not talking about the refined photograph that alters or transposes reality or intermixes media, I am talking about that family album snapshot, where mother and daughter, sister and brother, whoever, pet dog is identifiable...The observer encounters atomistic detail, they observe a great deal more information than they would see with their scanning eyes. They also encounter a great deal of...witnessing of aspects of inspection, not only of the object or its location in space, but they also have the

instantaneity of recall that they were present with the camera person. After that the subject was made manifest, or picture-taking, ok, so they have a double kind of developmental, they not only have a memory trace of the original subject, but they also have the record of that original subject presented with greater form that could have possibly been seen collectively. Now what happens in a painting? You tell me. What was the observer seeing in a painting if it is Fido sitting up or mother, father, sister, or brother, what can we see that we can confirm? In the first place, we do not witness a medium as autonomously affected someone by the effects of some wave energies and it is not itself-reflexive. Where is the palette... someone has to put a brush in the palette, I don't care if it is a spray can...the paint does not leap from the palette and form itself into the subject of Fido...is an extremely important issue. We can say all media other than photographic media. Challenge that, you would have to argue a long time because I have a lot of evidence to the truth of that. I just throw that out there, all media other than photographic media are subject to a willing agent. Something must will in order to form the image. In photography, someone must will the selection, the vantage point, even the interpreted developments through certain instrumentations, wide angle lens, conventional lens, or alterations that occur after the fact, scarring the photographic image, those are all not originally innate to the process of forming something by light. And insofar as we even call it photography, we've got photo/light, and graphein/to write. One thing the observer notices here is that this medium seems to automatically constellate the subject and there is a certain degree of almost magical identification, and I think the credibility is much more apparent in how the image emerged than it is in the image itself because that is subject to innumerable variations of interpretation, but one thing seems to be of interest is the fact that the process never seems to be questioned in a typical, conventional photograph...because the medium is itself-reflexive. Now painting... is obviously subject to something that has to be humanly doable...paintings done by donkeys, that is not subject to debate, the point is that you might get a phenomenological occurrence by virtue of certain types of motion or force, but it is also predetermined, that paint does not itself form the image, it must be subject to a specific, humanly-willed series of conditions. There are photographic images that are not subject to humanly-willed conditions, except for the preparation of the plate and the preparation of the camera...In the first case, the observer sees the reality as if present, according to the original processes of the definition, or the defining medium. In the second case, the observer is presented with a willed transformation medium. And then there are two things in terms of the sense of time that we might associate with images. I like to make the distinction that photographs are always in the past tense, and I know of none...they are always past tense,

Student: Couldn't you argue that the...is present tense that can imply past tense...

Let's discuss that, because there is present tense in terms of counterpoints {?} to observe in a photograph and there is present tense in terms of using selective, let's say someone is taking a photograph of something that originally had a source in a photograph, an offset image or what have you. I would grant the idea that certain elements can be developed, certain images can be developed so that they have an implication of present tenseness, but if I trace it back to its original phenomenological occurrence to the effect of light on a light-sensitive plane, I can always say that originally that subject source was acausal in the development of it. In other words, I am not going to worry about infinitesimal units of a second form of exposure to be made in the camera insofar as it does seem synchronistic: the object, the subject out there, the light reflecting from it, the shutter, and the effect on the light-sensitive plane. We say the connection is so immediate, so compressed, that we imply that no matter who selects the camera, the lens, the film, obviously radical alterations can take place in the way the image will appear to the observer, but insofar as the manifestation is still dependent on the effect of light. Whereas in painting... the medium itself has no potentiality, it has no teleological autonomism, it must be willed. I do know, my brother had a job in Jacksonville, Florida at a place called the Yerkes Laboratory...and there are chimpanzees who are trained to paint, why I can even remember when I was a child in Collier's Magazine, remember that? They showed...painting a boat on the ocean ...interestingly enough, but that was just a very imaginative brush, because what we find out is that it is conditioned-response... the monkey would get a banana, get confirmation when it painted on a diagonal...then knows how to get a banana...and couldn't paint anything other than that little sailboat...the Jack Paar show...and they had Vincent Price and...it wasn't Clement Greenberg...and they were on the show... a man had dipped earthworms into pigment, it is a very cruel thing to do, and on a very large canvas similar to an early Colorfield image, and let these worms slither across...and of course at the conclusion of the painting it was presented to this panel of experts. And what was interesting, from the very first comment...he said you know my mother didn't raise any foolish children... looks like these were made by a worm... and the point he made was, it was a very beautiful form and the audience is screaming, and he wasn't phased at all, and he said it is a very beautiful form, obviously I suspect it was done unintentionally, it was done naturally, and Vincent Price said the same thing. It was amazing... it was a lesson in what it is to perceive something stunning in its formal constructs... but let's not confuse that with intentionalism or content-levels of response. And then they asked how was it done, and the worm artist came out... and Price just became explosive... all you have done is to use a very imaginative brush. It doesn't make a difference how the form was produced, but you see you are confusing the issue by intending for someone with normal movements to create this effect... The photograph seems to reflect the original subject so well that we tend to be bound to the original time and space of that subject. As Cavell says, it is as if we look at a photograph

and the world is present to me, but I am not present to it... what he is trying to state is, that it is peculiar how photographs, of any photograph that still bears witness to photographic processes, whether they are kinetic like film, or still, whether black and white or color, to seem to be in the presence of something. But it is certainly one thing we can say for sure, it is a world which I can no longer interfere with. It is presented with clarity, detail, a certain order of comprehensiveness in terms of what can be observed in the particular structure that is more apparent than I do with a good old fashioned fifteen minutes of staring at something. Because my eye has to lose... and whatever the camera sees, sticks... and the implication that Cavell is trying to get across is, it is as if the world, whatever that may be, the subject, is present to me and I am thus removed from it, I no longer can even have the opportunity to interpret it according to my own projections... because any pictorial form commands us to recognize a photograph: something has stopped, something is present, interacts with light... and paintings don't have a tendency to suggest what, now use your imagination, do they not stop at the artist's last stroke, hung in a museum or gallery, or do they continue? Cavell would say that in essence the painting in the first place is a fiction, despite however clearly the identification of the subject is, it is also a testimony to an act of mind, and a willing of hand, and skill, that we speak of as implying a continuum. In other words, seldom do we think, certainly if the artist is deceased, we don't think of *that* painting, we think of that artist's paintings, we start referring to things like, Oh I saw a Mondrian. I saw an Andrea Del Sarto. We tend to personify, we think of the humanism of the inventing human creature. We also think of it as a series of postulated ideas that have been made manifest in form, and a form that has been willed and articulated, and carries those ideas into the work, or at least to suggest them. And it is as if we know that paintings must continue to build up an image in the mind toward a future ideal, or an image possibility, insofar as we are interested enough to look at a group of paintings by the same artist or group...the painting seldom returns to the original subject, whether it is incredibly mimetic, because that would apply to a work that has been done in a medium that is not itself-reflexive...if we look at a painting and we recognize authorship, put it in quotes, and the invented I, or the fictive I, we also have the recognition that we have the possibility of a continuum of that invention, use Pollock as an example...one can say that we have a teleology of that particular approach affecting other painters who use non itself-reflexive media...as an extension of Pollock's work. Photographs always require a return to the original act of creation, and by that the autonomous creation of light impressing itself on itself-reflexive media. And in essence we can't talk about the work of Benno Friedman and how it influences so and so, yes in certain image... appearances there may be an apparent influence. Or Tom Barrow sought the influence of Henry Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* library images...the point is, there is no relationship whatsoever, from Talbot's exposition of a rather unusual prophetic dimension...of photography, he comments on the photograph in the *Pencil of Nature* of

those books on the library shelf, he is also commenting on missing one book... how many of you have read the comments in the *Pencil of Nature*, and they are a beautiful thing, he has some quite interesting projections to make, some are downright mystical. Barrow was making a commentary upon human beings who have certain books in their library, particularly photographers; he is also ultimately conscious of Talbot's detachment in the presentation of his own imagery. He is also in essence sharing a certain degree of conceptual definition by virtue if we read the titles and associate initials with...but then we get involved with something that tends to deal with the development of concept that deals with the use of certain provocative images or approaches to photographs of the past and grafts them onto the present, or tries to reflect them in the present. We can't say there is a distinct relationship of influence there. There is no continuum as such. The only thing we might suggest could be possible is the fact there was light, and something for it to arrest itself upon, a medium. In painting, there is a continuum not only of a set of deliberately distinct ideas such as Pollock's, in his major work that he developed, that we say is non-referential, we know that it sponsors a strain of non-referential art, and we know that each time it has to be invented out of the ideational...constructs of the human being who responds to it, and that is not necessarily the case with the photographer. Someone else may photograph that bookshelf, and not have a reference to Tom Barrow and Henry Fox Talbot. Do you see the distinction I am trying to make?... Here is one of my final examination questions, I'll give you one of my exams...here is Max Kozloff writing in the *Territory of Photographs*...the contemporaries of Hill and Fox Talbot were Le Secq and Du Camp, also knew they had been handed an extraordinary power. Looking at a scene recorded by any one of these photographers, they held a visual advantage over anyone susceptible to every manner of breeze, texture, motion, and heat who had been merely present when the shutter opened. A further plenitude had been awarded their absentee eyes, one that enlarged visual retention with a torrent of details, parting from each other as willed, but always melting back into an unheard-of-whole." That is a way of saying the atomistic structure of the photograph ..."parting from each other as willed," that means by the observer, not the photographer, like, I know, look at the individual standing at the top of...I shall now look at this small motif in the upper right, you see the details, there is so much there that one can honestly enter into a kind of selective process of what one wishes to be attentive to. Painting is involved with seeing the gestalt, the schema first, then you move around to see the detail. And what happens, at a certain point, even in the most extraordinary image by Van Eyck for example, one falls from the ultra-infinitesimal detail into the realm of pigment and you see the process, the mark of the brush, the syntax as Ivins would speak of it. Of an authored process of a work of art. In photography we can seldom look further and I am talking about an original photograph and not a...

End reel 1A