Photographs as Objects of Memory

Elizabeth Edwards

When Roland Barthes, eaten by ontological desire, eventually found the photograph of his mother which transmitted, for him, the essence of that unique being, what he first describes is an object:

> The photograph was very old, the corners were blunted from having been pasted into an album, the sepia print had faded, and the picture just managed to show two children standing together at the end of a little wooden bridge in a glassed-in conservatory, what was called a Winter Garden in those days.[1]

Photographs are perhaps the most ubiquitous and insistent focus of nineteenth- and twentieth-century memory. The photograph infuses almost all levels of memory, even those of which it is not directly part. It constitutes a meta-value of memory construction, its tentacles spread out, blurring and constructing memory in its own insistent image. My focus here is very precisely on the photograph and its presentational forms as material culture, drawing on writing from photography on one hand and the anthropology of material culture on the other. None of the elements I discuss is of itself very original, nor can one, in an essay of this length, discuss any one of them in detail, however I hope through a massing effect to suggest that the relationship between photograph and memory and the way in which it obtains its privileged position as a conduit of memory is refracted through the photograph's materiality.

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1984 [1980]), 67.

My argument is not intended to attempt the impossible – to divorce the materiality of the photographic image from the image itself. Just as Barthes argues that the image and its referent are laminated together, two leaves that cannot be separated, so are the photograph and its materiality, the image and object brought into a single coherent form.[2] However, as a heuristic device I shall shift the methodological focus away from content alone, arguing that it is not merely the image *qua* image that is the focus of contemplation, evocation and memory, but that its material forms, enhanced by its presentational forms, are central to its function as a socially salient object. These material forms exist in dialogue with the image itself to make meaning and to create the focus for memory and evocation. For photographs belong to that class of objects formed specifically to remember,[3] rather than being objects around which remembrance accrues through contextual association (although they become this as well).[4] For photographs express a desire for memory and the act of keeping a photograph is, like other souvenirs, an act of faith in the future. They are made to hold the fleeting, to still time, to create memory. Indeed popular clichés on photography (frozen moments in time etc.) actually encapsulate a cultural expectation of the medium. In their relationship with their referent, their reality effect and their irreducible pastness, photographs impose themselves on memory. They become surrogate memory and their silences structure forgetting. Certainly some have greater 'specific gravity' than others through the intensity of represented expression, or they accrue value, the photograph of the recently dead more precious than that of the living perhaps. Yet their very being or inscription is dependent on the desire for memory expressed through the intervention in time which characterize it as photography. Thus in photographs we see fragments of space and time reproduced to infinity. The analogical insistence that so anguished Barthes projects the past into the present, the dead among the living through the inscribed image, the forms of its materiality, and the modes of its uses.

2. *Ibid.*, 6.

3. David R. Unruh, 'Death and Personal History: Strategies of Identity Preservation', *Social Problems*, xxii (1983), no.1, 347–6.

4. Alan Radley, 'Artifacts: Memory and a Sense of the Past', in D. Middleton and D. Edwards (eds.), *Collective Remembering* (London, 1990), 48.

The Transparent Object

Photographs have inextricably linked meanings as images and as objects: an indissoluble, yet ambiguous, melding of image and form, both of which are direct products of intention. The transparency of the photograph to its referent has been one of its most cherished features. Culturally, despite rational realizations that photography can 'lie', the photograph has been viewed, especially in its vernacular forms, as a window on the past.

However, 'in order to see what the photograph is *of* we must first suppress our consciousness of what the photograph *is* in material terms.'[5] What things are made of – how they are materially presented – relates directly to their social, economic and political discourses. The appropriateness of their material form is central to their meaning. As Miller has argued, 'Through dwelling upon the more mundane sensual and material qualities of the *object*, we are able to unpick the more subtle connections with cultural lives and values that are objectified through these forms, in part because of the qualities they possess.'[6] In this, photographs do not differ from other classes of 'things' enmeshed in everyday practice.

The materiality of the photograph is integral to its affective tone as an *image*. The subjective and sensuous experiences of photographs as linking objects within memory are equally integral to the cultural expectancies of the medium, the certainty of the vision it evokes, and cultural notions of appropriate photographic styles and object-forms for the expected performance of photography in a given context. The forms in which images are displayed and used follows their function, a cultural expectancy bringing together physical form and cultural *function*. Which photographs are enlarged, displayed as public faces, and which remain in small private worlds? What choices, affecting visual meaning, have been made concerning processes, printing papers or finishes?

Then one has to consider how photographs are actually used as objects in social space? What is displayed? Where? What is precisely and intentionally hidden (in lockets, wallets, diaries, family bibles), where and why? How do these elements link with the performative material culture with which photographs merge, such as frames and albums? Choices matter: they are decisions with consequences for the

5. Geoffrey Batchen, *Photography's Objects* (Albuquerque, 1997), 2.

6. Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London, 1998), 8–9.

objects or humans associated with them. For materiality constitutes the presentational forms which themselves structure visual knowledge as well as those related human actions in modes of viewing which form both private and collective commemorative acts.[7]

In much of the writing on photography, on the history of photography, on memory and on the past, very little attention has been given to the actual plasticity of the photograph as object. Pierre Bourdieu pointed the way many years ago with his examination of the social uses of photography and the social meanings enacted within the act of photographing, of access to and control of photographic technology to perform memorializing acts. This was analyzed in terms of class, gender and access to production.[8] In his later work he also considers the photograph in terms of taste and the accumulation of cultural capital.[9] While he hints at materiality in his discussion of display and taste and genre he does not engage with it in analytical terms. In photo-therapy[10] and in work on family photographs and albums as a collected form and as narrative[11], other authors have also hinted at the signifying possibilities of materiality, but photographs are largely treated as pure content, triggers for other forms of narrative.[12]

Likewise, much of the theorizing of the image of the last two or three decades, including work by influential writers such as Victor Burgin, Jean Baudrillard and John Tagg, has come out of semiotic, psychoanalytical or phenomenological concerns which have failed to take account of materiality. Linked to much of the Marxist-derived critique of both material objects and photographs, which has concentrated on modes of production or the ideological control of photographs, images have been treated as relatively arbitrary signs, which can be configured into a semiotic web resembling a context which could in turn be deconstructed.[13] Tagg's detailed and convincing essay on photography and slum clearance in Leeds makes mention of the form in which the photographs were presented and viewed within the discourse, but this is given no analytical weight in his argument.[14] In the concentration on the politics of the image, materiality is too often perceived as a neutral support for images rather than integral to the construction of meaning. Photographs are, in such analyses, detached from physical nature and consequently from the functional context of that materiality. The way in which people construct themselves and are constructed by others through the cultural forms of their consumption has been underestimated in relation to photographs,[15] with little attention given to how they matter to people in terms of evocation, of making pasts, and without engaging with their intrinsic and affective qualities, which matter. It would seem that the material forms of memory are central to any engagement with such issues.

Given that photographs as evokers of memory are often related to people, the invisibility of the photograph as object may in part be related to the dualism between person and non-person which has dictated the relationship between people and things. But as Daniel Miller has argued,[16] given that things are a product of human desire, the dichotomy becomes less certain, ambiguous. This is especially so in the case of the photograph, where it is possible for Barthes to say 'Here is my mother' – that lamination of image and referent perhaps lies at the basis of the ambiguous responses to the material being of photographs.

One of the formal characteristics of photography, which distinguishes it from other mimetic inscriptional devices, such as film and video (and to an extent transparencies, still photographs performed in the mode of cinema), is that photographs make the image visible through

7. *Ibid.*, 11.

8. Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art,* trans. S. Whiteside (Cambridge 1990 [1965]).

9. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London, 1986 [1979]), 44–7.

10. See, for instance, Linda Berman, *Behind the Smile: The Therapeutic Use of Photography* (London, 1993).

11. See, for instance, Glenn Willumson ,'The Getty Research Institute: Materials for a New Photo-History', *History of Photography,* xxii, (1998), no. 1, 40–51.

12. See, for example, Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect,* (New York,1981); Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (eds), *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London, 1991) and Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London, 1995).

13. Miller, 'Artifacts and the Meaning of Things', in Tim Ingold (ed.), *The Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (London, 1994), 406.

14. John Tagg, 'God's Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance and Photography in Late Nineteenth Century Leeds', in his *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London, 1988). His analysis hovers tantalizing on the edge of materiality, alluding to 'folios' (121; 144) and albums passing from hand to hand (145) but never engages precisely with presentational form as integral to discourse.

15. Miller, *Material Cultures;* M. Csikszentihalyi and E. Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge, 1981), 16–17.

16. Miller, *Material Cultures;* 396.

the nature of its materiality, without intermediate technical translation to realize the image beyond initial processing. Its objects can be handled, framed, cut, crumpled, caressed, pinned on a wall, put under a pillow, or wept over. Furthermore, the evocative fascination of photographs as they operate in their stillness and materiality is very different from the evocative qualities of film or video. Stillness invites evocation, contemplation and a certain formation of affective memory in a way that film and video, with their temporal naturalism and realistic narrative sequence, cannot. As both Christian Metz and Barthes argue in their different ways, film suggests 'being there' in its temporal immersion, whereas photographs speak to 'having been there': they are fragmentary and irreducibly of the past or of death itself.[17]

In daily interaction, photographs come to stand partially as foci of memory themselves and partially, but never wholly, for moments in which those people existed – mythically presented as 'evermore'. The power of the nexus of image and material is made clearest in the destruction of the material object. As Barthes argued, to reject a photograph and thus the memory-value it holds out demands its physical removal: destruction engages with materiality.[18] To cut, tear or, worse, burn a photograph is, as Mavor describes it, 'a violent, frightening hysterical action, which leaves behind indexical wounds and irreparable scars'. [19]

Materiality and Extending the Sense of Vision

The treatment of photographs is in many ways analogous to that of relics. Deemed significant as a bearer of memory or access to a past either real or imagined, the photograph is treated in a special way, for instance in an album or display. It is authentic in that it is traced off the living; that which was there, like the 'pignora' of the saints. Like relics, photographs are validated through their social biography: ordinary remains (family snapshots) become treasured, linking objects to traces of the past, the dead, a fetishized focus of devotion. Finally they return to the ordinary, indeed disposable object, the detritus of material culture, as they cease to have meaning for the living beyond a generalized 'pastness'.[20] In this they follow Victor Turner's path of ritual experience moving from the ordinary space of secular symbols to the spatially separated non-ordinary for a finite period, perhaps as sacred symbols more overtly linked to death, to return to the ordinary.[21] This relic quality is perhaps most marked in photographic jewellery, where the physical trace – the photograph – is encapsulated with the bodily relic such as a lock of hair. To be fully appreciated the object had to be turned, caressed with the fingers, from trace to relic and back again, with that tactile experience of the relic so strongly linked to emotion.[22] The image as an encoded interface of public and private could be worn about the person within the conventional public genres of personal decoration. Alternatively it could be worn under clothing, next to the skin, bringing the living and the remembered into bodily relation with one another. Pointon's analysis of hair-jewellery has great relevance here, but how much more so when the image is a photograph, traced off the living by the action of light on chemical.[23] It gives an additive quality of intensity.

For in considering the photograph in this way we have to consider not just sight but touch and even smell. From its earliest days the relationship with photographs has demanded a physical engagement – photo-objects exists in relationship to the human body, making photographs as objects intrinsically active in that they are handled, touched, caressed. This may not necessarily reflect the original intention (which was to create an image) but is none the less intrinsic to the object.[24] The daguerreotype is only visible as an image if manipulated in the hand, moved to reveal the image, not the mirror quality of the polished plate. Similarly the ambrotype, a negative projected positive by means of a dark backing layer, demanded physical engagement, a manipulation of the material object to reveal the creamy tones of the image as a lifelike positive rather than a negative. Both daguerreotype and ambrotype had weight, a concrete quality. They were matted in a

17. Barthes, 'The Rhetoric of the Image', in his *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London, 1984 [1977]), Christian Metz 'Photography and Fetish', *October*, xxxiv (1985).

18. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 93.

19. Carol Mavor, 'Collecting Loss', *Cultural Studies*, xi (1997), no. 1, 119.

20. Patrick Geary, 'Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics', in Arjun Appudurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge, 1986).

21. Victor Turner, *Dramas , Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), 166–9.

22. Batchen, *Photography's Objects*, 7.

23. See Pointon's essay in this volume.

24. Stephen Riggins, 'Fieldwork in the Living Room: An Autoethnographic Essay', in S. Riggins (ed.), *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects* (Berlin, 1994), 111.

gilt mount, packaged in a silk or velvet-lined leather case; or later 'Union' cases, often heavily decorated.[25] Even the humble loose print demands tactile engagement. In the many hours I have spent watching people look at photographs, the describing of content is accompanied by what would appear to be an almost insuperable desire to touch, even stroke, the image. Again the viewer is brought into bodily contact with the trace of the remembered. Thus we can say that the photograph has always existed, not merely as an image but in relation to the human body, tactile in experienced time, objects functioning within everyday practice.

It would appear significant that many of the evocational material forms of photographs have absorbed or adopted the forms of other objects culturally associated with commemoration and remembrance, such as memorial lockets, miniatures, painting and even plates or mugs. They have a skeuomorphic quality and in their mimetic forms resonate with the values of their objects of association. For instance many Victorian family albums assumed the physical form of 'sentimental albums' in which women, in particular, kept locks of hair, pressed flowers, keepsakes, poems, watercolours and drawings.[26] The continuing but suppressed practice of post-mortem photographs, which though no longer displayed as in nineteenth-century practice, are, as Jay Ruby has explored, transformed into private relics, interleaved in family bibles.[27] Again following Turner's model of ritual process, absorption into this material form related them to genealogy and sacred text, sacralizing the image in a specific form, removed here from the daily practice of memory, into the realm of a specific, focused form of contemplation .

Materiality is also integrally linked to social ways of viewing and thus accessing the past, personally or collectively. Are albums, for instance, read as a group or individually? Or on a table or resting on people's knees? Small albums to be held in the hand require close physical proximity for joint viewing, while large albums are unwieldy, and need to be spread out or displayed, on knees or tables for instance, but do not necessarily require such close physical proximity (Figure 11.1). Albums have weight and tactility, they often smell, sometimes

25. Batchen, *Photography's Objects*, 2.

26. Isabel Crombie, 'The Work and Life of Viscountess Frances Jocelyn: Private Lives', *History of Photography*, xxii (1998), no. 1, 41.

27. Jay Ruby, *Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 187.

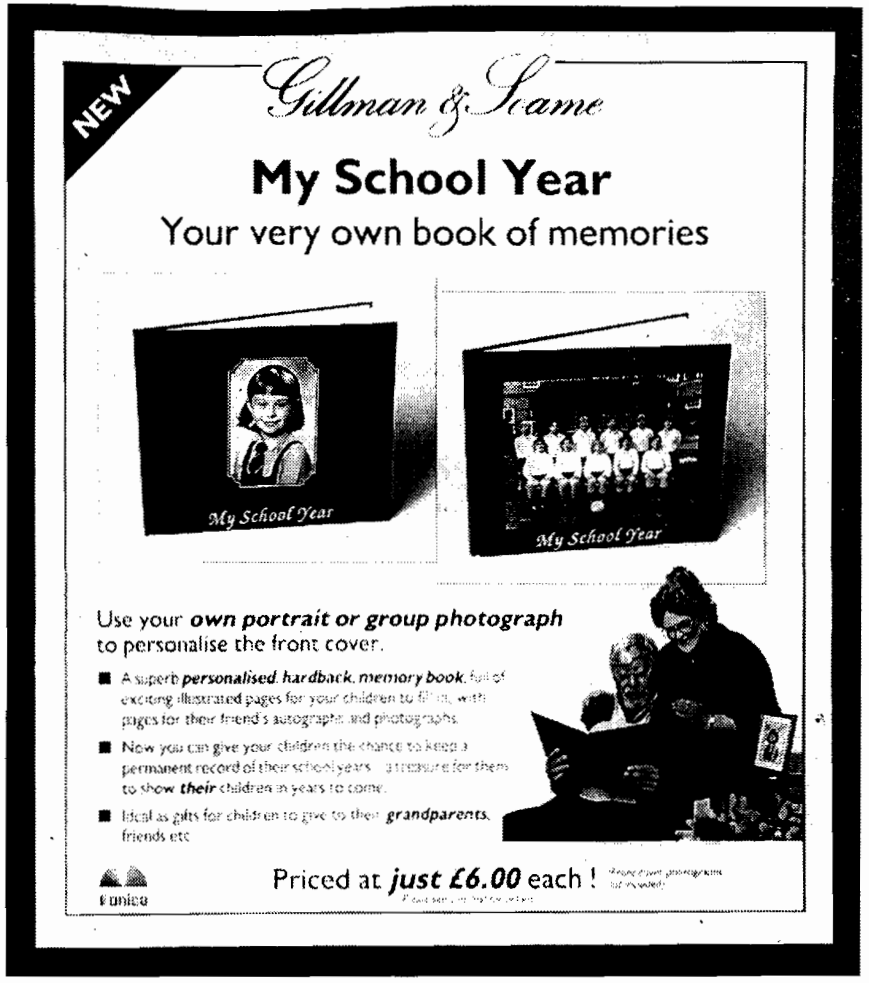

Figure 11.1 Advertisement for 'My School Year: your very own book of memories', 1997 (Gillman and Soame, Oxford)

of damp, rotting card, the scent of 'pastness'. In relation to memory, and the resurrectional qualities of photography, it is significant that many early album bindings, with their relief leatherwork and metal clasps, look like family bibles or medieval devotional books; often they suggest, like the special dynamic of the image itself, a miniaturized form, a containment and an intensification.[28] The heavy tactile surface

28. Susan Stewart, *On Longing : Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC, 1993), 136–7.

and material form is suggestive of the weight of visual meaning contained within it. What are the cultural meanings residing in those albums, morocco-bound, blind-stamped, gold-embossed and gold-edged?

If the photo-object engages with the body, it also retemporalizes and respatializes the photograph. In Barthes' famous phrase, the 'there-then becomes the here-now'.[29] Again, one can argue that the material culture approach fleshes out the bare bones and the emotional forces of Barthes' contention. Consider the photographic album. The album is more than a sum of its parts in that its significance lies multiplied in the massing of individual images: narrative structure and related texts formed through its materiality. Crucially, the album retemporalizes, it constructs a narrative of history, not merely in the juxtaposition of separate images but in the way that the viewer activates the temporality and narrative through the physical action of holding the object and turning the pages. The viewer is in control of the temporal relationship with those images. Each viewer will have his or her own track through the physical album, those pages lingered over, those skipped over, investing the object with narrative and memory, interwoven with private fantasy, fragmented readings and public history.[30] One might argue here that there is a temporal aspect to touch where, as Susan Stewart argues in this volume, sensing touch relates directly to visualising. The album also respatializes: disconnected points offer glimpses of possible pasts. They are transformed not into an experienced spatiality but with an imaginative and ambiguous space which the past inhabits, collected and co-located, they transform history into space.[31] Blank spaces in an album suggest memory lost – photographs that escaped or were destroyed, leaving material traces of their absence (glue and torn paper) and opening the object further to the imaginative projection of making histories.

At another level one finds the material forms of albums reflecting precisely the experience contained or constructed within them. For instance Japanese tourist albums of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often presented in a material form which enhanced the exotic experience. Containing stereotypical genre pieces of Japanese life by commercial photographers, the lacquer-covered albums were kept in padded silk boxes closed with traditional silk and

29. Barthes, *Image Music Text*, 44.
30. Holland and Spence, *Family Snaps*, 1.
31. Stewart, *On Longing*, xii.

bone toggles. Unpacking the box suggests resonances of exotic experience through the physical action of unpacking the precious and the different.[32] At another level one finds the humble albums sold in their thousands in the early decades of this century, with covers inscribed 'Sunny Memories' or 'Shining Hours' setting a textual tone; albums where the rhythm of differently shaped vignettes offered presentational choice within the album. Linda Berman reports an album whose owner had titled it 'The Family Jewels', linking memory value with the materially precious.[33] I cite only a few examples of the many variations in presenting images, but they are linked in that they are all specific material manifestations of social desire. These relate to the

Figure 11.2 Embroidered photographic 'shrine' to George Young, killed during World War I (Trustees of the Wisbech and Fenland Museum)

32. David Odo, *Japan: An Imagined Geography. Constructing Place Through a Nineteenth-century Tourist Album* (Univ. of Oxford, 1988 M.St. dissertation, ISCA/Pitt Rivers Museum, unpublished.
33. Berman, *Behind the Smile*, 105.

function and appropriateness of form, which makes possible authorial ordering, and text, which is central to evocation and the construction of memory.[34]

Thus we must consider the implications of the materiality of object-forms for the cultural processes in which they are enmeshed. Form and image merge to create function, a satisfaction with the object in terms of its cultural role. This is forcefully exemplified by an embroidered photographic shrine of a young man killed during the First World War in the collections of Wisbech Museum, Cambridgeshire (Figure 11.2). Without the imagery and text, the patriotic coloration and the act of stitchery as an act of therapy[35] or remembrance, or as tender communion, the photograph would have had less power to evoke human experience and emotion which the image and every stitch project in their merging. It is a memorial which represents an originating act of remembrance but also constitutes an object of redemption through sacrifice. The photograph peoples the cenotaph, providing a body for the empty tomb. While the photograph marks the inevitable absence of the body it also points to the presence (life) of the spirit. As such, one could argue that the photograph also assumes a crucial role in the Christian narrative of resurrection and healing. The act of making inscribes the memory, the photograph gives reality to the mourned, the object acts as cenotaph and the icon and the index collapse into one another not simply through the process of signification, but through a dialectical and signifying relationship of image and material form.

Exchange Objects

One of the most widespread functions of photographs as material objects is as objects of exchange. While the image itself is, of course, central to the act, giving, receiving and utilizing the material object is integral to the social meaning of those images. Photographs operating as exchange objects and circulate as 'memory texts'.[36] As physical distances in social relations increase, so the tension between knowledge (memory) and ignorance (forgetting) becomes a critical determinant in the flow of 'memory texts'.[37] Exchanges allow, for instance, distant kin to participate in the experience and intimacy of rites of passage and other important occasions. The exchange of the photograph as image itself expresses the social value of the relationship that is maintained and sustained between groups and individuals, which demands reciprocity to consolidate the socially desired memory of images.

Thus the implications of the gifting relationship are integral to the meaning of the photo-object in gestures which recapitulate or re-enact social articulations.[38] They reinforce networks and identity built on the memory to which they relate, positioning individuals *vis à vis* the group, linking past, present and perhaps implying a future. The specific social dimension is significant in relation to the material form of a specific artefact. Is the gift exchange a whole album? A mounted print? Or a casual group of prints? The inscriptions on the back, the mounting, the size of the print, the intimacy of the image-content in relation to material forms are integral to social meanings and social relationships expressed through the act of exchange. Such exchanges have been found to be deeply implicated in the negotiation of social identities within diaspora communities. Gail Baker's work with Bene Israel communities in UK suggests complex motivations for the exchange, public display or private retention of different image-contents treated in different material ways.[39] Materiality and physical form again set the affective tone, the emotional relationship and the consequence of things dialogically associated with those photo-objects through the associations of personal and collective memory.[40]

The exhibitions of framed collections, on top of televisions, sideboards, pianos or mantlepieces, similarly have shrine-like qualities. They are spatially differentiated in their positioning and in their formats. The focus on the image is created through framing or matting, concentrating the eye on that image, lending it gravitas. The selection and care of these living-room shrines are gendered. The 'family archivist', controlling the overlap of history and fantasy, and the domestic spaces

34. Willumson, 'The Getty'.

35. See Nigel Llewellyn's essay in this volume. See also Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London, 1984), 137–8.

36. See, for example, Brian Lewis and Colin Harding (eds), *Kept in a Shoe Box: The Popular Experience of Photography* (Bradford, 1992); Kuhn, *Family Secrets*.

37. The shape of this idea is from Appudurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value' *Social Life of Things*, 41.

38. Stewart, *On Longing*, 138.

39. I am most grateful to Gail Baker for allowing me to use her unpublished doctoral research-in-progress.

40. Holland, *Family Snaps*, 10.

dedicated to the articulation of this function, is usually female.[41] Such spaces, as shrines, become public statements of group achievement and assurance; private statements of devotion, past and present,[42] spaces where public and private memory and evocation overlap. They are as much an instance of the presence of the living as a memory of the dead. The longevity of exchange-objects assimilates them to the person in the sense that parting with them is unthinkable.[43] Such collections of images, as Baker suggests, reach out through their exchange-relations to establish a group cohesion through the act of exchange and display.

Yet the affective tones of the photo-object are difficult to grasp. Artifacts are often at their most powerful and effective as social forces when they appear to be most trivial. The physicality of the photograph is not articulated by those consuming it. It constitutes part of the unarticulated 'habitus', that daily praxis within the material world, a 'household ecology of signs' in which social actions take place.[44] Thus it is possible to state of photographs, 'This is my cat.' Even the embroidered shrine was, one can conjecture, seen in terms of 'This was my brother/husband/son.' But, as I have suggested, material forms of the photographic artefact and their cultural appropriateness to the function sought is not unconsidered. Clearly the photographic artefact matters, although it is not necessarily articulated as such. One merely has to think of the culturally appropriate forms for wedding photographs, in a white album embossed with silver bells, arranged in a narrative expressive of social relationships underwritten by the family, themselves expressed (both denoted and connotated) within the image content. The dialogic relationship between content, form and materiality create the socially meaningful object and the 'correct' expression of *rite de passage*. Further access to the album and the circulation of images as material objects is an act of cohesion. The material object constitutes an intersection between social context and codified, connotative ideologies of social practice (the form of the content) on the one hand, and material production of the artefact within object-worlds on the other.[45]

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While the operation of the 'objectness' of photographs is perhaps most apparent in the consideration of historical images, their salient social uses and biographies as 'things' are every bit as significant in contemporary uses of the photograph. The late twentieth century may indeed be saturated with visual images and their specific social meaning as material culture may be less apparent. However, I would argue that many of the material and presentational forms preserve the traces of earlier forms, yet reflect the modern ubiquity of the image. For instance, images are massed in flip-over albums, which are made to look like books, with fake leather covers and with gold decoration. Indeed there is a recent vogue for family photographs presented as antiques, with a massive range of 'Victorian-style' frames available, often marketed with old photographs in place. Or there are those which extend the sensual experiences of viewing, such as furry frames which can be stroked like pets, or frames which record sound to go with an image: a baby's laugh, for instance. Here the presentational forms are simultaneously reinforcing the reality-effect of the photograph and intensifying the sensual range of associated memory. Thus the presentational forms enhance, as memory, the significance of specifically chosen photographs in a world saturated by images. With the video perhaps becoming the main quotidian memorializer, one might argue that the choice of still photography and its presentation become ever more significant and perhaps more fetishized as a focus of longing and remembrance.

I have touched on only a few of the many material forms of the photograph in which visual meanings and thus memory are inseparably enmeshed. I have intentionally taken a more methodological position so as to shift thinking beyond content towards the cultural object existing in social relations within an experienced world, thus perhaps extending phenomenological approaches to photographs. There are many different forms which deserve detailed analysis in their own right, from photographic gravestones and votive offerings to the spatial configuration of images within the domestic space or the culture-specific practices of photography.[46] One can think of innumerable

41. *Ibid.*, 9; Jeremy Seabrook, *'My Life in that Box', ibid.*, 173.

42. Berman, *Behind the Smile*, 9.

43. Csikszentmihalyi's and Rochberg-Halton's Chicago-based study revealed photographs to be amongst the most cherished classes of objects overall and the most cherished in relation to other mementos, *Meaning of Things*, 66-9. See also I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', in Appudurai (ed.), *Social Life of Things*, 80.

44. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge,1977); Csikszentihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *Meaning of Things*, 16–17.

45. M. Gottdeiner, *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and Forms of Postmodern Life* (Oxford, 1995), 56.

46. For an example of the possibilities see Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London, 1997).

historically and culturally specific material cultures of photographs, whose meaning is too often subsumed in the contemplation of content, which would benefit from a more rigorous form of material analysis.[47]

Finally, a topical thought. It is the appeal of the material forms of the image which is likely to outlive conventional chemical photography. Future photographs may be digitally produced, but the economy of photographic desires and concepts will surely persist.[48] Human values and human desire for linking objects of memory will, I believe, still demand the material possibilities of photography, where the affective tones of physical tactile quality, as I have argued, integrally construct the photograph and its status as an object of memory. Objects are links between past and present, and photographs have a double link as image and as material, two ontological layers in one object. One wonders if Barthes' ontological desire would have been so stirred if it had not been for the very materiality of his mother's photograph. For he yearned to go into the depths of the paper itself, to reach its other side.

47. I believe it is significant that it is precisely this element of photographic identity which has been the focus of a number of artists concerned with the relationship between photography and memory. For instance, Christian Boltanski's work concerns transforming photographs into objects through their massing and presentational forms to explore the themes of memory, photography, object and loss, from the consuming issues of Holocaust to imagined micro-histories of the unknown.

48. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 213–14.

The *Titanic*: An Object Manufactured for Exhibition at the Bottom of the Sea

Tag Gronberg

Objects related to the *Titanic* acquired a cult status virtually from the moment of the ship's sinking in April 1912 (Figure 12.1). There are accounts of survivors deciding to keep their lifejackets upon arrival in New York, but perhaps even more revealing is the fact that the crowds on the New York quays awaiting the arrival of the *Carpathia* with its 700 *Titanic* passengers included a substantial number of souvenir hunters. The *Titanic* lifeboats were apparently stripped overnight. According to its cargo manifest, the *Titanic* was not a 'treasure ship': apart from the personal belongings of its wealthier passengers, it did not carry a particularly valuable cargo. 'Value', in the case of objects identified with the *Titanic*, resides in their association with the sinking of the ship, and in particular with death. Such artefacts involve a financial as well as a curiosity value. Not only private collectors, but also certain dealers specialize in *Titanic* memorabilia, and the estimated price of, for example, a postcard sent from the ship is about £3,000.[1] The *Titanic* market can even incorporate materials not directly related to the ship itself, as in the case of the living-room fittings in a Southport

1. Peter Johnson, 'Awash with Titanic Memories, Collector's File' in the Personal Finance section of *the Sunday Times*, 7 Aug. 1994, 7. A variety of *Titanic* artefacts were sold at a Christie's South Kensington Maritime sale in May 1998; nearly all the lots exceeded their reserve price. See the Auction Results for Sale No. 7986 Sale Code MAR.

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