

Chris Townsend
DPhil student

**Transcendent Replication:
Self Portraiture, *Verae icones* and Photography**

In the ninth lecture of his eleventh Seminar, Jacques Lacan introduces a series of remarks that will prove fundamental to his conception and dislocation of the human subject. Arguing the contingency of the subject upon the siting and sighting of the self in the gaze of the other, Lacan comments 'Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied, and through which - if you will allow me to use a word, as I often do, in a fragmented form - I am *photo-graphed*.' (Lacan, 1979, 106)

As a beginning, I want to read Lacan literally. Read him as if he had written 'I am *photo-graphed*': 'I am written in light, and my being written produces not coherence but fragmentation.' The gaze of the other, however productive it may be of subjectivity, does not - even in an era of prolific imagery - automatically produce a photograph, a residue of the subject's transit through the scopic field. If Lacan's understanding of desire is as the longing for something that is already separated from the self, irreparably lost, then the photograph - as product of firstly a chemical and latterly a digital practice - begins to look like a material token which, however inadequately, answers desire by its reparation of lost time: re-presenting the past, through representation, as both past and present continuous. However, understood as an answer to separation, photography, as a concept that produces material practices, rather than an equivalent to Lacan's visual realisation of subjectivity, begins to look like desire's answer to being *photo-graphed*: an imaginative structure that seeks to render permanent the transitory, the ephemeral, the ineffable. Indeed, the great concern of the early experimenters in chemical photography is to fix the image, to prevent the representation they have produced from itself fading away. The character of this longing is illustrated in one of Fox-Talbot's descriptions of his early experiments with the action of light on silver salts. Writing to John Herschel, Fox-Talbot (Schaaf 1992, xi) exclaims 'I have captured a shadow!' We might argue that 'fixing' is what defines photography as both discourse and practice: Wedgwood and Davy made 'photographs' in the first years of the 19th century, but so fugitive was the chemical reaction which captured the image that none survived more than a few days or weeks. Photography, rather than being a distinctive technological institution that makes images out of light's effects upon objects with chemicals, paper and lenses, might be understood as an answering of a more persistent need to capture shadows, which is realised in a particular manner in the discursive conditions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Photography's response to *photo-graphy* is, however, permeated by other conditions. The fixing of the flicker of the subject across the field of vision is supplemented by the desire that this fixation is conducted as if it were the subject of the gaze that had willed it. This surrender of agency to automatism, and the simultaneous investiture of agency within the ineffable, is typified by another remark of Fox-Talbot's (Schaaf 1992, 48), where he writes to Herschel of photography as 'Nature magnified by Herself'. For Fox-Talbot and many of the other founders of photography as an

organised discourse, their 'discovery' is not the means by which Nature may be accurately represented by 'man', but rather the graphic process by which Nature can 'draw' itself for him. Nature becomes a way of thinking 'God' for these Enlightenment scientists, a substitute boundary for the ineffable limit so comprehensively trashed by rational thought. We might see a singularly Lacanian inflection in this desire for the other that is subjectivised in the gaze to make itself both known and permanent. If we know ourselves only through our visual relationships with that which is not us - as Lacan suggests - there is no point at which an external confirmation of our subjectivity can be granted, less we ascribe to the objects we see the power to make themselves visible, to confirm that not only are they in our gaze, but that we are in theirs. In this sense the photograph, as manifestation of the perceived object's own subjectivising gaze - embodied in its representative capacity - would answer Lacan's (1979, 95-96) parable of the sardine can floating in the sea by demonstrating that it was indeed looking back at the observer.

Also conditional within photography, as we have come to understand it, is that however much this 'spontaneous' reproduction of the other may proliferate, producing any number of images of itself, each of those prolific images - despite the 'artistic' insistence on the limited edition and the hand-crafted print - is self-identical. Not only is the image an exact likeness - a true replication of its subject - each image, like all its other, identical, images, has the exact properties of its subject. Each image states the same fact of presence, of the event represented having been a true phenomenon in time and space. Despite replication, each image is a facsimile that proliferates without diluting the representative power of its original.

However, isolating all the characteristics of photography from their chemical and digital practice, from the discourses that produce those practices and the discourses which they produce, we discover both a set of determinants and a set of desires that they answer. These are not uniquely located within either photography as it is now practised, or within the preface of 'proto-photography' that encompasses the widespread use of *Camerae Obscurae* after the Renaissance, the Renaissance 'invention' of perspectival vision, or Schulze's experiments with the light sensitivity of silver compounds in 1725-6. The desire for verisimilitude, for spontaneous, proliferating, reproduction of the image, for the elimination of agency, and for the preservation of what is lost in time and to sight, all these are met in certain earlier forms of representation, just as they are seemingly satisfied within photography.

In his *Self Portrait* of 1500 (Fig. 1) Albrecht Durer assumes the role of Christ, an idealised version of the representative man. Here Durer's facial features are modified to conform both to late mediaeval descriptions of the appearance of Christ given in the fourteenth century manuscript, *Epistula Lentuli*, and an older form of iconic facial representation, itself deriving from the early Christomorphic tradition of the *sudarium*. Durer is not usually thought of as a photographer. However, I suggest that the 1500 *Self Portrait*, and its relationship to Christian relics such as the proliferating *Verae Icones* of the late Middle Ages is conceived and produced by Durer within a tradition of 'photographic' representation. In this tradition photography is understood as a desire for an infinitely and spontaneously reproducible, transcendent, veristic, trace made without human hands, rather than the specifically chemical or digital discourses in which this desire is realised in recent centuries.

As both Jan van Eyck's *Holy Face* (c.1440), and Petrus Christus's *Portrait of a Young Man* (1462), demonstrate through their introduction of depth, the medieval tradition of the *sudarium* (or Veronica's cloth) as manifested in the mass-produced *Vera icon*, became an idealising model for naturalised *en face* portraiture. For Durer it became a form onto which a version of the self as its absolute, defining other (Christ) could be imagined. In the 1500 portrait - and unlike his 1498 and 1493 portraits - Durer carefully concealed the marks of portraiture, just as the commercial producers of *sudaria* effaced all such signs in their output. Far from acknowledging his act of self-authentication - an act until then essential to the relentless self-promotion of his status as an artist - Durer elides reference to his creative presence. The 1500 *Self Portrait* appeals to a tradition in which the image is *non manufactum*, in which it is reproduced spontaneously by proximity or contact. If Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* is the apotheosis of the Renaissance body (man as the measure of all things), then Durer's 1500 *Self Portrait* is equally assumed to be the Renaissance face, (man as the measurer of himself). Yet in its frontality, heiratic symmetry, effacement of production, and idealised proportions, the portrait is profoundly distanced from retrospective constructions of an autonomously productive self. Koerner (1993, 72) suggests that Durer's painting is so embedded in a tradition of religious portraiture that a contemporary would have seen it as a picture of Christ rather than of Durer. Man, the measure of all things, the maker of history, sublimates his identity to the imagination of a universal, determining construct and its representative forms.

However, Durer's self-representation as Christ, through its relationship to the tradition of the *sudarium*, is not only a painting of the self, it is a painting that depends upon a 'photographic' imagination of the 'other'. The visual premises that underlie the construction of the 1500 self-portrait are not 'painterly' - rather they derive from an imagination of representation that is not specific to any single medium. This is a fantasy of the physical, representational, manifestation of nature and/or God that produces first those objects (*diipetes*) of pantheistic religion, and which later become known as *acheiropoetoi* within early Judeo-Christian culture. The *diipetes* are objects, probably meteorite fragments, with coincidental references to human and animal forms, venerated within Classical Greek culture as 'thrown by the Gods'. The desire which they fulfil for the physical representation of the God's image, without the intervening agency of human hands, is echoed in the early Judeo-Christian tradition of the *acheiropoetos* (literally 'not-made-by-hand'). As the Church evangelised in the Eastern Mediterranean it encountered pagan traditions in which the representation of God(s) was taken as proof of their existence. However, the Church was constrained, though not wholly limited, by Old Testament injunctions concerning idolatry and the production of graven images. The representational shift from a textual to figurative God (or rather Son of God) was effected partly through narratives concerning images of Christ which spontaneously imprinted themselves upon fabric, which possessed both curative and prophylactic properties, and which also might spontaneously replicate themselves without any human intervention.

The oldest of these stories concerns King Abgar Ukama of Elessa, which Ewa Kuryluk suggests has its origins in apocrypha of the late fourth or early fifth century. In these the sick monarch asks that Jesus visit Elessa and cure him. Preoccupied with his ministry in Palestine Christ praises Abgar for having faith without seeing his works, and, paradoxically, sends back a miraculously produced likeness of himself imprinted on a cloth or *mandylion* (from the Arabic *mandil* or veil). The King is

healed, and subsequently, preserved within Edessa, the *mandylion* miraculously protects the city against sieges by invading Persian armies. It is likely that the Christian use of *acheiropoetoi* served several discursive functions. Firstly they answered a traditional need for representation. Secondly, in their seeming military efficacy and miraculous powers, these objects argued for the necessity of icons against the iconoclasts. Furthermore, and paradoxically, because of their miraculous, non-manufactured, origin *acheiropoetoi* were not icons, and did not transgress any Scriptural limitations on representation, and were resistant to iconoclastic arguments.

The associations of representation and replication with divinity, permanence and the elision of physical contact that are developed in early Christian texts to conceptualise a process of divine intervention with visible effects, are later accommodated within Western traditions through the story (and reproduction) of the *sudarium*. In this narrative the cloth (*suder*) given by Veronica to Christ on the way to Calvary is returned with an image of the Son of God's face imprinted upon it. But what is handed back is not a prototypical relief print: the stain on the cloth miraculously realises the three dimensions of Christ into two, a true image, a *Vera icon*, which, perhaps felicitously, plays upon the giving saint's given name. Consistently, however, the *Vera icon* is a representation imagined in photographic terms. Ernst von Dobschutz, for example, is cited by Koerner (1993, 83) as arguing an analogical status for the image which anticipates the claims of Bazin and Barthes concerning photography's verisimilitude, claiming that: 'Although miraculously produced and linked to eternity, the likeness of Christ also recorded one person's body at a singular moment in time, thereby affirming history as a central reality of the Christian faith.' Similarly Kuryluk (1991, 4, 32-33) describes the *mandylion* as 'a photographic impression', and the proliferating Byzantine *acheiropoetoi* of the eighth and ninth centuries as "xerox" copies of God fixed by his divinity.' Barthes himself (1980,129), writing of the photograph's testimony to a prior presence, establishes a relationship between modern, mechanical reproduction and the mystical tradition.

Peut-etre cet etonnement, cet entetement, plonge-t-il dans la substance religieuse dont je suis petri; rien a faire: la Photographie a quelque chose a voir avec la resurrection: ne peut-on dire d'elle ce que disaient les Byzantins de l'image du Christ dont le Suaire du Turin est impregne, a savoir qu'elle n'etait pas faite de main d'homme, acheiropoietos? ¹

In this passage Barthes not only establishes the similarity of effect of these apparently historically and mediatively separated images, in his reference to immersion [*plonge*] he sets the Christian tradition of baptism as the productive performance of a new subject alongside the photographic practice of immersing blank paper in a chemical bath to 'miraculously' produce a new image upon it. Mixing metaphors, Barthes highlights the trans-substantive character of these representative processes, and their religious implications, in his reference to shaping or moulding [*petri*] with its overtones of bread-making, and of bread-breaking in the original theological interpretation of the Christian Mass, where the body of Christ is not *substituted* by the object but *is* that body. Photography is thus not only to do with resurrection: in one of the central statements of his thesis for the photograph's analogical status, Barthes immediately (and I would suggest deliberately) undermines that analogy by directing our attention to its transformative capacities. That both media are also, in a sense,

reproductive, is emphasised by Barthes's understanding of the Turin Shroud as actually or imaginatively descended [*dont*] from the impregnation of earlier Byzantine icons.

The *sudarium* held by the Roman church became increasingly significant as a devotional object from the early thirteenth century onwards. In 1216 Innocent III granted remittance of sins to any penitent reciting his prayer to the Holy face, *Salve Sancta Facies*. At about the same time the *sudarium*, more and more associated to grants of indulgence, became an object of public ostension and pilgrimage. As a consequence of this popularity, the image of the Holy Face from the relic was increasingly reproduced in the form of souvenirs. Just as pilgrims to Compostella would wear the scallop shell to signify their visit to the shrine of St. James, and most pilgrims to Rome wore the tin cast keys of St. Peter, so other visitors to the Holy See could confirm their journey and recall its efficacious effects by wearing a badge on which the *Vera icon* was variously painted, etched, stamped or (later) printed. Koerner (1993, 89) argues that: 'Owing partly to the proliferation of these images, mass-produced and sold by specialized *pictores Veronicuram and mercanti di Veronichi*, respectively, the particular features of the Holy Face in St. Peter's spread throughout Europe, to be copied and imitated by local artists in an enormous variety of media.' However, and in contradiction to Walter Benjamin's theory of the loss of meaning through proliferation of an 'original' image, each reproduction of the *Vera icon* is also invested with those auratic properties which rendered that 'original' unique. Koerner (1993, 89) remarks that:

By Durer's time nearly every church in Europe had at least one image of the Veronica in its possession. Sometimes these images were outfitted with the *Salve Sancta Facies*, so that the individual believer could benefit from the Holy Face's redemptive powers without having to make the journey to Rome.

In Petrus Christus's *Portrait of a Young Man* (1462), a reproduction of a Holy Face with an appended hymn to St. Veronica appears on the wall behind the subject. As a miraculous, venerated object, this *Vera icon* contradicts the space which Petrus begins to construct for his real, human, subject. It appears *en face*, though it is hung from a wall which, on the evidence of the window sill to the sitter's left, runs at some thirty degrees from plane of the picture to create a perspectival framework. Thus the 'real' space from which the human subject emerges, and onto which it casts its shadow, is revealed to be a construct which the miraculous can transcend. However, in the distance between the trans-substantive icon and substantive subject Petrus illustrates the origins of his portraiture. With the *Vera icon* as the dominant tradition of facial representation, one based upon a universal conception and representation of man, Petrus projects that tradition into the specificity of "real" subjects in a world organised by depth and dimension, who nonetheless remain inextricably linked to the divine and miraculous. The space in which the subject emerges is proved, by the intervention of the *Vera icon*, to be "impossible". It resembles nothing so much as those equally impossible spatial situations of the subject in which Francis Bacon locates himself, in his full-body self-portraits, or which the American photographer Francesca Woodman creates for herself, distorting the medium's conventions of temporal and spatial coherence.

We might understand Durer's Christomorphic self-portrait as a closure of the space which Petrus opens. The flattening of the impossible perspectival field conforms the features of the human to the perfect standards of the universal. However, through its appeal to the spontaneous (re)productivity of the *sudarium*, we might also understand this image as a photograph, or rather, as a fantasised representation of the photographic. The story of the *vera icon* is a myth which evolves to suit particular discursive crises for the Church. But it is a myth which also answers four historically persistent desires: the preservation of that which is ineffable; the realisation of the three dimensional into two without any loss of veracity; the imaging of God (or in early nineteenth century scientific discourses, a gendered *Nature*) as he/she is, without any intervening human agency, and in some of its variants, the automatic replication of the image through contact with an appropriate surface. These desires are precisely those of photography. Furthermore, as an end point within history at which sign and referent converge, the *vera icon* (in its representation of the *sudarium*) parallels photography's denotative status, that condition which Barthes (1986, 5) describes as being 'a message without a code.' The *sudarium* is, in a sense, a conflation of two end points rather than a single moment. The relic, and its facsimiles, are both the beginnings of History - the mark of Christ's presence in the world - and guarantor of History's closure in the eschatological promise of Christ's judgement. Like the photograph - whose temporal status Barthes (1980, 148 - 151) argues as a conflation of the past and future tenses - the *sudarium* is characterised by a collapse of time into a continuous present that is simultaneously time past and time future. The *vera icon* is not only Christ's image now, it is Christ at all moments in time, simultaneously original (*sudarium*) and copies (*verae icones*).

The Renaissance is repeatedly described as a period of radical restructuring of art and subjectivity in which the two components appear inseparable. Such periodising is often pressured into the establishment of originating moments, in which subjective transformation is signified by the presence of a single work. Through a conflation of individual materiality and subjectivity the self-portrait is repeatedly deployed as a metonym of historic convulsion. Durer's self-portraits are continually read as representing originating moments within art which are then associated to the condition of the subject. In each work the painting or drawing is described as representing the artist as a stable, self-conscious, meditative individual. The image is not only a likeness of facial characteristics but an accurate rendering of the inner self. The content of the work is not simply 'This is what I look like' but 'This is who I am.' Koerner summarises the following responses: Friedlander (1921, 34) cites Durer's 1493 oil portrait as '...the oldest true artist's portrait', whilst Panofsky (1943, 37) describes the carefully dated and monogrammed portrait of 1498 as '...the first independent self-portrait ever produced.' Hugo Kehrer (1934, 31) writes of Durer's 1491 drawing as '...more than an individual likeness. This representation is at once a spiritual self-analysis and self-dissection. One could say that in the hour of Durer's self-observation, the German Renaissance awoke.' The act of personal representation thus stands for the emergence of a general category of the human, suddenly fully self-aware, and the brief duration of that moment initiates an historical and cultural phenomenon to which this new conception of the self will be fundamental.

More recently it has been suggested that Durer's self-portraits are technical exercises or else fantasies of particular social conditions which the artist, bound by his artisanal status, has not yet achieved. Far from being produced as a dissection of the 'unique

inner self', the 1491 drawing may have originated through the artist's use of his own hand and cheek as the basis for studies to solve formal problems within other works. Koerner (1993, 17) points to the disjunction between hand and face to suggest that the latter was added as an afterthought. The configuration of the hand and cheek in the drawing appears later to have been employed in Durer's 1492-3 *Holy Family*. Of the painted self-portraits Koerner (1993, 67) comments: 'Viewed in succession, these works chronicle not so much one person's physical and artistic maturation as a sequence of roles enacted by the artist for a variety of occasions.'

In the portrait of 1493 Durer represents himself as a sexually potent candidate for an arranged marriage, whilst admitting at the same time, through inscription, to his externally determined performance of that role. Jean C. Wilson (1995, 149-150) suggests that this self-portrait is '...a relatively calculated construction of a "self" that Durer very much hoped to achieve.' Both the motto and an alternative, though not necessarily contradictory, reading of the sprig of Eryngium that the artist holds as a symbol of Christ's Passion as much as a signifier of human passion, suggests that Durer here evokes a representation of the self as subject to God. However, this obedience to social and theological norms is complicated by the painting's socially transgressive references. Wilson argues that Durer's strategy, including the donation of the painting, (part of a familial 'campaign' for the betrothal effected privately by Albrecht Durer senior), apes the social customs of courtiers and burghers rather than following the conventions of artisanal courtship. So it is that Durer adopts a meticulously rendered costume that follows the fashions of courtly dress, rather than wearing the garb of an artisan painter.

The 1493 *Self Portrait* is thus not simply an advertisement of the younger Durer's artisanal skill, together with representations of his spirituality, sexual potency and availability for marriage. As a material object in the courtship process, it places its *producers* (Durer and his family) outside the normative structures in which their courtship might have been expected to be properly conducted. In the painting Durer wears a cap with a flourish of ribbons. The binding of these tassels with a band was a ritual performed by lovers to express their fidelity to a partner. That Durer's tassels are unfettered suggests his availability for courtship. However, the wearing of this cap and the binding ritual were both courtly practices, not artisanal ones. Durer's use of this headgear not only marks him out as amorous but as noble. He signifies this at a time when the Nuremberg city council is maintaining strict regulation over clothing through sumptuary laws - and whilst the 1493 painting may have been made in Strasbourg it was intended for a limited audience in Nuremberg. Wilson (1995, 156) comments, 'Durer's choice of costume was evidently intended to impress upon the viewer that the painter was no mere artisan but rather an individual of considerable stature and refinement.' But as an individual this is a representation not of autonomy but a complex signification of obedience to and dissension from the regulatory norms of sexuality and class within family and society.

In the portrait of 1498 Durer similarly portrays himself not as he is - an artisan, his form of dress potentially the subject of juridical regulation - but as the burgher he aspires to be, and is perhaps becoming through his marriage and the changing status of the artist. His clothing is lavish and fashionable, and he wears expensive doeskin gloves. Rather than representing the 'self' of Durer, the 1498 portrait is an introjective fantasy in which the use of props modifies its subject, allowing it to transcend - at an

imaginary level - the conditions imposed by the external constraints of class. This is a study in social transvestism: a subject dressing not across boundaries of gender but class distinction, and thus affirming power to conceal the extent of his social impotence and exclusion.

Together with the 1500 *Self Portrait*, these works may be read as fabrications of otherness illustrated upon and within the material representation of the artist. Such readings articulate a tension between the performance of the self and the experience of lack which the separation between materiality and performance necessarily invokes. The act of representing self-materiality serves not only to illustrate the idealised persona of the artist through external trappings, but as exteriority it masks the void between itself and interiority. The performance enacted here, for the self by the self, thus not only conceals lack - what Lacan would understand as the impossibility of seeing the self through the gaze of the other and thus realising a transcendent subjectivity - through the re-enactment of presence, but also erects a memorial that perpetually invokes a melancholy associated with the emptiness of the performative gesture. The artist's body is rearticulated as the site of identifications with bodies and identities whose otherness, and absence, should construct its class and its very humanity. We might say of Durer that what he is not constitutes his imagination of what he is, enacting an elision of the self and in this seemingly masochistic, even nihilistic, act simultaneously reiterating a fantasised self-presence. However, there is a fundamental difference between the earlier portraits and that based on the *sudarium*. Where the former allow Durer to propose that this is how he sees himself as other than he is, the latter allows him to propose that this is me seeing myself as I appear to others. That is as a *photo-graph*, a subject embodied not through its own gaze but that of others; a representation that reunites subject and object by effacing its status as representation.

It is this pursuit of transcendence that separates the 1500 *Self Portrait* from Durer's other studies, where the subject, however fantasised, remains resolutely grounded as a representation in history. It is also this characteristic that, beyond and perhaps because of verisimilitude, spontaneity, and adventitiousness, defines photography. In his structuring of the subject in the gaze - its *photo-graphy* - Lacan (1979, 106) suggests that there is no relationship between object of representation and subject, but rather a splitting to which the being accommodates itself. Part of this accommodation is indeed grounded in representation: Lacan (1979, 107) comments that the human subject maps himself in the imaginary capture of the subject of desire, by isolating and playing with the function of the screen, or surface on which the subject of representation appears. But what the photograph seemingly allows is a reunion of phenomenon (the tangible object of representation) and noumenon (its representation, otherwise available only to apprehension). When King Abgar received his facsimile of Christ he was satisfied not by the representation, but by the real presence of Christ, which would perform miracles not because the *mandylion* was a facsimile of the individual's appearance but because it also replicated his agency. This image is not an icon; it *is* its own subject. The story of the *mandylion* is not a myth of representation, it is a myth of transcendent relation between the fractured elements of being and being seen to be. Durer's insertion of a fantasy of the self into the later variants of this myth suggests a similar desire for reparation: the 'inadequate' subject, through photography, moves from being known only in its relation to the other into immanence. This is not to suggest the 1500 *Self Portrait* is a gesture of massive hubris on Durer's part: certainly

his investment in the self as Christ is no greater than its imagination as eligible young noble or mature burgher. The spiritual exhortation of the age to imitate Christ might well have influenced the production of an image in which Durer sought to reconcile the phenomenon of being made in the image of God with the noumenon of his own subjectivity. But strangely, the attribution of such a 'photographic' character of the 1500 *Self Portrait* might return us to those older readings of the subject as autonomous and transcendent. Or rather, they might point us towards a subject bound up in fantasies of transcendence which are served by photography.

If the *sudarium* is, like the photograph, a response to the loss of the gaze at the other, a product of desire, what are we to make of images of the self that are both fashioned in the image of the other, and produced in such a way as to deny the materiality of their making? Could such an image be not only the product of desire, but also a response to being *photo-graphed*, a fantasy of one's fragmented self as momentarily rendered whole in the image of the other? In its appeals to spontaneity and the elimination of agency, Durer's 'photo-realism' attempts not only a certain *trompe l'oeil* (this is not a painting of me, but a spontaneous realisation of myself in a guise (Christ) which would legitimate the possibility of spontaneous realisation), but a *trompe de l'inconscient* (this is me as I cannot see myself.) Durer produces a portrait that, as the photograph will after 1839, satisfies a fantasy of transcendence: a fantasy of seeing the self as others see it.

In representing himself as Christ, Durer not only undermines his own subjectivity, as an autonomous, self-meditative individual at a specific moment in history. He also imagines himself photographically - produced without agency, though nonetheless authorised, transformed from three dimensions into two, and present as the same subject at all moments in time. I am not suggesting that the 1500 *Self Portrait* is in any way a photographic likeness of Durer - far from it, the similarity of its features to those described in the *Epistula Lentuli* suggests the portrait is rather more a likeness of Christ as imagined in contemporary documents. I am claiming that what Durer is engaging with, and putting his name to, is a fantasy of photographic representation and reproduction which, in its fabrication, satisfies the same desires as photographic representation, and in particular the subjective desires of photographic self-portraiture. It is this fantasy which will, in self-fulfillment, eventually produce photography as a chemical-mechanical practice in the same way as Durer's portrait answers that desire, in the same way as medieval reproductions of the *vera icon* also answer it.

The idea of Durer as 'photographer', or at least as symbolic figure within photographic history, is not unique to this study. Christoph Geissmar commented on the visual strategies that link *verae icones* to the body in his 1992 exhibition *The Rhetoric of the Body* at the Albertina Graphische Sammlung, whilst Bernard Marbot endeavours to establish a pre-history for photography which encompasses an illustration of Durer's woodcut *Italian method for drawing a subject according to the principle of linear perspective* (c.1525). Marbot employs Durer's representation of the 'scientific' production of perspective to illustrate how, three centuries later, the visual innovation of the Renaissance is embodied in photography. To the extent that the dominant discourse in photography since 1839 is organised around perspective, we might say that photography begins if not *with* Durer, then with a shift in the construction of representational space in which Durer, as an early-modern painter, is

inevitably bound up. But whilst engaged in the construction of perspective as an apparently natural way of seeing, Durer's draftsman is also engaged in the accurate transfer of a three-dimensional body into a planar field. The *ultimate* consequence of perspectival vision is the transformation of the 'real' into the representational without loss of truth.

This suggests that the ontology of photography does not have an originating moment in the development of perspective, but that perspectival space itself is a 'photographic' answer to a preceding desire - the reproduction of *verea icones*. Alberti in *Dei pictura*, the Renaissance text that contributes most to the naturalisation of perspectival space, describes the plane of representation (which the gridded screen used by Italian draftsmen both limits and mensurates) as an intersection, a veil that separates artist from other. Alberti's metaphor for the picture is at once transparent - so that the subject may be seen through it - and imagined as opaque, so that it may be drawn on. The gridded paper on which Durer's draftsman is about to make his mark, on which the subject in perspectival space is realised, stands in for this imaginary image bearing capacity. Once the processes of the different image focusing and representing surfaces are analysed in this way, Durer's woodcut is perhaps less an illustration of the artist at work than a cross section of a Renaissance 'camera' - an optical means of organising the real within two dimensions whilst retaining the verisimilitude of the original. The gridded screen is a lens which, according to the distances of the artist and the subject from it, may magnify or reduce the subject; the paper is an equivalent to the photographic film on which a faithful transcription of the object is made. The artist, in such a schema, is the mirror behind the lens which condenses and transfers the image from lens to film. Veronica's veil is a fantasised realisation of this process which substitutes spontaneity for the studied human gesture. Similarly photography can be understood as substituting a chemical and mechanical operation which fabricates what the Renaissance draftsman must realise by hand and eye.

Durer's *Self Portrait* of 1500 is, without the artist necessarily using a perspectival grid, a positioning of the same figure on both sides of Alberti's veil. (A figuring of the self that is literalised in Durer's later gift to Raphael of a version of the *sudarium*, Durer's own face rendered on cambric in watercolour and gouache so that it was visible on both sides - like a photographic transparency. And - given the symmetry demanded by the hieratical organisation of the face in a *sudarium* - perhaps informed by the conceit of being identical from either side.) The self-portrait is thus a 'photograph' of a 'photograph' in which the artist's self is realised as other (Christ) in the moment that it is simultaneously authorised by Durer's signature. The claim to authority (Durer's facility as an artist) is achieved through those very means which emphasise the spontaneity of the other's appearance - the elision of the marks of the artist's painterly skill in favour of a 'photo-realist' finish. The 1500 *Self Portrait* leads us to question not so much the history of photography as the status of photography as a medium which might have a history, and also suggests that the photographic imagination of self as other will be marked by the reintroduction of a self-identity reinforced by the processes of its apparent erasure.

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1 'Perhaps this astonishment, this obstinacy, immerses me in the religious substance from which I am shaped; it can't be helped: Photography has something to do with resurrection: might we not say of it what the Byzantines said of the image of Christ from which the Turin Shroud is impregnated: knowing that it was not made by human hand, *acheiropoetos*?' My translation
