

... (Photographic) Desire and Astronomical Imagination

NOTES

* I would like to thank Marilyn Ivy at Columbia University for her encouragements, her careful reading, and for providing the initial context (a seminar entitled “Ecocriticism in the End Times”) in which this research emerged.

1 One might be reminded here of the title of Judith Mayne’s [The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women’s Cinema](#) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

2 My understanding of such a photographic history draws inspiration from Geoffrey Batchen’s seminal work, [Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997). The section entitled “Desire” is almost exclusively concerned with the question of images of landscapes and views of nature.

3 Gaston Bachelard, [Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter](#) (Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983).

4 Ektachrome is a reversal film produced by Kodak and has been officially discontinued since 2013. Its vivid and contrasted colours are highly sought after by filmmakers still using analogue techniques.

5 Walter Benjamin, [Berlin Childhood Around 1900](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 115.

6 [Pareidolia](#) derives from the Greek [para](#) (beside) and [eidolon](#), or [eidōs](#) (appearance, form). The Online Merriam-Webster suggests this definition: “the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful, image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern. ‘The human brain is optimized to recognize faces, which could also explain why we are so good at picking out meaningful shapes in random patterns. This phenomenon, pareidolia, could be responsible for a host of otherwise unexplained sightings, such as the face of the Virgin Mary on a toasted cheese sandwich.—[New Scientist](#), 24 December 2011.’”

7 On this topic see the work of Margaret Rossiter, [Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940](#) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), and

Londa Schiebinger, [The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999). On the Harvard College Observatory, see Pamela Mack, “Straying from their Orbits: Women in Astronomy in America” in [Women of Science: Righting the Record](#), ed. Gabriele Kass-Simon, Patricia Farnes, Deborah Nash (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 72–116). See also Peter Galison, [Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

8 Annie Jump Cannon, [In the Footsteps of Columbus](#) (Boston: Barta and Co., 1893).

9 The Kamaret, patented in 1891 by The Blair Camera Company, was the first American camera to move the film spools to the front of the camera.

10 It was during the last decades of the 1800s that the crucial figure of the female “typewriter” emerged, as documented so deftly by Friedrich Kittler in [Gramophone, Film, Typewriter](#) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Also, for a detailed study of the ways in which “nature” and “women” have been historically conflated—and how both have been exploited by capitalism—see Carolyn Merchant, [The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution](#) (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990).

11 Lorraine Daston, Peter Galison, [Objectivity](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books & MIT Press, 2007), 341.

12 [The Henry Draper Catalogue](#) (1918–1924), which Cannon co-authored, catalogued over 300,000 stars and was an absolutely pioneering effort in stellar spectra classification for the time.

13 Geoffrey Batchen insists, in the early proto-photographers’ discourses, on the recurrence of the trope of “spontaneity” in the revelation of the image on photographic surfaces.

14 It is remarkable that Marielle Nitoslawska’s riveting film [Breaking the Frame with Carolee Schneemann](#) (2014) begins with a spiraling image of the moon she found in a stack

of Schneemann’s Super 8mm outs. She opens with such an evocative scene as a way of conjuring up what she calls the “perplexity of the see-er in the seen,” one of her film’s forceful motifs.

15 Prior to this, the philosophical motif of the sphere was already present in Szlam’s work. See her own text inspired by Jorge Luis Borges’ short essay on Pascal’s sphere: “Una Esfera,” [Pausa 2](#) (Chile Council for the Arts and Culture, November 2004): 62–67.

16 Benjamin, [Berlin Childhood](#), 115.

17 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, [Dialectic of Enlightenment](#), trans. John Cumming (New York: Verso Books, 1997), 3.

18 Jacques Derrida, [Of Grammatology](#), trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 101.

19 Conversations with Malena Szlam, March–June 2015.

20 Raymond Williams, [Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), in particular the entry “nature.”

21 For example, J. B. Jackson, editor of [Landscape](#) magazine, who after 25 years of scholarly work on the topic wrote that “the concept continues to elude me.” “The Order of Landscape,” in [The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes](#), ed. D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 153.

22 Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in [Writings on Art and Literature](#) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

23 Kenneth R. Olwig, “Sexual Cosmology: Nation and Landscape at the Conceptual Interstices of Nature and Culture, or: What does Landscape Really Mean?” in [Landscape: Politics and Perspectives](#), ed. B. Bender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 307–343.

25 Annie Jump Cannon archive, “Southern Skies” (1922), Harvard University.

26 Spiritualist groups that gathered in Paris around new astronomical and photographic discoveries at the end of the nineteenth century. See Giordana Charuty, “Standing

Upright Before the Heavens’: Metamorphoses of Customary Christianity,” [Diogenes](#) 52, no. 1 (February 2005): 67–81.

27 We should be reminded here of Immanuel Kant’s famous early phrase (which was reproduced on his tombstone) in which he expressed his awe before two seemingly incommensurable realities: “The starry sky above me and moral law within me.” For an elaborate critique of Kantian philosophy, correlationism, and the question of finitude, see Quentin Meillassoux, [After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency](#), trans. Ray Brassier (London/New York: Continuum, 2008.)

NIGHT: RHYTHMS

Presence

Natalie Jachyra



[Presence](#) elicits the nocturnal, desolate urban, suburban, and industrial landscapes particular to Edmonton, outside of human interaction. Capturing suburban alleyways in the coldest of weather and urban pedway systems during late summer nights, the camera would remain in a fixed position while taking dozens of unique photographs. I moved through the spaces, interrupting the darkness with various artificial lighting sources, then later layered and manipulated compositions of light to create artificial landscapes. These digital collages reveal a forlornness that would otherwise be unknown.

207



All images: Natalie Jachyra, Presence, 2015, Digital photographs mounted on aluminum, 42"x28 inches.