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Absolutely Nebulous:
Fog, Fuzzy Edges and Vagueness in Photographic Fields

Hello.
I'd like to talk about mobility versus fixity.
Absolutely nebulous, the title of this talk, is first, a reference to a sitcom about alcoholics, but it also includes these two ideas: one, the absolute, that which is fixed, unvarying. And two, nebulousness, which, like a cloud, points to something indistinct, that is hard to pinpoint. Its boundaries, its very definition, are mobile and mecurial.

And thirdly, there's the idea of vagueness. Something that is vague is, like a nebulous thing, indistinct, not clear. The adjective describes a noun. But "vague" is also descended from a verb: "vaguer" in French; being "vagus" in latin, is to be wandering, drifting, moving freely.

So I'd like to start this talk by inviting you to wander with me to a field, of vision, with this fellow:



It's the British archaeologist Leonard Woolley, born 1880, died 1960, famous for his excavations of the city of Ur in Mesopotamia (Iraq), in the 1920s.

In *Digging Up the Past*, a Pelican books introduction to the discipline of archaeology (date, 1930, price: two shillings), he describes how once in Sudan, he was looking for a long-lost cemetery from the second centry BC, that he suspected should be here on a plain, but he knew that by now it would buried, sunk below ground. At first Woolley could not find any clues as to the location, as the ground was disappointingly uniform; he was in the dark.

He could not find the cemetery, until early one morning he chanced to climb up a hill at one side, and, looking down over the flat surface spread before him, he noticed that the particular slant of the light at this time of day was making some of the rocks over the plain glint in a specific way. These colour rocks, and these only, would react to the light differently; would reflect a particular portion of the colour spectrum, they glowed black. From the hill he saw these rocks making circles of darkness distributed in a regular pattern over the pale background of the other stones. The access of light made the darker circles show up.

What Woolley realised was that each circle showed where a hole had been dug for a burial shaft: when they'd dug the tombs, four thousand years ago, they'd extracted underground rocks, of a

darker colour than the surface ones, and put them on the earth. A shaft was dug, a body buried, most of the rocks were put back in. But there were a few that no longer fitted in the shaft, as the body was there, taking up space. These extraneous rocks were left scattered round the shaft top, where over the course of the next four thousand years, they flattened and became indistinguishable from all the other ground. Except for when they were exposed to this particular quality and direction of the light, for these ten minutes of the morning sunrise. Then the initially-underground rocks reflected differently, allowed Woolley to trace apertures, to dig down into the dark and find where the bodies were first placed and now hidden. Double-descended. Woolley and his team dug at the spots indicated and found exactly what they'd been looking for.

I love this story because it shows Woolley's detective skills, looking for traces of what is secret, beneath, out of sight. And because it suggests something about an expanded or exploded form of camera action, at a larger scale. He's showing how surfaces, openings, viewpoints, light angles, concealed chambers, all these allow us to consider the scene differently, allow us to re-encounter the dead. He's doing photography, but at a larger, geographic scale. And slowly.

I'll read you a few pages from my book, also about Woolley, his excavations at Ur, because it gives an indication into how I approach my subjects. What I do is looking at history, but in a perhaps unconventional way.

Here's pages 11 – 14 of *Photo, Phyto, Proto, Nitro*:

Her ribbons and her bows have fallen

In his other popularizing book on the excavations, *Ur of the Chaldees* (1929), Woolley talks about the discovery and deciphering of the Great Death Pit (up until him still unplundered), which held scores of royal attendants, neatly reclining, among the most splendid treasure. Some of the magnificent costumes and ornaments were still there, preserved, on the queen and her retinue. There were shells used as containers for cosmetic powders, jewellery, hair-combs decorated with golden beech leaves and flowers. Almost half the women had hair-ribbons of gold; the rest had none. But then Woolley made a deduction; from discolouration of the bones, he grew certain that the women without gold ribbons had instead had silver ones: "there may be detected on the bone of the skull slight traces of a purplish colour which is silver chloride in a minutely powdered state: we could be certain that the ribbons were worn, but we could not produce material evidence of them."

Among the finery, the ropes and ribbons of gold and stones, there should have been silver ribbon, but it had rotted away. Woolley then finds a proof of this, beyond the purple traces. In an example of little human foibles reaching a finger through five thousand years to brush us on the face, Woolley found that one of the maids still had her silver ribbon coiled up in its case, presumably because she was late getting ready, and had to rush out of her dressing room before having time to tie it in place round her forehead. So it stayed in the case like camera film left in the reel, and, unexposed to the atmosphere, did not have a chance to decay, like those of the better-prepared maids.

That's what we can see through Woolley's century-ago eyes: the purple tinge of where silver used to be, on the body of the woman. A blue-ish marking, a decoration, a faint, permanent tattoo. An adornment that has lasted far longer than the person.

Royal blue, permanent

[I've cut out a para about the reed-mat and the Gowin butterfly]

Woolley lived in a more formal age than mine (he was born in 1880), and he can be seen in three portraits (as well as in various digging-site photographs), two of which are held by England's National Portrait Gallery, and one by the Science and Society Picture Library. It's the same face in all three, unmistakably, with a similar expression, same smartness of suit, same pose. But one, the latest, is taken by Walter Stoneman in 1954, not so long before Woolley's death in 1960; he's about seventy-three. A middle portrait, by Bassano Ltd., is taken in 1938. He looks slightly harsher, a bit vulpine. The third portrait is unspecified, listed as circa 1930. The placing of his head, the pyramid-esque eyebrows, the uneven hooding of one eye, the neatly curving mouth – these are carbon-copy similar to the 1938 picture. But though the exterior is the same, there's something different about his emotion: he's indefinably younger, more beautiful, less stern.

What's below this field of vision?

Something hard to notice or articulate under the surface? This is the very province of archaeology. And interpreting the image by studying its surface: this is how we look at photographs. The two activities combine in the practice of photoclinometry, which is, studying aerial photos so that differences in light and shadow can reveal information about the below-ground. For early-twentieth-century archaeologists, the aeroplane was obviously a great new tool for this, but as Woolley explains in *Digging up the Past*, even standing on a hill at the right time of morning or evening, with a sloping sunlight, can give the archaeologist a clearer picture of where to dig, thanks to faint shadows indicating irregularities, unflatness, in the plain or plane of vision. Brick structures below the earth provide an easier path for plant roots to wriggle through as they seek out the dark and nourishment, giving bushier outcropping above ground. You can even, says Woolley, detect what's waiting underground by perceiving, "in the very early morning, a difference of tone given by the dew on the blades." That's a beautiful way to start the day, looking for history in the reflection of sunlight off the water droplets.

So this is what Woolley does; he examines and interprets the field below him, then he digs down and goes through the layers, comparing bricks, bones, silver, texts, and temple stones. He's trying to line up the various things that he finds, literally when he's working out what depth of digging matches what other finds, figuratively when establishing the relations between, say, a particular style of pottery and a reign, a date range, a culture.

This is what I want to do, too: hold items from different levels beside each other and establish a timing and a meaning for them, set them on a wider flood plain. I plan to align some texts and artifacts and work out what they might indicate about culture. It might seem that the juxtaposition is wrong, that something from one era could not possibly cast light on another item. But archaeology allows us to see many levels at once, and photographs, in particular, make it easy to shift in time, to juxtapose and arrange the layers differently. As with Woolley's photos, I always find it moving to see pictures of one person at different times, as they glide on through. Like the attendant with her silver ribbon, Woolley's traces remain. He's been caught there by the silver halide crystals, held on the paper.

End of extract. That's from early on; the book goes on to discuss a range of other historical situations, literary forebears, images.

So, this is my technique. Disinter. Consider. Compare. Move to a different standpoint or position. Re-look. I find it fruitful to not stick within one artform or genre. I come from an English literature background and training, but a lot of my work is looking at legal or scientific papers (shark biology; developments in eyes, vision, optics), or else thinking about films, or revisiting Classical mythology. I get around.

One of the things I'm trying to find out is how similar ideas might appear in different contexts. So, sometimes I do this through time and over artforms. For example, I look at:

Charles Thurston Thompson and his mirror photographs from 1853. This one is *Mirror from the King's Bedroom, Knole House, Kent*. When a collection of these mirrors were gathered for display at the V&A, he was asked to record them. These images are lovely and illuminating in themselves, but also it's fun to as it were angle the mirrors somewhat, send an image batting onwards to a new zone. So I was thinking about how this mid-19th C set of images relates forwards to the mirror in the SLR cameras, or how it relates back to for example, Perseus, using a mirror to approach Medusa. In Greek mythology, so he isn't turned to stone.

You can do this sort of comparison, through time, between art forms, either conceptually, or physically.

Obviously, for this sort of comparative consideration the photograph, something physical like the 8x10 inch snapshot, is a useful tool, because you can shuffle them over the table, pick them up and place them in different orders. Try different combinations and comparisons. Like here, what Donald Sutherland's character does in the 1970 film *Kelley's Heroes*, with his aerial photographs.

Or, you can carry out this process of comparison between two different forms or categories, by using language, rather than prints. I'm very interested in this, in using metaphor, as a linguistic form of comparison rather than visual.

I got the very germ of *Photo, Phyto* from a line in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* , where a herald announces that the Greek ships, returning victorious from Troy, have been wrecked, so that the ocean is "on flower with corpses" or, "strewn with the purple blossoms of the dead." There's a range of translations. I like this profusion of words, different ways in English for the eyewitness of trying to convey the same visual image, the fact that a ship has been sunk and there are bodies floating in the water, and they look like something else. This is like that. It's not just that there are different translators, each with their own sensibility and vocabulary, writing at different times. It's the whole concept that words and vision might not quite align, there's always a fuzziness, a mis-registering, between one and the other, between word and image. Translation just emphasizes this.

So this prompts me to suggest my first example of fuzzy edges – the whole undertaking or enterprise of talking about images. It's blurry, however good you are.
And as an extension of this, or perhaps an illustration, there's the whole field of, the written word on the photograph. Here's Peter Beard's 1965 image, *I'll write whenever I can*;

I like his collages and additions to his photos, the way he makes visible this idea that the word attaches to and seeps away out of, the image. He uses ink, paint, or sometimes blood for this, too; it flows off and disperses, round the edges. It makes it apparent that words, language, are part of the wider experience of, the whole existence of, the photo. And not just the written word, but the whole discursive practice: everything we later say, write, discuss about the image – all these words are part of it. That's my first suggestion here, about fuzziness.

But this incident, from *Agamemnon*, was fruitful, caught my attention for a wide range of reasons. It sent me digging in loads of directions. A main one was, that it reminded me of an incident from *Jaws* the book of 1974 by Peter Benchley, which I'm mildly obsessed with. The Aegean sea, "on flower with corpses," reminded me of when in *Jaws* a patrolman, Len Hendricks, finds the first shark victim's body on the beach. He vomits as he sees Chrissie's mutilated body, and thinks "that the woman's remaining breast looked as flat as a flower pressed in a memory book." Flowers and corpses, again, just like the herald in *Agamemnon* reports that he saw in the water. The comparison set me tracing a line between these two works, two thousand years apart in their creation. I held them up next to each other to see what emerged.

Jaws the book is surprisingly chocablock full of metaphor. In just the first, opening pages, there's a description of the shark attack that transforms this victim, Chrissie Watkins, into a dead body. It uses the simile, "The great conical head struck her like a locomotive, knocking her up out of the water." A shark's head here is like a locomotive, a train, a sort of vehicle. Or, from the same opening pages, the simile that the blood streaming from the bitten woman's femoral artery is "a beacon as clear and true as a lighthouse on a cloudless night." In the way that it notifies and attracts

the shark (although, it has already found her). The author, Peter Benchley, is comparing a stream of blood to a beam of light. This is like that. In a deathly, and watery, sort of way.

Metaphor: two separate things are similar, in a way that amplifies and enriches my understanding of both halves of the comparison. Sometimes it's just funny, to realise that this thing is like that thing. Sometimes it gives you a clearer understanding of, or a new insight into, the elements under consideration. But more than just the two terms, when metaphor is really working it's not the particular points that matter, it's the broader idea, the realisation that everywhere we look there are or could be points of overlap. Nothing is unrelated, uncomparable, to something else. It just depends on adjusting your perspective, framing, depth of vision, a bit. Then you get a better, richer picture of the whole world. Like Leonard Woolley, you can find what you're looking for.

Metaphor in language works by drawing attention to similarities between two things that are nonetheless different. It doesn't work to say "eggs are like eggs" – that's not a metaphor but a tautology. They have to be different enough that something is generated by the fact of comparison; there needs to be a bit of friction. All of this requires in the first place, separation, discrete-ness, an ability to identify and to recognise your items into different categories.

First, you have to set up your two groups, before you can work with them. In language. What I want to suggest now is that we could also think of photography as a form of metaphor: *this* image, that I've isolated, is like *that* real world, or *that* memory, or *that* item. But it's not *the same* as… We have some friction.

And, following on from the language model, it works by, it absolutely depends on, the initial distinction between two spheres: shark / locomotive; blood / light; exposed / concealed; light / dark; black / white. Contrast. Only after you've identified, captured and fixed the components, can you start the process of comparing them. You need the fixity before you can start having the flow.

Photography works by using these contrasts, by containment: you want the light to come in, but only to a particular, limited extent. You want the chemicals to do their processing work, but not too far. You want the silver to darken, the crystals to transform, but then to stop, to be stopped at a certain point in the process. Otherwise everything is exposed and there's no differentation. It all fades to white. All the time, you're taking careful charge of the interplay between fixed category and free-flowing process; you're manipulating the limits, in time or space or material.

There's an early photographer I'd like to look at in this context, thinking about fixity versus mobility in the photographic process. It's Alfred Capel Cure, an English, Victorian early photographer.

Let's look here at some of his images. I'm into Capel Cure because he's quite odd, while being sort of characteristic of the era and practice. His work has three main strands: architectural; military; and artistic, leisured, upper-class domestic. But I find it rather prescient (like much very early photography, which can be sometimes astonishingly prefiguring of much later photographic trends. Everything was up in the air, there wasn't so much of a cannon for artists to try to break out of or divert from). Look at these two self-portraits, for example:

It's Capel Cure in his brevet-colonel uniform, Blake Hall, Essex, in September 1856; then him in mufti. He's maybe trying out his equipment, practising with daylight, exposure, etc. He's maybe utterly anticipating a Cindy Sherman-esque interest in self-creation, reshaping and presenting identity.

Here's another Capel Cure, it's the grounds of Blake Hall, his family home in Essex, on 31st March 1856. You can see a cypress tree in the garden. Then – here's a detail of the bottom strip of the image:

these flowerbeds that look like Leonard Woolley's circular grave shaft tops, the ground turned over, something buried down there, underneath. This is after he's come back from a desvastating Crimean campaign, severely wounded. Photo historian Roger Taylor suggests that these 1856 photos are influenced by, a reaction to, his war trauma. Which is an interesting suggestion, and opens a whole can of worms about how we could infer or ever know that; to what extent could a photograph ever reveal or explain something, about the maker's psyche, or is it always a matter of interpretaion, supposition. Never proof.

But the main Capel Cure photo I'd like to discuss is this one, My Beasts, of 1852,

This image comes from before his Crimean war service, though he had been a soldier for 8 years by then, anyway. I saw it first like this, as it is in the collection at Moma, as a negative. UCLA have an album with a positive print of it. But it's better like this.

This is an interesting photo because I read it as referring to, and destabilising, ideas about categorisation. It's a collection sheet . At first I thought it was a wooden specimen box, with little compartments that you put the animals in, like you'd put letters into the typeface box. (It's not that, sorry to say. But still.) It's a way of trying to understand natural history by tracking, gathering, killing, categorising, sort out specimens from the world. It's the Darwinian / Victorian great age of encountering the world by sorting, arranging, pinning it all down. Taxonomising. Putting the material into a grid, containers, so that it can be studied, viewed, and understood.

But the thing that I like about this particular photograph of animal arrangement is, that it's so batshit crazy. There's a huge bat overseeing the collection of moths and beetles. It reminds me of what Shakespeare's Prospero says about Caliban (act five of The Tempest):
"This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine;"
and, in an inchoate way that I cannot yet quite explain, it reminds me of John Donne poem's A Nocturnal upon St Lucy's Day, from about 1627, what the speaking voice says about love:
"He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death: things which are not."

What is the bat doing? There's a blur or stain on the negative, and a blob of some substance. It looks like the edge of the page fogging over, or a disturbance, or something coral-like, branching, also laid on the page. A piece of foliage? Fuzzy edges. It's as though the whole photograph is at one level partaking of the idea of collecting, ordering, imposing structure, and on the other hand it's mocking this very notion, making it ridiculous. And blurry. And, it's all reversed into darkness, much less comprehensible, anyway. It's showing that there's a tension between collecting and controlling, on the one hand, and, on the other, the uncontrollable, or hard-to-predict things that might affect your image: nature, spillage, dirt, decay, time… bats!

Well, anyone can read anything into images. It really depends what you've come here to see. But this is what I like about ACC, the oddness of his work. He's pointing out something that I suspect is there everywhere, at the heart, this fixity / motion divide.

And I like this here: there's always a tension between order and dissolution, with something flooding, pooling away, spreading out. A profusion.

I was reading this new collection of essays by Michael Collins, photographer and photo editor, in which he made what I thought is a good suggestion, that in photography, there's always a tension between whether it is an object or a set of processes. Fixity versus motion. "Photography's dilemma is whether it is an object or a medium," he says; and, "it is a sequence of processes."

Whether something is fixed in time, place, and substance, or constantly evolving, developing. Michelle Henning in her forthcoming book (*A Dirty History of Photography*) uses a great quotation from Jordan Bear, who asserts that back in the day (when Humphrey Davy was experimenting with nitrous oxide in 1800), "the categories we now use to understand photographic history – "fixity, experiment and evidence" – were not yet secured" says Bear. Everything's still fluid, or seeping.

I was taken by ideas of overspill and uncontrolabilitywhen writing my book. I was fascinated by the work of Emmet Gowin, in his 2019 book *The Nevada Test Site*. This one is *Yucca Flat Looking West*.

In it he presents aerial images that he made in 1996 and 1997, of the spaces where, from 1951 to 1992, agencies of the US government were carrying out experiments into the use and effects of nuclear explosions, both above and below ground. His images are extremely interesting, like Nazca lines.
Or, like the circles inscribed in the earth that Woolley deciphered in Sudan, that I mentioned at the start.
Or, like Capel Cure's earth mounds in the stately grounds of his ancestral home. Images keep echoing each other, shock-waving out, from one event or one photo to another, far distant.

So, in The Nevada Test Site, Gowin writes a very good essay in his intro, in which he recounts a story he's told by one of the pilots who is conveying him over the blasted desert below. It's a story about how a cloud of contamination drifted – or, wandered, vaguely – from the nuclear deserts, into photography.

Here's how Gowin tells it:
"a batch of Eastman Kodak X-ray film that was worth, perhaps, millions of dollars. […] was tested and found to be mysteriously spoiled from exposure. This batch of film, even after repeated testing, proved a total loss. In trying to discover what had happened, Kodak eventually approached the Department of Energy and asked, "Is there any way that radioactivity from one of your tests could have reached the eastern United States?" […]
"In the pilot's story, that's what seems to have happened. Radioactive dust and debris from Nevada had entered the jet stream and been carried east over the American South. A rainstorm dumped that

radiation onto cotton fields. When the cotton was picked, carried to Rochester, turned into cellulose acetate (film base), and coated with X-ray emulsion, it was sufficiently radioactive to expose and ruin the freshly coated film."

So, that's what the photographer Gowin says a pilot told him.

I love this anecdote: there's a lot to unpack: cotton-growing, and therefore geographical racism, trust in government institutions and actions. The history of film technology. The fact that it's a "pilot's story," told to the photographer, who passes it on to his readers (and I'm passing it on to you). A sense of a kernel of material disseminating through time and through narrative, not quite confirmed, slightly uncertain, probably disputed by some parties. But the story spreading, nonetheless. Like the dust and debris does. It's a bit reminiscent of Wm Burroughs' famous, and excellent, assertion that language is a virus. It spreads.

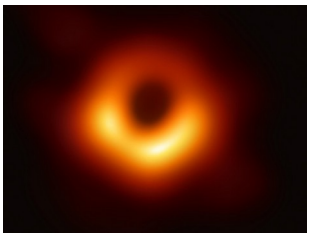
I'd like to come back here, wander back to the nebulous. Here's Alfred G Buckham's *Storm Centre* of circa 1920, from the Scottish National Gallery.

Thinking of clouds: an obvious point is that they are matter in a certain state, a gas, as opposed to the other potential forms of a liquid and a solid. In previous work (both books and radio) I've been interested in how matter, particularly water itself, presents in different forms.

When it's a liquid, I'm very interested in how it flows, then on to turbulence, waves, bodies of water, how they move and how we move over the water. My first book was about surfing.
With ice, or water in its solid form, I am and have been interested in what gets preserved in the ice. Bodies, for example, as organic matter does not rot. Or, you can also get stuck, confined by ice. It's the start and end of Frankenstein, and it's, for example, Shackleton, frozen into the ice, becoming slowly immobilised and crushed. But ice is also about movement: we slide over it, like ice-skaters, we carve into it. There's something about fixity and constraint vs smooth motion. That's like the whole of photography: fixed, or fluid? And the other oppositions: transparent or opaque. Light or dark.

And H2O as a gas? What are the particular characteristics? I haven't looked so much at this, but one that strikes me is the property of expansion – water takes up more space as it becomes steam. And at the conceptual level, I want to look at photography, too, expanding. There are several things, habits, events that strike me as very photographic, beyond the common, fixed definitions. I'll explain how I think these fit into a category of photography-plus. Or, photography if you expand its ambit, if you let its edges become blurry.

One example comes from another science-theory writer: it's Peter Galison and his black holes,



Here's a 2019 image from the Event Horizon Telescope, of the supermassive black hole M87. Galison describes it as "the scientific image" rather than a "photograph" as such. A photograph as just a visualisation of data? We don't tend to stretch the boundaries that far. But it's good when we do.

Then, I propose another fuzzy edge to photography. Though we tend to think of it as producing a fixed image, an item, I noticed the idea or phenomenon of, wobbly photography.

I've written about two examples of this, one from the journalist Rebecca West and one from poet Andrew Marvell. His *Upon Appleton House*, of 1681, is quite a poem. It covers a lot but it's got an excellent, proto-photographic bit near the end, where he describes a kingfisher flying over the river at the shadowy, end of the day ('she' is the kingfisher):

> The viscous air, wheres'e'er she fly,
> Follows and sucks her azure dye;
> The jellying stream compacts below,
> If it might fix her shadow so;
> The stupid fishes hang, as plain
> As flies in crystal overta'en;
> And men the silent scene assist,
> Charmed with the sapphire-winged mist.

What's happening here is that as the kingfisher flies, somehow the viscous air osmoses into blue, the jellying stream tries to retain the bird's shadow, tries to hold the image. The water crystallizes with fish in, and the whole scene is full of sapphire-winged mist. This is brilliant, and, to my mind, it's hugely photographic, with the surface, the crystals, the jelly retaining the image of the bird that has passed over; the flight and motion have been preserved by an action of the light.

The second example is from 1937, when the writer Rebecca West was travelling through a tinderbox Yugoslavia. She visits Lake Scutari, and describes it thus:

"For this lake is not water, it is mud. It was green as a horse-pond on an English common, but the substance was not so liquid. It was nearly solid; the reflections it bears were not superficial images which a breeze will confuse and annul, but photographs imposed on a sensitive jelly.
[The reflections were] more solid, more dogged, more of a fact than reflections commonly are, because they were registered on this viscid medium. [. . .] In this landscape there had happened to matter what happens to time when, as they say, it stands still. Mobility was not."

Lake Scutari, according to West, is holding the reflections, the pictures, in its gelatinous, not really liquid, not quite solid surface.

So, photograph-ish images in deep space, then in jellly. My next example of expanded, fuzzy photography is: the fossil as a form of quasi-photographic image.

Like here, the Bearsden Shark, found near Glasgow in 1982. It's a piece of Lower Carboniferous shale from 330 million years ago, containing a fossil of an Akmonistion, an early sea creature, or proto-shark. In the Hunterian.

I suggest it's photographic because it's made in a comparable fashion to eg making a cyanotype or photogram, like Anna Atkins' seaweeds (that many of you will be familiar with), just, much more slowly. For her, the process was: you find your item from the ocean, place it touching the material of a specific chemical composition, control the access of light to it. Wait, look.

Here, with the Bearsden shark, the parallel process would be: find your sea creature. Confine it into a space of the right consistency and chemical make-up; keep it in the dark and under pressure, for millions of years so that a fossil develops. Wait. Look. Eventually the minerals precipitate into stone, and you end up with a visible record of what is no longer there. Sounds familiar.

And, as my last proposal (for now) for fuzzy photography: alcoholic drinks, specifically the mojito. From November 2024, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported this case:

It's about a man who made some mojitos for his party, out of rum, sugar and lime, then experienced dreadful burns and inflammation all over his hands. He was suffering from phytophotodermatitis, where the skin records the markings, in conjunction with sunlight.

The scientific explanation is, that these markings are a result of a substance in the limes: "Specifically, the toxic chemicals are furocoumarins, which […] can enter skin cells and, for those that are phototoxic, become activated by exposure to ultraviolet light. The light causes the chemicals to form cross-linking bonds with the pyrimidine bases in DNA. This ties the double-stranded genetic material together, halting replication, which in turn leads to cell death and inflammation."

Sunlight causes chemical changes in the subject – a fuzzy, and itchy, form of photography.

So these are my current suggestions, of ideas of what we might also include in the wandering, expanding category of photography. They come from, far out in space; from 17th century England; pre-WW2 middle Europe; from Glasgow, forty years ago or many million; from a cocktail party last year.

There are other suggestions that I haven't illustrated here, that I might look at in the future. Perhaps we could also include: rust. Leaves. The spines of books fading where the sunlight shines on the bookshelf. All potential examples of areas where images are produced by the action of light through time, areas that we wouldn't immediately include in the photographic. But I think we should. Expand the edges, fuzz out a bit. Seep.

Just to close, there's one more field that seems to me a bit photographic. I mentioned above with Emmet Gowin and the nuclear testing, which leads on to the idea of nuclear mutation and damage – I write about Hiroshima and radiation poisoning in my book.An excessive expose to part of the electromagnetic spectrum has the potential to cause permamnent change. There's a huge and interesting lot of work going on about photography in the nuclear age, nuclear photography.

But there's also, thinking of DNA, how it's a form of information, very specific and categorised, that nevertheless is constantly in flux, changing. At a slow scale. Across the generations, each time. In Michelle's book there's a section I particularly like, about the artist Moyra Davey and work she does with and about her son, and about Herve Guibert's work that's a response to Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, which is an essay about his mother. And in my book, too - in some senses it's a critical meditation on history and an art form. But I'd assert it's also an autobiography of sorts – if you read carefully enough you can spot the tiny details of family history; it has my grandmother, my daughter in it. It's, like Alfred Capel Cure's work, it's a portrait of me.

That's my final suggestion, that perhaps procreation is a form of image perpetuation, when you make a copy into the next generation. But it blurs a bit, adapts as it goes. It's an idea about having children as a form of the photograph. You're sending your own image on into further generations. This is just a vague idea, for now; I might investigate further.

Anyway, I hope that this talk has given both some fixed explanation of how I write, why I do what I do, and what the processes are that I deploy; and, that you have enjoyed, although it's a bit fuzzy, I hope you've enjoed wandering round, digging down a bit, with me.