

**WOLFGANG HOCHBRUCK**

The intangible image of Buddy Bolden

# THE INTANGIBLE IMAGE OF BUDDY BOLDEN

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## *Résumé*

Les trois photographies de *Coming Through Slaughter* de Michael Ondaatje — l'une représentant l'orchestre de Buddy Bolden, l'autre des enregistrements de dauphins au sonomètre et la dernière, l'auteur lui-même — servent à illustrer et à compléter quelques significations possibles de ce roman. En tant que photographies elles sont pour ainsi dire 'mauvaises', floues, endommagées, ou illisibles. Leurs défauts reflètent et renforcent l'incertitude postmoderne des réalités, y compris la réalité historique. Le personnage de Buddy Bolden reste intangible sauf sous forme de légende.

## *Abstract*

The three photographs in Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* — one of Bolden's band, one of dolphin sonographs, and one of the author - serve to illustrate and complement some of the possible meanings of the novel. As photographs, they are 'bad', blurred, damaged, or illegible. Their defects mirror and reinforce the postmodern uncertainty with realities, including historical reality. Except in the form of legend, the figure of Buddy Bolden remains ultimately intangible.

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Looking at some writers who were photographers themselves or who worked extensively with photographic images, as did John Steinbeck and Eudora Welty, Jefferson Hunter's claim that "Somewhere in the vicinity of every photograph there is a hand holding a pen" appears almost justified. It certainly is justified in the case of literary texts like Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*<sup>2</sup> which incorporate photographs. These photographs, however, are no longer 'original' as Susan Sontag has observed, following Walter Benjamin's dictum that the result of mechanical reproduction is to place "the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself"<sup>3</sup>.

A photograph in a book then is a medium within another medium. It contributes to a larger text and context, being itself part of the text. Within this text, different captions may actually change what is in the photograph. In an example given by Hunter, the caption turns a chubby-looking farmer-type man into a Mississippi plantation overseer - which completely alters the viewer's perception of the persons in the picture, both white and black.

The fact that what is in a photograph not only changes with our view but may be altered through an alteration in context also helps to dispel the myth of the objective lens. Photographs are not limited to realism, as a quick glance over their history as an art form proves, and photographs have been

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1. Jefferson Hunter, *Image and Word. The Interaction of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts*, Cambridge/London, 1987, p. 6.

2. Michael Ondaatje, *Coming Through Slaughter*, Toronto, 1976. All subsequent page references are to this Anansi edition.

3. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", quoted in Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York, 1973, p. 140.

4. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 11 f.

used in and have interacted with realist as well as surrealist, modern as well as postmodern texts<sup>5</sup>.

Photographs play an important role in a variety of ways and functions in the works of Canadian author Michael Ondaatje. To quote but a few examples : in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*<sup>6</sup>, Ondaatje stylizes Billy as a gunman fascinated by the objective. As George Elliot Clarke has noticed, "The shootings that occur are either executed by photographers or by gunmen"<sup>7</sup> Ondaatje seems to be playing with the somewhat more than metaphorical affinity of camera and gun - a look into the history of the photographic camera in fact reveals an ironic parallel in Enjalbert's 1882 invention of a 'photographic revolver'<sup>8</sup>. Structuring power is also attributed to photographs : "Indeed, the Kid is caught in a radial system of narrative that fans around each photograph"<sup>9</sup>.

In *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje plays with the bias of expectation and representation. "The photograph I [the 'Ondaatje' narrator] have been waiting for all my life"<sup>10</sup>, - is, as Linda Hutcheon has observed, described with accuracy and conjured up before the reader's mind-eye. This photo (of Ondaatje's parents making faces for a photographer during their honeymoon) is then reproduced on the next pages following the description<sup>11</sup>. Says Hutcheon : "By then, of course, it is

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5. See the resp. chapters in Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, London/New York, 1989, pp. 42ff, 118ff.

6. Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Toronto, 1970.

7. George Elliot Clarke, "Michael Ondaatje and the Production of Myth, " *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 16, 1991, 1-21, p. 6.

8. Thilo Koenig, "Wenn Blicke Töten. Laden, Zielen, Schießen - über das krieglerische Vokabular der Photographie", *Die Zeit*, 17.4.1992, p. 64 (Munich Museum of Photography Lecture).

9. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

10. Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*, London, 1984, p. 161.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

redundant : words can be as real as photographic reproductions"<sup>12</sup>. This statement runs contrary to Roland Barthes' impression that

the description of a photograph is literally impossible ; to *describe* consists precisely in joining to the denoted message a relay or second-order message derived from a code which is that of language and constituting in relation to the photographic analogue, however much care one takes to be exact, a connotation : to describe is... to signify something different to what is shown<sup>13</sup>.

That is, if we accept Barthes' assumption that the photographic image is "not the reality but... its perfect analogon" giving the photographic image the special status of "a message without a code"<sup>14</sup>. In a way, Ondaatje's treatment of photographs seems to evade both Hutcheon's and Barthes' statements. It seems questionable whether a photo as hysterically comical as that of Ondaatje's parents could ever be adequately represented in writing. At the same time, the closeness of photographer and photographed refutes Barthes. Two readings of a text will always differ, just as no two views of the same photograph are ever quite the same. Alan Trachtenberg has argued,

To read an image is to write upon it, to incorporate it into a story. This is not to say that an image is a blank writing pad. There is something there to be seen, and we want to see it. We never (or rarely) read naively, however, but always through a veil, the screen of pre-

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12. Linda Hutcheon, "Running in the Family : The Postmodernist Challenge" in Sam Solecki, ed., *Spider Blues, Essays on Michael Ondaatje*, Montreal, 1985, 301-314, p. 305.

13. Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message", in Roland Barthes, *Image - Music - Text*, trans. and ed. Stephen Heath, New York, 1977, 15-31, p. 18.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

vious interpretations, of intervening contexts or discourses, and of our own motives, hidden and known<sup>15</sup>.

In this particular case, the due sense of difference is underscored by the simple fact that the author's familiarity with the picture creates a context which makes his view of the photograph different from the impression any other reader will possibly ever 'read' out of it. The enigmatic confrontation of photographic and textual representation accounts for much of the narrative tension in *Coming Through Slaughter* (hereafter : *CTS*). Stephen Scobie was among the first to notice that *CTS* "is a novel in which the real action takes place at the level of the poetic image"<sup>16</sup>. Expanding upon this statement, Alice van Wart found that "the metamorphic representation of the images constitutes the subject and the form of the novel"<sup>17</sup>. Consequently most critics have noticed the importance of recurrent motifs and images which in true postmodern form add coherence to an otherwise fragmented plot, reinforcing and/or juxtaposing the narrative storylines in a dialectic language game. There are semantic fields around images of cutting and of blood ; the colours of red and white return frequently as do images of fans, circles, and stars. Windows and mirrors in particular reflect their own significance in the text, and their relation to the apparently immediate image, the photograph of Buddy Bolden's band, is obvious. Most critical articles mention this picture, referring to it as the only pictorial representation

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15. Alan Trachtenberg, quoted in Beverly W. Long and Mary Susan Strine, "Reading Intertextually : Multiple Mediations and Critical Practice", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75, 1989, 467-514, p. 469.

16. Stephen Scobie, *Coming Through Slaughter*, Fictional Magnets and Spider's Webbs", *ECW*, 12, 1978, 5-23, p. 6.

17. Alice van Wart, "The Evolution of Form in Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid and Coming Through Slaughter*", *Canadian Poetry*, 17, 1985, 1-28, p. 2.

known to exist of Bolden and any set of musicians he ever played with<sup>18</sup>.

My argument today is that there are actually three photographs in the novel rather than just one. Of these, one appears twice bringing the total up to four according to Trachtenberg's theory. Furthermore, a number of photographs are not pictorially represented in the novel but described. I will try to show that and how they are related, and that they serve a purpose. Like Dan Beard's illustrations in Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*, the photographs accompany the text, but they also constitute a sign system of their own which can be read and interpreted as a text which supports and complements some of the possible meanings in the novel<sup>19</sup>. (Since some later editions of *CTS* omit the photographs, it is important that all references made here are to the original Anansi edition with Bolden's band on the front cover and Stan Dragland's photo of Ondaatje on the back).

Including the front and back covers of a book in an analysis may seem to be taking things a bit too far. However, even if we would refuse such a holistic approach as a general rule, there is sufficient justification for an inclusive reading in this case. As the postmodern novel gradually leaves the boundaries of the genre, other genre forms and other art forms are being coopted, and Ondaatje invites a trans-genre reading by opening the frame of the novel to include parts before and after the

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18. This is not quite true : Donald B. Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden First Man of Jazz*, Baton Rouge/London, 1978, reproduces a portrait of Bolden he discovered during his research (*ibid.*, p. xviii and p. 146f). Ondaatje apparently did not know the portrait.

19. Cf. James A.W. Heffernan, "Preface" in Heffernan, ed., *Space, Time, Image, Signs, Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*, New York/Frankfurt, 1987, p. xiv.

text proper : what is said about the dolphin sonographs is said before chapter 1 begins, and after the text finishes notes and acknowledgments, "unmistakeably arranged like film credits"<sup>20</sup>, continue at the fringe of the storyline, telling the reader how historical information was transformed to become private metafictional truth. An inclusion of front and back cover into the reading is therefore only being consistent.

The first photograph, on the front cover, is a badly damaged picture of a group of black musicians. Most of them are looking straight into the camera. The guitar player looks particularly unhappy, the one behind him - this is Bolden, but readers unfamiliar with jazz history will of course be unfamiliar with the photo as well - sports a wry smile. He is holding a cornet, or rather, he seems to be balancing it on the open palm of his hand, a surprisingly self-conscious gesture of offering, of dissociation and estrangement from the object. Bolden is holding his cornet in the *left* hand. This is the way the photograph was originally reproduced in *Jazzmen*<sup>21</sup>.

Another puzzling aspect of the photograph is the way the musicians are holding their instruments. As originally printed in *Jazzmen* the fingering positions of the clarinetists indicate that the picture may have been printed backward. When the picture is reversed to correct these poses, however, both Johnson on bass and Mumford on guitar would seem to be playing left-handed. Johnson was not a left-handed bass-player, and Mumford's family and others who knew him say he was not left-handed either<sup>22</sup>.

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20. Steven Heighton, "Approaching 'That Perfect Edge' : Kinetic Techniques in the Poetry and Fiction of Michael Ondaatje", *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 13, 1988, 223-243, p. 241.

21. Frederic Ramsey Jr., Charles Edward Smith, *Jazzmen*, New York, 1939, p. 32.

22. Marquis, *op. cit.*, p. 77.



Stephen Scobie has drawn attention to the possible inter-textual quality of a motif of left-handedness, "considering the fact that the legend of Billy the Kid's left-handedness originate[d] with a reversed photograph, and that the original cover of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* featured a reverse image..."<sup>23</sup>. In any case, the certainty of photographic representation is undermined by this uncertainty of possible reversals<sup>24</sup>. According to Winfried Siemerling, uncertainty is a key word in the novel :

The pull of fascination and the question of the observer's position...begin with the picture of Bolden's band on the cover of *Coming Through Slaughter*. (...) The closer we let the picture and its stories come to us, the less certain becomes also our own position as observers<sup>25</sup>.

The initial uncertainty is aggravated by the repetition of the same photo (or rather of a version of it) on the title page of the novel. In this reprint, one person - Buddy Bolden - is singled out for identification, a caption that changes the meaning and focus of the image's representational capacity. In addition, what appeared to be a wall behind the group turns out to be a piece of cloth ; the typical false wall in a studio.

The resulting experience of uncertainty and possible hidden meanings is deepened further by the reader's confrontation

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23. Scobie, *op. cit.*, p. 21 FN 2.

24. To make things worse, Marquis reproduces the band members's (sampled) signatures in order of appearance underneath the *reverse* print, giving the impression that this is the correct version. If, however, the signatures had been on the back of the photograph, the *Jazzmen* version would again be the correct one, as Danielle Schaub noticed when I read this paper in Strasbourg.

25. Winfried Siemerling, "Temptations of Identity : Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* and Fascination", Guest lecture at Osnabruck University, Dec. 2, 1991, 16 p., p 7

with the pictorial representation of "three sonographs - pictures of dolphin sounds" (CTS, p. 6). Underneath the sonographs the reader is confronted with an introduction to a system of communicational devices called here squawks, whistles, and echo-location clicks. The whole scientific excursion into the world of dolphin communication is unexpected in a novel on a New Orleans jazz musician, and it remains enigmatic at this point in the text. The dolphin as a literary motif, however, triggers off a series of associations and references from classical literature to modern stories, including a line in an Ondaatje poem from *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*, "a dolphin reciting epic poetry to a sleepy audience"<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, there is the portrait of the artist as a 31-year old man on the back cover. Recalling Ondaatje's intrusion into the text in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, the reader may already be prepared to assume that this is not just a dust jacket portrait of the author. In *Billy the Kid*, there is a miniature in the back of the book which allegedly shows Ondaatje as a kid, dressed in a cowboy suit. In CTS, the picture is on the back of the book : it is larger by comparison but blurred, the man hardly recognizable and unhappy-looking with wild hair. Why would anyone want to be represented by a bad photograph ?

I see a connection here to the blotchy picture on the front cover. To have 'bad' photographs on the front and on the back cover of the book appears to be more than a coincidence, particularly if one takes into consideration that there are numerous references to bad and disfigured photos in the text. One of them concerns the first person narrator. After the description of

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26. Michael Ondaatje, "Sweet Like a Crow", in *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*, Toronto, 1979, p. 94, quoted in Heighton, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

Buddy's breakdown, there is a sort of coda and a reversal to documented facts. The narrator, who had been "float[ing] by in a car today" at the outset of the narrative (*CTS*, p. 8), is reintroduced : "There is so little noise that I easily hear the click of my camera as I take fast bad photographs into the sun aiming at the barber shop he probably worked in" (*CTS*, p. 133).

With the bad pictures documenting Bolden's geography, the 'I, Ondaatje' - narrator becomes a counterpart of the photographer Bellocq, of whose pictures Bolden at one point in the text says that they "were like...[sic] windows" (*CTS*, p. 59). "Attributing the picture of Bolden's band to this photographer, the text also suggests that the picture may constitute a dangerous window, a fascinating surface for an artist's imagination that may open up and induce a fall"<sup>27</sup>.

Bellocq also makes 'bad' pictures, but he creates them deliberately, first photographing prostitutes — "Snap. Lady with dog. Lady on sofa half naked. Snap. Naked lady. Lady next to dresser. Lady at window. Snap" (*CTS*, p. 55) — then defiling, destroying the pictures, slashing at them with a knife. We are not told how, when, on what occasion, or for which purpose the picture of the band was taken, but we are told how Bellocq likes to take pictures, how he treats his models, and what the results are :

The photographs of Bellocq. HYDROCEPHALIC.  
89 glass plates survive. (...)... the thirty year old naked woman he photographed when she returned to the room... She now offering grotesque poses for an extra dollar and Bellocq grim and quiet saying No, just stand there against the wall there that one, no keep the petticoat on this time. One snap to quickly catch her scorning

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27. Siemerling, *op. cit* , p. 9.

him and then waiting, waiting for minutes so she would become self-conscious towards him and the camera and her status, embarrassed at just her naked arms and neck and remembers for the first time in a long while the roads she imagined she could take as a child. And he photographed that (*CTS*, p. 54).

This method to bring out the self-consciousness in the alienated object may account for some of the puzzles surrounding the Bolden photograph. It certainly offers one explanation why the musicians in the picture look so uneasy, most of all Bolden, whose apologetic grin and awkward posture are topped off by the unlikely way he holds his instrument. Who tells Webb that Bellocq tempted him "... out of the world of audiences where I had tried to catch everything thrown at me. He offered mole comfort, mole deceit. Come with me Webb I want to show you something, no come with me I want to show you something. You come too. Put your hand through this window" (*CTS*, p. 91). Here again we find the image of the window, this time a window out, ready to "induce a fall". Needless to say, Webb does not emulate Bolden who puts his hand through the mirror / image / window all alone, imploding into silence.

Bolden's nemesis in *CTS* is brought about tragically at least in parts by Bellocq, who lures Buddy into the wasteland of the mind, but partially Webb, the spidery detective, is also responsible. His role is more ironic, and so is his handling of the picture. The cop Webb wants the picture almost more than he wants the man, breaking into Bellocq's place in his search for a tangible image of Bolden :

Hope Bellocq has the picture. I can't even remember what you look like too well. I'd recognize you but in my mind you're just an outline and music. Just your bright shirts that have no collars are there. Something sharp (*CTS*, p. 50f.).

Webb's reading of the picture is that of the ratiocinatic 19th century, and of the detective novel<sup>28</sup>. This reading, however, fails just as Webb's 'reading' of Buddy Bolden fails to grasp his personality.

Webb had spoken to Bellocq and discovered nothing. Had spoken to Nora, Crawley, to Cornish, had met the children - Bernadine, Charlie. Their stories were like spokes on a rimless wheel ending in air. Buddy had lived a different life with every one of them (CTS, p. 63).

In a symbolic action in the novel, Webb eventually gives up his copy of the photo to Willy Cornish who in turn in real life (this is one of the few interfaces with historically sound terrain in the novel) gave it to Frederic Ramsey who reproduced it in *Jazzmen* in 1939. There seems to be an incongruency here : on p. 53 we are told that Webb received a print of the photo from Bellocq, while Bellocq made "one more print of the group and shelved it" before destroying the negative. This shelved photo is the one which, "waterlogged by climbing hoses, stayed in the possession of Willy Cornish for several years" (p. 66). On p. 145, however, Cornish says "All I had of Buddy was the picture here. Webb gave that to me." I have the impression that we are meant to assume that Webb, realizing his part in Buddy's demise, relinquished his copy of the photograph, but obviously the two copies are not the same, and Cornish owns the one Bellocq originally kept. All this, however, may just be some red herring which Ondaatje introduces tongue-in-cheek for the detective reader to find<sup>29</sup>.

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28. Lorraine M. York, "Photography and Postmodernism in Canadian Fiction", *Mosaic*, 21, 1988, 193-201, p. 198 calls attention to Arthur Conan Doyle's use of a photograph in "A Scandal in Bohemia" and to Webb's belief "in the Holmesian myth of the nugget of truth".

29. Cf. Nancy E. Bjerring, "Deconstructing the 'Desert of Facts' : Detection and Antidetection in *Coming Through Slaughter*", *English Studies in Canada*, 16, 1990, 325-338.

In an ironic turn the reader is finally introduced to the photograph and particularly to the characters in it. As if the process of making a copy of it had not been part of the text some ten pages before, it is pointed out that

*There is only one photograph that exists today of Bolden and his band. This is what you see*

*Jimmy Johnson Bolden Willy Cornish Willy Warner*

*on bass on valve trombone on clarinet*

*Brock Mumford Frank Lewis*

*on guitar on clarinet*

*(CTS, p. 66)*

Only that this time, all there is to see are the names. Some of them are mentioned in the text / as text : Frank Lewis (*CTS*, p. 37) Brock (a nickname, his signed name was Jefferson) Mumford (*CTS*, p. 76) and Willy Cornish (*CTS*, p. 145). The men on the fringe where the photo is most faded, Warner and Johnson, are not given speaking roles : like extras in a play they stand at the edge of the storyline.

Ascribing to the creation and existence of 'bad' photos qualities of a referential code operational in the text, a New Historicist reading/conclusion would be that trying to record and to transfix what has long become a legend will always net 'bad', blurred results. From today's perspective it is no longer possible to see the past clearly. Gathering all the available information, all the bad photographs, will only result in the creation of yet another fictional account.

Another possible reading would stress the affinity of photo, window, and mirror, the personal parallels which Ondaatje inscribed into the text as well as the arrangement of

photos. Where the differences between past and present coalesce, Bolden, Bellocq, and Ondaatje coincide.

The photograph moves and becomes a mirror. When I read he stood in front of mirrors and attacked himself, there was the shock of memory. For I had done that. (...) Defiling people we did not wish to be (*CTS*).

Bolden, Bellocq, and Ondaatje meet as slashers and cutters, cutting into themselves and others (Bolden into Pickett), or their objects (Bellocq into his photographs, Ondaatje into his auctorial other in the text). The picture changes from a window to a mirror, and, through the looking glass, the 'I, Ondaatje'-narrator perceives himself darkly :

There was the sentence, 'Buddy Bolden who became a legend when he went berserk in a parade...' What was there in that, before I knew your nation your colour your age, that made me push my arm forward and spill it through the front of your mirror and clutch myself ? (*CTS*, p. 134).

Bolden, Bellocq, and Ondaatje also meet as progenitors and objects of 'bad' photographs. The blurred picture of the author on the back cover underscores the parallel construction and proclaims the necessary uncertainty and unfinishedness of the novel's biographical and autobiographical urge in pictorial form.

The majority of critics has insisted on a pessimistic reading of the text and particularly of the ending of *CTS*<sup>30</sup>. This reading, however, means leaving the dolphin sonographs out of account. Taken into the story-frame provided by the photographs in and on *CTS*, the sonographs add a more positive

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30. With the notable exception of Constance Rooke, "Dog in a Grey Room, The Happy Ending of *Coming Through Slaughter*", in Solecki, *Spider Blues*.

viewpoint, transcending life-story into ungraspable, legendary sound. Consider the parallel between the following passages :

The top left sonograph shows a 'squawk.' Squawks are common emotional expressions that have many frequencies or pitches, which are vocalized simultaneously. The top right sonograph is a whistle. (...) The middle sonograph shows a dolphin making two kinds of signals simultaneously. The vertical stripes are echolocation clicks... No one knows how a dolphin makes both whistles and echolocation clicks simultaneously (*CTS*, p.6).

Notably, Bolden is said to play "squawk beats" (*CTS*, p. 129f.) on the day when he goes crazy, arriving finally at "What I wanted" (*CTS*, p.131 - it is not clear whether Bolden or the 'I, Ondaatje' - narrator is speaking here, or both). The other parallel is to the way Bolden's music is described by Dude Botley :

Though I knew his blues before, and the hymns at funerals, but what he is playing now is real strange and I listen careful for he's playing something that sounds like both. I cannot make out the tune and then I catch on. He's mixing them up. He's playing the blues and the hymn sadder than the blues and then the blues sadder than the hymn. That is the first time I ever heard hymns and blues cooked up together (*CTS*, p. 81).

There is a dual inexplicability of what is happening here ; the real and the legendary are both beyond grasp and intangible. Ondaatje chooses the sonograph as an appropriate image and metaphor for a kind of music which has never been recorded, and will never be heard again. In the sonographs, uncommon sound is spatialized. The sonograph is indeed a method of photographic representation, but one that the average reader is unable to read without explanations, just as Botley is unable to understand what he is hearing. Even with the meta-linguistic proposition/identification "Three sonographs" we are at the mercy of the author.



The anthropologist Melville Herskovits shows a Bushwoman a snapshot of her son. She is unable to recognise any image until the details of the photograph are pointed out. (...) For this woman, the photograph is unmarked as a message, is a 'non-message', until it is framed linguistically by the anthropologist. A metalinguistic proposition such as 'This is a message', or 'This stands for your son' is necessary if the snapshot is to be read<sup>31</sup>.

The situation - to be confronted with a pictorial representation we are unable to 'read' without a linguistic frame - is reminiscent of Derrida's statement that according to how one defines a graphic system we may all be illiterate. The message behind this (or at least my reading of it) encompasses both Bolden's and Ondaatje's art : the ungraspable, unrecordable of Bolden's ever-changing music and the multiple meanings of the postmodern novel are linked through the sonograph images that also link the uncertain, strange, 'bad' pictures of the author and his musician alter ego. Buddy Bolden there is a mythical figure intangible in a damaged photograph, blurred in the picture of his mythical resurrection Ondaatje, and ominous in the pictures of sounds of dolphins.

On the level of the literary text and particularly this text as historiographic metafiction, the combination of photographs in and 'on' CTS is used to shatter Oliver Wendell Holmes' "mirror with a memory"<sup>32</sup>, that is, the ideology of tangibility and objective representation. Presented as they are - blurred, blotchy, incomprehensible - they are used to "make strange"<sup>33</sup> and serve

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31. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning", in Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography*, Houndsmills, 1982, 84-109, p. 85f.

32. Quoted in Carol Shloss, *In Visible Light. Photography and the American Writer : 1840-1940*, New York/Oxford, 1987, p. 266.

33. Cf. Simon Whatney, "Making Strange : The Shattered Mirror", in Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, 154-176.

to illustrate how the clearly defined edges, the mind-frames of realism, have given way to an uncertainty with representations in postmodern narrative, to blurs and blotches which defy any single reading and meaning. What we are left with is the plurality of possible codes Umberto Eco has ascribed to iconic signs<sup>34</sup>, transformed here into "a radial system of narrative that fans around each photograph"<sup>35</sup> like "spokes on a rimless wheel ending in air" (CTS, p. 63). The photographs remain intangible in their own space and time, guarding their message and their code, and it is only on the level of personal legend and myth that a tentative union can be established. When the novel ends, the reader still doesn't know "how a dolphin makes both whistles and echolocation clicks simultaneously" but he may realize that he has been listening to "a dolphin reciting epic poetry to a sleepy audience"<sup>36</sup>.

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34. Umberto Eco, "Critique of the Image", in Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, 32-38.

35. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 6, s.a. FN 10.

36. Cf., FN 28.