

Essay 2

Read Allan Sekula's *The Body and the Archive* and respond to the following.

In *The Body and the Archive*, photographer Allan Sekula argues, "photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look-the-typology-and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology." Briefly define the concept of The Other, and how it developed from early uses of photography to diagnose illness and mental instability. Consider the influence of Positivism in early scientific uses of the photograph, and other records of human physiognomy. What traits of the photograph led Victorian scientists to trust in the accuracy and truthfulness of photographic images?

Compare and contrast Alphonse Bertillon's anthropometric photos with Francis Galton's composite portraits. Explain Sekula's point that, "The projects of Bertillon and Galton constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance"? Relate what you have learned in Sekula's essay to a contemporary photograph dealing with law, order, criminality, and/or surveillance. Describe how your photograph presents its subject as an Other. What problems are inherent in such subjective uses of the photograph?

- or -

Read *Games of the Doll* and answer the following questions.

What characterizes surrealist photographs? How do the psychoanalytic theories developed by Sigmund Freud at the turn of the century relate to surrealist art? Why are Bellmer's photographs often described as surrealist? In other words, what surrealist characteristics do the images utilize?

Compare and contrast a photograph from Hans Bellmer's *La Poupee* series (1936-1938) with Gertrude Kasebier's *Portrait of Miss N.*, c. 1900, and Hannah Höch's *Dada Dance*, 1922 using psychoanalysis and biography as methodologies for understanding meaning. Consider how life experiences and personal/creative/political/identity struggles may have influenced each artist's work.

When using an psychoanalytic approach, it's important to understand that Freud theorized that our behavior reflects a persistent battle between the id, the ego, and the superego. We are born with instinctual drives, but as our personalities develop, we fail to resolve conflicts at particular stages, which may cause us to develop fixations and inhibitions. While we may not have access to the personal details of these three artist's lives to directly analyze their work using psychoanalytic theory, we can generalize and propose ideas based on the elements of their photographs.