

Extracts from camera lucida - lab report example



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Extracts from Camera Lucida By Roland Barthes To Roland Barthes, photography is much more than an art and more like a religion: a religion that allows Barthes to transcend the mundane and grasp at the passion that fuels his soul. Barthes marvels at the idea of having two selves: one with a conscious and one without a conscious forever trapped in a time vortex. In questioning the very essence of a person Barthes strives to find a photo of his deceased mother that captures her true essence, but according to Barthes none of the photos seem to fit until he comes across one that was taken when his mother was a child. In this photograph, Barthes sees his mother's true essence speak through the photo paper.

Barthes has a passion for photography that is marked by an extreme idolization of the transcendence of photography. Barthes states, " Such a desire really meant that beyond the evidence provided by technology and usage, and despite its tremendous contemporary expansion, I wasn't sure that Photography existed, that it had a 'genius' of its own" (1). All of the technical and analytical books Barthes read on photography could not satisfy the feeling he had for the art/religion of photography. Barthes goes on to define the photograph as: " the object of three practices: [] to do, to undergo, to look" (3). The respect that Barthes shows to photography is so evident throughout Camera Lucida that he even states the photographer is not merely a photographer, but an operator: An operator who not only manipulates the camera, but an operator who manipulates the referent or subject, the environment and the spectator.

Barthes muses on the subject of being the referent. His hope that the

camera will make him look stunning is a hope that many people can relate to. His fear that the camera will not capture his true essence is also a fear that many people can relate to. Upon seeing the result of the photo Barthes states, " the Photomat always turns you into a criminal type, wanted by the police" (4). It was thought-provoking to read that Barthes mimics himself when he poses for a photo. In mimicking himself he is hoping that the reality of who he is will be captured on the photo.

Barthes writes quite extensively on his deceased mother. According to Barthes after his mother became deceased he was searching for a photograph of her that would capture her essence. He was searching for a photo that spoke through time to remind him of his mother's characteristics, not only her features. Barthes happened to come across a photo where he recognized his mother's soul, so to speak. The photo was taken when his mother was a child, but he saw the eyes he remembered of his mother's in the little girl.

Barthes has a passion for photography that could be likened to a religious experience. When Barthes looks at a photo he seems to be looking past the ordinary and into the extraordinary of the photo. He's constantly asking the question: What is the essence of what I'm seeing Perhaps Barthes felt frustration at the technical text-books about photography because they only went through the motions while Barthes himself was a committed lover. When Barthes tried to find a photo that captured his mother's spirit the one he chose was taken when she was just a girl. He felt that her essence really shone through on that one because she was in a moment of being herself and not posing in an attempt to mimic herself.