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**The Phenomenon of Emotion Within a Photograph**

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# Abstract

This thesis explores how emotion is expressed in photography through portraiture. The thesis examines the concept of types and tokens to define the function of the photograph, which leads to an investigation of semiotics. It then becomes possible to analyse how different semiotic systems impact on the connotation of the image, how each system influences the portrait. By comparing two differing methods, one that is didactic and another triadic, demonstrates how each system enhances and restricts the connotation. This is taken further by exploring the use of different types of logic, deductive and inductive reasoning, and the consequences of using systems of logic.

This is followed by an analysis of Barthes and the photograph of his mother in the Winter Gardens. This example demonstrates the process of achieving a sense of contact with the person depicted and can lead to an emotional / subjective feeling response. To explore this concept there is the proposition that the viewer constructs a mental paradigm of personhood for the person depicted. The image serves as a catalyst, eventually providing an emotional connection between the viewer and the image. Using this case study as a foundation, it is then possible to introduce the Component Theory of Emotions, exploring the phenomenon of a subjective feeling response in relation to achieving a sense of contact with the person depicted in the portrait.

Through this the thesis explores the influence of culture on our reactions. The sense of contact and the subjective feeling can seem to be independent of influences, but reactions are socially based and owe more to cultural dominance instead of the viewer's experience or knowledge. Consequently, this raises the question of photographic truth and how this can be trusted, which is possible by the viewer taking a leap of faith.

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## **Introduction**

One of the oldest genres in art is the portrait. From prehistoric times, human beings have been making images of themselves and others, to today where the genre has a multimedia dimension, ranging from painting to film and photography. It can be seen that there has always been something within ourselves that treasures the portrait, and as a genre continues to grow, develop and change with time.

Of all the genres, portraiture remains one of the most popular. A quick look at social media and the abundance of portraits proves this point, for instance Instagram registers over 69 million images using the #portrait identifier. These can be self portraits that people use as cover photos, photographs of friends, family, parties and countless other situations that have the portrait at the centre of the subject matter. It is also the staple diet of the high street photographer who often specialises in taking people's portraits, along with enthusiasts and hobbyists embracing the genre with eagerness and fervour. Even the untrained amateur will predominately use a camera to take a portrait, choosing this genre before landscape or still life, and the recent rise of the self-image in the form of the "selfie" is testament to this, adding to the popularity of the portrait on social media sites such as Facebook.

The portrait crosses cultural barriers. It appears in the cultures of western Europe and in Asia, the far east and the indigenous tribes in Australia and Africa<sup>1</sup>. This genre appears to be flexible, meeting different requirements with different cultures, some concentrating on the representation of the person, whilst others value an element of the sitter's personality. With this being the case, it can lead to the belief that there is something within ourselves, our humanity, that places such a high value on the portrait. But, what is this value and why is it given such importance?

The answer to this question is contact. Human beings are social animals and have evolved a need for contact and connections to friends and families. As Cynthia Freeland states "It speaks of one of the primary reasons why we value portraits and care about having them: they sustain our connections with people, offering up a kind of immortality and contact with loved ones when they are absent" (Freeland, 2010, p43) So, it seems that portraiture fulfils a need within us, to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> For Instance, the Wandjinas rock paintings by Aboriginals in Australia.

our contact with the people closest to our social and family groups, and the closer emotionally we are to those people then the stronger the desire is for the photographs of them.

However, to say that the portrait fulfils a need to feel close to a friend when they are absent is, at best, relatively simplistic. The issue is complicated by the emotional and subjective feelings directed towards the portrait on the part of the viewer. This is made more complex by the phenomenon of the person depicted in the portrait manifesting as an edited projection, idealised by the viewer that concentrates and enhances character traits they find most pleasing. Also, when we consider that the potential qualities of the photograph, such as enhanced beauty, are then also attributed to the person in the portrait, a further layer of complexity is added.

All of these elements culminate in an exciting mixture of definitions, interpretations, emotional entanglements and contrasting subjective feelings that give substantial meaning to the portrait. But, it is also necessary to consider when this process happens to images of people we have never met, such as celebrities and other people of high social status. How is it possible to feel a sense of closeness, a connection, to such people?

The last issue, and probably the most important, is how the truth of the definition generated by the interpretation is defined, or in other words, how can someone believe that the photograph represents an honest and true depiction? The process of generating a paradigm of beliefs directed towards the person depicted that can contain values of emotional and subjective feeling, which lead to a conviction of believability and truth, is a culmination of all the previous processes and interpretations. It becomes a case of producing a belief system about the person depicted that has an element of authenticity, which supports a belief and give rise to the conviction of truth. This means that processes such as grand narratives are used, and sometimes invented, to reach the conclusion necessary for the viewer to be emotionally satisfied with.

This thesis explores these differing aspects of the portrait and to a certain extent, explains why the portrait and the sense of contact is so valued amongst differing societies and differing cultures. Overall, there will be an investigation of the phenomenon of a sense of contact with the person in the portrait and the differing elements that enable this phenomenon to manifest into either a continuing or fantasy relationship. Because of these differing aspects there is an explanation as to the difference between an emotion and a subjective feeling, the use of semiotics to support an

interpretation of photographic truth and also how the person depicted appropriates the quality of the photograph.

But before moving on a few guideposts need to be set, as a series of assumptions that have had to of been made. For example, there is an exploration of semiotics, which makes the assumption that the reader is already familiar with semiotics and definitions, such as denotation and connotation. Even though these topics are covered, they are explored in relation to the portrait specifically and how, within their limitations they relate to the viewer's ability to construct a paradigm of meanings and definitions.

Another assumption that has been made is the notion of personhood. This is because to fully understand and explore this subject is an entirely different thesis in itself, so this concept is only used in relation to the portrait and how the sense of the person is embodied within the representation of their body. When personhood is explored here it is in the terms of the person's characteristics and personality and how the photograph can capture an essence of this.

The term of a *priori* is briefly used and it is assumed that the reader understands this term. This is used with the understanding of being the use of knowledge that is part of human nature and the actions that are motivated from that knowledge. This knowledge is something that we are born with and is part of every human being, hence it being universal and consequently becomes part of our human nature.

In addition, the focus of this thesis is mainly on the viewer and how a portrait is consumed, with the photographer as a person wanting to express ideas and emotions with a creative process has been overlooked. To focus on both aspects would make the thesis too broad or too long, as the creative process is as in depth and as complicated as being the viewer.

Finally, the reason for using aspects of existentialism in this thesis is because it supports the Component Theory proposed by Klaus Scherer in 2005. With Scherer asserting that our emotions are a survival tool and are triggered by our environment, Existentialism can also support this view because of the reliance on human agency rather than a priori. From this position it is possible to assert that "In the field of visual arts *existentialism* exercised an enormous influence, most obviously on the movement of *Expressionism*" (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019*) because of having *the freedom of not relying on the concept of a priori*. This has been connected to the theory of



expression in art and how this developed in relation to photography. Furthermore, by building connections with existentialism, it accesses the thoughts and theories of that particular philosophical tradition and adds depth and meaning to the eventual conclusions.

Over the following pages these issues will be unpicked, examined and explained into a cohesive whole and a theory that enables flexibility and understanding will emerge. Undoubtedly, this will not be the only interpretation of the phenomenon of contact, but will offer some explanation to a phenomenon that is rich in meaning and depth to interpretation. There will always be contrasting theories and ideas, but this thesis will go some way to exploring and explaining why the portrait matters so much and why a portrait can be so highly prized, not only to ourselves, but also to our cultural heritage.

## Functionality and Two Systems of Semiotics

When presented with the portrait, the viewer is automatically challenged to make a decision. The viewer needs to choose how the portrait is going to be viewed, how they will “read” the photograph and in what context it needs to be placed. This is because the portrait needs a function, a way of operating that will give it a value and a meaning and place it within a context, which can serve as the purpose of the portrait. As Graham Clarke observed “The portrait photograph is, then, the site of a complex series of interactions – aesthetic, cultural, ideological, sociological and psychological. In many ways it simultaneously represents the photographic image at its most obvious and yet at its most complex and problematic” (Clarke, 1997, p102)

The most obvious context for the photographic portrait is that of identity. Official government issued documents use the portrait in a standard way that has a clear set of rules and guidelines which need to be followed to ensure the likeness represented within the image is accurate. The reason for this is functional, the function of the photograph is to confirm a person’s physical identity. As can be seen in *fig1*, the structure of the portrait is very restricting; the person has to look forward, be devoid of any expression, not wear glasses and to have a plain background. These rules have defined the image as one that primarily is used for identification, that any hint of any other

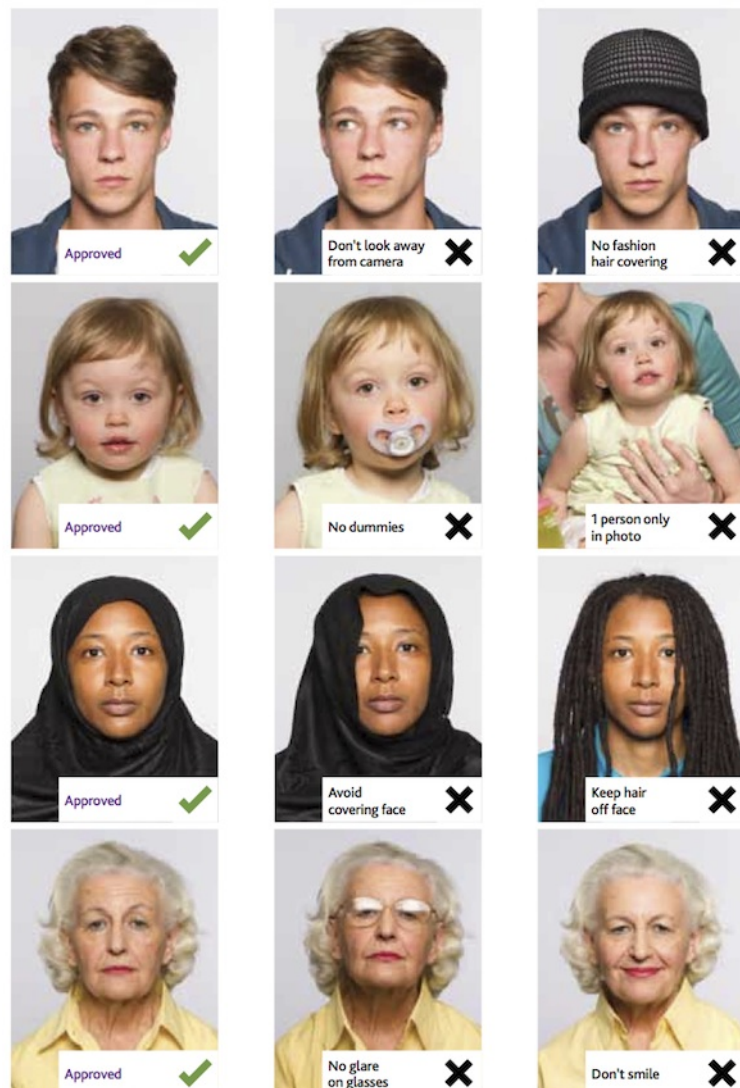


Fig 1: The rules for a passport photograph, photographer unknown

interpretation is weakened because of such a strict and rigid set of regulations.

Consequently, the passport photograph is fulfilling the function of representation. The image is a realistic representation of the physical characteristics of the person depicted. Any other interpretation is kept to a minimum because that would detract from the primary function of the photograph, that of identity. This also highlights the importance of function. Without this context the passport photograph does not have a reason to exist, and so it would be a strange and strict composition of the image, that any meaning would be lost and indecipherable. So, as an example, the passport portrait shows the obvious, but Clarke also importantly draws our attention to the portrait's complexity: "In many ways it simultaneously represents the photographic image at its most obvious and yet at its most complex and problematic". (Clarke, 1997, p102)

Initially, there is a need to define a function. A function defines what the object does, and this can be defined by the situation or the context the item is used in. If this is all there is to it, then the function could be fluid, that there has been nothing to qualify the function belonging to the object, but instead being defined by a quality of the item and its context or environment. For instance, a book has been designed to be read, but it can also balance a wobbly table by being placed under the table leg and so its function, its *current* function is different to what it was designed for.

Consequently, a function can be fluid, not fixed, even though the object could have been designed for a specific task and because of fluidity, the function needs to be defined.

To begin to define the function of the photograph it is necessary to start with the notion of types and tokens as this can take into account the context and environment of the portrait. By using this system, it is possible to define the function of the photograph using a logical and understandable system. It helps to clarify what the image is being used for and how the viewer can interact with it. Richard Wollheim touches on the same issue when he asserts that "once it is conceded that certain works of art are not physical objects, the subsequent problems arise, which can be put by asking, What sort of thing are they?, is essentially a logical problem. It is that of determining the criteria of identity and individuation" (Wollheim, 1968, p74) By using types and tokens, it gives the definition of the function a logical structure, and by using inductive knowledge a function can be established that is based on reasoning and not arbitrariness, thus avoiding the fluidity of function.

The first step is to clarify what a type and a token is and what separates them. A type can be defined as being a collection of things that share similar characteristics. For example, a landscape, a portrait

and a still life can be seen as being all types of image. Of what defines them as being a type of image is that they all share the definition of being a genre of the visual arts. This means that the classification of a type can be defined as part of a concept or an ideal and is not a physical object but instead resides in the realms of the metaphysical. This in itself does open up the ontological questions about art and how it is defined, but for the sake of the current discussion, the assumption that photography is art will be used.

Moving onto the definition of the token is simpler because a token can be defined as the physical manifestation of the type. So, for example, *fig1* is a token of the passport photograph because it is a manifestation of the ideal or concept of the passport photograph. This is because it shares the qualities of the definition of the passport photograph, that the requirements which are made by the government are fulfilled within the image, it is a clear, unambiguous image of a person to confirm their identity.

So far, everything seems fairly neat and straightforward, a type is the concept and the token is the example of that concept. However, there are two points that need clarifying: digital manifestations and probability. This is because the digital photograph is not a physical artefact but only exists virtually and so would this alter the definition of the photograph being a token. Also, with probability, the issue of inference is raised, that the connections between the type and the tokens are inferred and implicit instead of being deducted and explicit.

With the digital manifestation there is no physical object, an image is viewed on the screen rather than printed onto paper in a book or magazine. With this being the case, can the digital image still be seen as a token and a further question is raised about the reproduction of the image, are they both tokens?

To say that a photograph has to be a physical manifestation to become a token just doesn't work in the modern world. When Wollheim was writing his theory about tokens and types the digital revolution had not happened and so could not account for the seismic shift created and needs modification. A digital manifestation can still be a token because it is still a manifestation of the concept that defines the type, regardless of how the image is viewed. Just because the image is on a screen rather than paper doesn't change the characteristics that make it a token of the concept that defines the type.

Another point worth considering is that because in the digital world images can be recreated an infinite amount of times they do not all become tokens, and as Wetzell mentions “there is a related distinction that needs to be mentioned in connection with the type-token distinction. It is that between a thing, or type of thing, and (what is best called) an *occurrence* of it—where an occurrence is not necessarily a token.” (Wetzell, 2006). This is because it is a repetition of the image and is *recreating* the token, there is nothing different and so all that is happening is that the same image is being used to define the same type. In these situations, the repetitions can be thought of as occurrences because the same image is being used - it is reoccurring. For example, if *fig1* was used 1,000 times within this essay to show an example of the passport photograph, then the first is the token and rest are occurrences. This is because each image is viewed within the same context and is duplicated from the original, but if the context or image was to change in any way, then it would become a token instead of an occurrence.

Another problem that arises with types and tokens is one of probability. This is a problem that is inherent within logic, which is in this case using induction and not deduction, that is used within the types and tokens arguments, because the qualities of the type are inferred in the token. This means that an interpretation between the ideal or the principles of the type is transmitted to the token, no matter how basic. Again, *fig1* is a good example. The rules and regulations laid down in producing a passport photograph are very exacting and precise and this is all to eliminate the possibility that someone’s identity could be mistaken and is needed because of the probability inherent in inductive knowledge. The clearer and stricter the rules on identity photographs are, the less the probability is that someone’s identity could be mistaken. It’s a form of risk management and as Ian Hacking points out “Inductive knowledge studies risky arguments. A risky argument can be a very good one, and yet its conclusion can be false, even when its premises are true.” (Hacking, 2001, p11) Thus, the passport identity photograph needs a strict set of rules to ensure a faithful likeness is achieved.

It is this element of probability that Clarke is also alluding to when he suggests that the portrait is at its “most complex and problematic” (Clarke, 1997, p102). The issue is that the portrait has inherited the merits of oil painting and then complicated these qualities with an agenda that can be arbitrary. One area that has been embellished upon is the notion of manifestation, that instead of just being a representation of the person, the portrait actually allows a manifestation of the person in the mind of the viewer. This manifestation prompts the viewer to recall and remember the person in the portrait, special moments that are shared and have enriched their lives, or bitter recollections of lost opportunities and hurt feelings.

For instance, if we look at *fig2*, a photograph of Nigel Farage can stir up a series of emotional and subjective feelings. He is a divisive character that has had an influence on Britain with his campaign against the EU, subsequently almost everyone has an opinion about him.

This highlights the difference between the function of the two images. The passport portrait deals centrally with the issue of identity and yet Nigel Farage's image deals primarily with a cultural and political issue. He became one of the main figureheads for the Leave Campaign during the EU referendum in 2016 and so his views have become central to how his image is interpreted. This is why the function of the image, especially the portrait is so important and vital that it probably needs to be the first consideration when a portrait is viewed. This is in stark contrast to the passport photograph which the primary function is to confirm a person's physical identity. In this case there is a huge chasm between the two images and so illustrates the importance of function and highlights that the function is one of the initial understandings and influences of the interpretation of the portrait.



Fig 2: Nigel Farage smoking a cigar, Charlie Clift 2016

To help the viewer decide how to establish the function of the image, the mind uses the tool of



Fig 3: Porträt P Stadtbäumer - Thomas Ruff 1988

perception. In both of these cases the function has been relatively straightforward to establish and so the mind of the viewer can move swiftly through this initial step, but what happens when this function is disrupted and undermined?

The work of Thomas Ruff proves an excellent example of this phenomenon. Ruff took portraits in the style of the identity photograph, *fig3*, and then displayed them as large (6') gallery images. By doing so he recontextualised the image, but instead of producing a new definition it created an ambiguity of how the viewer should interact with the photograph. The definition of the identity photograph was still in the image, but

the size of the representation fundamentally changed how the viewer reacted to the image. Elements of manifestation were added to the interpretation, moving the image away from being purely representational and so consequently, ambiguity through this conflict was formed. In other words, the mind was aware of the original function of such images, but the perception of the mind could not support that interpretation and thus ambiguity was created. However, without this action of perception it is impossible to proceed because the portrait, or any image, needs to have a function, even if that function is to create ambiguity. A context is needed for the image and so reference points are created to allow the image to function, without these points providing anchorage the image will be just too ambiguous to have any meaning or relevance. Indeed, even if an image is designed to have no reference points, this in itself becomes the reference point that the interpretation of the image relies upon, which in itself demonstrates the importance of the role of the function.

So, the function of the image is crucial to the interpretation, a choice between representation or manifestation is one of the fundamental devices of the portrait and could arguably be described as a pre-requisite. It is because the image has a function that it can generate a meaning, a definition that is understandable by the viewer. It provides a context and a dynamic within the image that can help the viewer's perception to decipher how the portrait needs to be approached to be understood.

Even though the function of the image can be thought of as a pre-requisite, it does have a close relationship to what is depicted or represented. For instance, if *fig2* was exhibited in the same way as *fig3* there would be much less ambiguity and an increase in the sense of power because Nigel Farage is a white middle class male and this connotation would become dominant because of the size of the image. If the function of the image was to support this definition then the function and the representation are working harmoniously together, but if the function was to support the European Union, then the depiction and function are challenging each other. So, the next question is, how important is representation?

At this juncture, it's tempting to brush over representation just by stating that the realistic depiction of the subject matter represents the person depicted. This in essence is true, but doing so a whole underpinning dynamic system has been overlooked. In the portrait, we have a representation of the person, but to state it more accurately, we have a realistic depiction of the physical attributes of the body of the person. As John Willats asserts "When a symbol is used to give an account of the object domain it is *known* as an object language. Just as the sentence "The grass is green" tells us

something about the colour of grass, so a portrait or a landscape can tell us something about the shapes and colours of objects in the scene” (Willats, 1997, p269)

The use of an object language is something that is not new and has appeared in various guises over the centuries. For instance, Panofsky (1955) used Iconography as a way of organising objects depicted into an understandable order and hierarchy. In doing so he was creating a language using the depiction of objects. In the *Meaning of the Visual Arts*, he acknowledges that that representation and connotation are inherently linked as “we connect artistic motifs and combinations of artistic motifs (compositions) with themes or concepts. Motifs thus recognised as carriers of a secondary or conventional meaning may be called images, and combinations of images are what the ancient theorists of art called *invenzioni*; we are wont to call them stories and allegories.” (Panofsky, 1955, P54) Indeed, the use of a visual language recedes in time, through the Baroque, Renaissance and Byzantine periods and can be interpreted from the beginning of human society and culture, from ancient Egypt, to Athens, Rome and even prehistoric times in the caves before the documentation of history.

Photography and representation have always combined and because of the close links between the visual representational arts, such as oil painting and photography, it is understandable that the same ideas, theories and concepts become interdisciplinary. However, because of the veracity of the photographic image, the amount of realism that can be depicted suggests that a photograph can even be described as a facsimile of reality. Subsequently, it could be argued that representation has more significance than ever before. Being able to connect the imagery within the photograph to reality opens the possibility to “the links between the photography, science and nature meant that the medium was regarded as a way of providing evidence of what had been in front of the lens.” (Bull, 2010, p13)

At the centre of representation is the process of denotation. Denotation links the representation with the object, being able to see that a photograph of a family member looks like that family member and so it then represents that family member. Again, as above, this is a rather simplified version of denotation, but it is the action of relating the representation of the object back to the original object and explicitly linking the two. By viewing the image with this dynamic implies that “it is an attitude that suggests that a photograph is an unmediated medium with a direct, uncomplicated authenticity and which provides straightforward evidence of the thing photographed. As it is a mechanical recording device, it can only record the truth.” (Howells & Negreiros, 2012,



p190) Consequently, this can be seen as the mechanics of building a visual language, or as Willats stresses, an object language.

By performing this action, emphasis is not placed on the representation in the image, but more onto our interpretation of the real world. The viewer relies on the veracity of the representation to project the definition of the object created in the empirical world onto the representation. So, for example, Queen Elizabeth



Fig 4: Queen Elizabeth II, Annie Leibovitz 2016

in *fig4* is clearly represented because the denotation of the objects are clearly defined without any ambiguity and so adds to the sense of realism and veracity of the image. This means that the denotation needs an element of realism to help the viewer make the connections and to construct the object language.

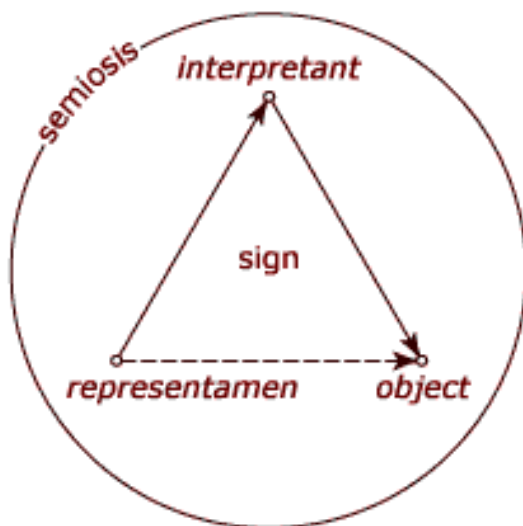


Fig 5: Charles Peirce system of semiotics

This process is better explained by the system of semiotics and in particular the theory created by Charles Sanders Peirce. As described by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy “Peirce's Sign Theory, or Semiotic, is an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning” (Atkin, S.E.P. 2010) Peirce asserts that the sign has three elements, which are the object or the signification, the representation of the object and the reference and meaning, also known as the interpretant, of the object as shown in *fig5*. The sign relies on all three of these elements to produce a cohesive and understandable definition, with each element interacting with the other, and without one of them, the sign wouldn't exist. The sign's

denotation is the element between the representation and the object that produces the interpretation of the sign, it is the mechanic or the process of interaction between those two elements that can then produce a reference and a meaning. However, where Peirce has been innovative is in making the three elements a triadic symbol instead of a system of just denotation and connotation. Consequently, the interpretation is firmly anchored on the knowledge of the empirical world and so imbues that interpretation with a high level of realism.

With a high degree of realism placed onto the photograph enables the viewer to engage with the world, the empirical world of matter and solid objects, in a different way. It becomes possible to see and react to events and situations that would otherwise be impossible, such as events from the past before the viewer was born, or to connect with current events in a distant place. A photograph can transport the viewer to any *where* at any *time* because of the emphatic link between the image and the empirical world. This is because of the dynamic of representation, when an object is viewed, the empirical meaning of that object is placed upon that representation, and “the plain fact is that a picture, to represent an object, must be a symbol for it, stand for it, refer to it; and that no degree of resemblance is sufficient to establish the requisite relationship of reference.” (Goodman, 1969, p757)

This is the system of the representational function of the image, that the denotation produces an interpretation that is strongly linked to the object in the empirical world. Thus, a passport photograph confirms the physical identity of the person, or a photograph can be used within a court of law because the high level of veracity contained within that interpretation. It also becomes possible to rely on the photograph as evidence, especially of the person’s physical identity because again, of the high value of veracity embedded within the image. When viewed from a purely representational viewpoint the object language of the photograph is supported by a realism that relates to the triadic theory, which was created by Peirce.

Consequently, this method of analysing a photograph means that it becomes associated with the *Imitation Theory*. According to this theory the object depicted has the same attributes and definitions as the object in the empirical world. So, in *fig4*, we have a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II, the person, but also all of the pageantry, status and opulence that belongs to royalty. There is a connection to the history of England, which also encompasses a world status, the family history of the lineage of royalty and the power of a former colonial empire that encompassed a third of the world.

This can happen because everything in the photograph is a symbol, as suggested by Goodman in the quote above. Because the objects, the subject matter, are symbols, they can be interpreted by using the Pearce method of semiotics, a triadic system linking the subject matter to the objects in reality. But also, because of the veracity of the photograph, this can seem to be the most logical of systems to use because “the idea that art should be imitative of the world remains widespread, and is not an untypical response by some to aspects of contemporary practice.” (Pooke & Newall, 2008, p11)



Fig 6: From the series Immediate family - Sally Mann 1984-91

However, a note of caution is needed. Because the object being depicted is so closely linked to the object in reality, it can serve as a limitation. A good example is *fig6*, where if the imitation theory is strictly adhered to, then it would be possible to define this image as a black and white photograph of a man with two children. This is because the connotation is being restricted by using just the definitions of the objects within

the scene, that the subject matter on its own is not enough to provide a meaningful interpretation of the image. In short, something is missing because “the question of meaning therefore is constantly to be referred to the social and psychic formations of the author/reader.” (Burgin, 1977, p67)

Burgin is suggesting that what is missing is the element of humanity. To rely just on the imitation theory leads to a connotation that is limited by logic and reason. This can be suitable for the scientific image, reportage and social documentary because the level of realism and an implied truthfulness in the image, has a high value, but the images can ultimately be interpreted as being bereft of emotion. If the types and tokens used produce a function that the image has a high value of veracity and truth, such as an identity photograph, then the imitation theory perfectly suits the function of the photograph, but it is limited and impossible for it to cover every single photograph and produce a definition that is correct every time.

What is needed is a different way of seeing, a different way of approaching the photograph so as not to fall into the trap of empirical realism. This is not to suggest that the imitation theory has no place outside of certain genres in photography, but to recognise that “it is a different nature which speaks to the camera than speaks to the eye” (Benjamin, 1977, p202) Being able to approach the image with a broader scope of reactions relies on being able to use knowledge that is outside of the triadic dynamic of Pearce’s theory of semiotics. This doesn’t mean that the function of the photograph has to change, but instead the image needs to be freed from the empirical connection.

As soon as the photograph no longer relies on the definition that is manufactured in the empirical world it can reference influences and interpretations that come from the viewer or the photographer. This in turn can allow the subjectivity to influence the interpretation instead of the objectivity, and by having a new sense of freedom, the cultural and personal influences of the photographer and the viewer are used to interpret the image. But here lies the paradox of photography, the subject matter is essential to the photograph, but the definition doesn’t have to rely on the subject matter, that “the picture suggests, in diagrammatic form, that whatever photography’s capacity for psychological penetration, it will always necessarily come back to depicting the external world.” (Dyer, 2005, p280)

To help deal with the issues raised, there is a different interpretation of the photographic portrait, which is one of manifestation. With the photograph not explicitly relying on the subject matter for its interpretation, it then becomes a case of the definition being implied through suggestions and prompts. Sometimes these suggestions and prompts can be very strong and obvious but also there are times when they are subtle and obscure. With the subject matter becoming a series of signs “the magical power of images lies in their superficial nature, and the dialectic inherent in them – the contradiction peculiar to them – must be seen in the light of this magic.” (Flusser, 1983, p9). There are times when this “magic”, this freedom for connotation, can be so strong, that the definition acquired by the image bears no relation to the subject matter, but still holds a valid conclusion.

Fig7 is a good example of this freedom. The subject matter shows a loyalist militiaman in the Spanish Civil War, who is apparently falling. There is nothing explicit to suggest that he has just been shot and dies, there is no blood or wound to be seen, this is suggested by the caption. However, the image has a quality that is hard to define, one that is of sadness, drama and shock. There is an element of



Fig 7: Death of a loyalist militiaman - Robert Capa 1936

ambiguity within the image that gives space for further interpretation, because the definition of the image is not secured by the subject matter there is the opportunity for further interpretation beyond what is captured in the image. In essence, it is the opportunity that is offered by the ambiguity which allows for the freedom of the connotation to form an essential part of the photograph, but “it is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence.” (Berger, 1972, p28)

Indeed, with this famous image doubts have been raised recently by various critics about the validity of the claim of the militiaman’s moment of death and “It is also one of the most debated, with a long string of critics claiming that the photo, of a soldier seemingly at the moment of death, was faked”. (Rohter, nytimes, 2009) Philip Knightley in the 1970s questioned the authenticity and then more recently Professor José Manuel Sussperregui raised doubts about the location in his book *Sombras de la Fotografía* (“Shadows of Photography”). Also, it is worth considering the angle of view, to have taken the photograph Robert Capa needed to be at least level with the soldier, which consequently means that he was also in the field of fire and presumably also being shot at. Even though Capa’s bravery is evidenced in his D-Day landings photographs, it still raises the point that taking the photograph was a life and death situation and can increase the motivation for staging the image.

The image does demonstrate the ambiguity of the photograph and how that allows for space between the denotation and the connotation. By having this space, this area for the freedom for the connotation to happen, allows for the subjectivity to influence the connotation. As stated above, there is a sense of drama, sadness and shock in Capa’s image, all of which are not only subjective qualities, but are also mental objects, something that exists within the viewer’s mind. For the image

to be able to access the viewer's subjectivity "may be described as the forging of master keys for opening the mysterious locks of our senses to which only nature herself originally held the key" (Gombrich, 2002, p304)

By being able to have a connotation that does not rely on a strict factual interpretation does allow



Fig 8: Generic Memorial card

for the portrait to be more open to interpretation. When the portrait is of a person known to the viewer, such as a family member, there is a sense of feeling a connection with the person, not in a physical way but in an emotional or as a subjective feeling phenomenon, such as fondness, regret or happiness. For instance, it is not unusual to have a funeral or a memorial with a picture of the deceased person printed on a card or an order of service, as in *fig8*.

This acts as a way of representing the deceased relative or friend, a catalyst for the mourners to remember and recall the personality, idiosyncrasies and special moments spent in their company. In some way, having a photograph of a loved one, relative or friend can evoke memories of the person, of good times spent in each other's company and

why that person is emotionally close to the viewer. This is made possible because of the space between the subject matter and the connotation, the space where the defining influence of the memories interacting with the photograph can happen and can lead to an emotional response or subjective feeling phenomenon. Consequently, when this sense of manifestation is achieved, this is accompanied with a sense of the person's presence, that we feel a sense of closeness to the person that was known to us. As Mikel Dufrenne so eloquently asserts "this link must be realized in behaviour by acquiring a certain urgency or authority. Meaning is not primarily something that I think with detachment but something that concerns and determines me, resonating in me and moving me." (Dufrenne, 1953, p335-6)

It is this sense of urgency that can help to generate and motivate the sense of manifestation. By being able to emotionally feel the person's presence gives the portrait an added dimension that is personal and unique to the viewer, which is then reinforced by the energy inherent in this connection, the energy that makes the photograph a catalyst for the manifestation. This also adds a sense of intimacy that can further energize the manifestation, making it resonate on a deeper and

more personal level. The more the viewer recalls the unique characteristics, idiosyncrasies and behaviors about the character of the person in the portrait, the more the sense of manifestation is energised. As this dynamic becomes more energised it “excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs “behind” the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one” (Sontag, 1964, p462) Indeed, it can seem to have a similar dynamic to that of the internal combustion engine, that the emotions which are surfacing due to the memories further energise the action and so even more memories surface, and only ceases once the fuel of memories subside. This then becomes a case that the more memories the viewer recalls, the deeper and more personal the sense of the presence of the person in the portrait and so creates an intimacy which personalises the experience between the viewer and the photograph.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the strength of this phenomenon of manifestation can also enable and allow the viewer to continue, or even create, an emotional relationship with the person depicted in the portrait. This is because the portrait is no longer just a representation of the physical likeness of the person, but is also connected to their personality. Consequently, it is possible to have a portrait that shows an image reflecting an inner quality that they possess, such as humility or charisma. By manifesting the personality of the depicted person, it then becomes possible for the viewer to either remain connected, or to create a connection, between themselves and the depiction of the other person. If the person is deceased it becomes possible to give the person a quasi-immortality, it allows for the person to live on after they are deceased. In the eyes of the viewer, this can help to console some of the grief of a person’s dying, that the pain of separation is lessened because they still feel that they are in the relationship, that they still have that vital connection to the person who passed away. Essentially, this can only be achieved by viewing the portrait in a different way, to allow enough space for the connotation to expand, because “we now conceive portraiture primarily as a representation of personality, rather than virtue”. (Woodall, 1997, p10)

By maintaining an emotional connection between themselves and the portrait with the use of memories and emotional reactions, the photograph itself can become a prized possession, not only because of the person depicted, but also because of the reactions of the viewer. The portrait becomes more than just a representation, but as a symbol of that person’s life, a reflection of the person’s professional, private and emotional life, and how this is interpreted by the viewer. It needs to be the embodiment of personhood and there are times when this can take precedent over the need for a realistic depiction of the person. Here, again is another paradox of the image, that “the



momentary nature of portraiture – its ‘occasionality’ – as well as the portrait’s paradoxical impression of a timeless or iconic image, is at odds with the more sprawling and developed aspects of character”. (West, 2004, p50)

Consequently, only certain photographs will act as a catalyst for the phenomenon of manifestation. With the portrait becoming a symbol for the person depicted through their personhood, the image needs to conform to the interpretation of their personhood as seen by the viewer. For instance, it would be unlikely that someone keeps a photograph of a spouse they lived with and deeply loved for a number of years committing domestic violence, or acts of cruelty and sadomasochism. Because the image is a symbol and “a symbol is something that is widely recognised as representing an idea or entity” (D’Alleva, 2012, p21) the viewer can choose which symbols to keep.

It is a case that the photographs which are kept and treasured remind and help the viewer to remember the person in a certain way. These can be images that are from family celebrations, such as birthdays, and to remember the person in the portrait the way the viewer wants to see them. Consequently, the manifestation of the person for the viewer is always with a sense of perspective from the viewer, that the manifestation is not a true likeness, but one that fits into the preconceived ideas of the viewer. It is with this sense of editing that the viewer uses the space created between the denotation and the connotation, the space to construct a reflection of the personhood of the person in the portrait. There is no need for the portrait to be an accurate depiction of the person because the definition of the portrait has become totally arbitrary, it becomes unnecessary to fix the connotation to an accurate portrayal of the person because what is being portrayed for the viewer are not physical qualities.

This process also reflects the importance of the function of the portrait, and which tokens and types are used. To decide if the image is suitable for the uses the viewer intends, a level of judgement is used and “we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (Kant, 1790, p269-70) The process is conducted on a subconscious level and is guided more by our intuition rather than relying on conscious cognitive activity, the types become emotional precursors with the tokens embodying these emotions then produce the function for the portrait to reflect the preconceived ideas of the viewer.



By having the ability to view the portrait with a different mechanic than suggested by Peirce does open an entire new range of possibilities. Removing the need for the image to relate explicitly with the object in the empirical world introduces the possibility for a different connotation, a definition that is more personal and subjective for the viewer. This, in itself, gives the viewer a new freedom as the value of being arbitrary can be fully exploited, leading to definitions and connotations that are intimate and deeply personal and not limited by the restrictions of the empirical world.

## **Barthes: The Winter Garden Photograph**

A portrait can become a treasured possession mainly because of the ability to achieve a sense of recognition of the personhood of the person depicted. A powerful example of this phenomenon of the sense of manifestation is the Winter Gardens Photograph that Barthes discusses in *Camera Lucida* and it is this phenomenon that dominates the second section of the book. With the death of Barthes's Mother, he decided to document the grieving that he went through and how he related this to photographs of her, of how his search would lead to the sensation of manifestation. His motivation was one that was born out of grief, but "one is characterising not an intention but a causal process, and while there is, as a rule, an intentional act involved, this is not an essential part". (Scruton, 1983, p121) Through the course of *Camera Lucida* it emerges that this is a process, which eventually leads Barthes to a moment of epiphany, comprehension and the manifestation of personhood.

Barthes begins by stating that he was looking through photographs of his mother but realised he had no hope of finding an image that would truly resemble her. Barthes recognises there is a gap between his intention, which is unreachable, and his desire, because "things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into an experience. There is distraction and dispersion; what we observe and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other." (Dewey, 1934, p36) At this point it is important to bear in mind who Roland Barthes was; a semiotician and philosopher who had written ground-breaking articles on photography, such as *Myth Today* and *The Photographic Message*, so it is with a sense of inevitability that the expectations of the image would be set very high. Barthes would be searching not only for a physical likeness, but also something else in the photograph, an element of her personhood that would identify his mother, making just a simple physical resemblance inadequate. The sense he was searching for that extra element is confirmed when he concludes chapter twenty five with "I was not engulfing myself in them. I was sorting them, but none seemed to me really "right": neither as a photographic performance nor as a living resurrection of the beloved face. If I were ever to show them to friends I doubt that these photographs would *speak*." (Barthes, 1980, p63-4)

It can seem that this was a type of process for him, a way of expressing and understanding the sense of grief that he was feeling. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that Barthes was searching the photographs to understand what he had lost, and how to reconcile that loss. "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world

that feels like knowledge-and therefore, like power” (Sontag, 1977, p4) Consequently, the photograph became central to his sense of loss and helped him document this turbulent emotional journey, analysing the images with a mind weighed down with grief. He used photographs of his mother and then wrote of his reaction and insight to them. The photograph was the initial catalyst of an emotional reaction, and in chapter twenty six he discusses photographs of objects that are his mother’s possessions and his reactions to them.

At the beginning of chapter twenty seven Barthes supports this notion by stating “According to these photographs, sometimes I recognised a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands. I never recognized her except in fragments, which is to say that I missed her *being*, and therefore I missed her altogether” (Barthes, 1980, p65-6) Systematically he is building up an image of his mother that is personal to him, and in some ways this could be seen as a composite mental image, which then leads to constructing a paradigm of her personality. He is drawing different elements from different photographs that trigger a string of different thoughts, which give rise to different emotional mind states and then lead to a subjective feeling.

This action continued till he reached a certain point when he could see all of these elements together. Whilst assembling the knowledge of his mother in picture form, Barthes was also building a paradigm that fitted the identity of his mother from his perspective. By creating a new paradigm that the composite mental image of his deceased mother can fit into, an image that is personal to Barthes of his mother is created and the way he wants to remember her is preserved. In other words, it supports a subjective view from his personal reality. “Yet worlds of make believe are much more malleable than reality is. We can arrange their contents as we like by manipulating props or even, if necessary, altering the principles of generation.” (Walton, 1990, p67)

It is inevitable when assembling a new structure of knowledge, a moment of epiphany was reached and that was manifested in one image, the winter gardens photograph. This can be seen to be something similar to the concept of *punctum*, which is covered in the first part of *Camera Lucida* and has been described by Fried as engaging “a particular viewer’s subjectivity in a way that makes the photograph in question singularly arresting to him or her.” (Fried, 2008, p95) It is not until chapter twenty eight that Barthes actually describes the Winter Garden Photograph and, as mentioned above, he didn’t expect to “find her” in these images, but because of his grief he was drawn towards them, probably as a result of wanting to establish contact with her personhood. Then suddenly he finds *her*. This moment of epiphany for Barthes proves to be truly inspirational because it then motivates him to construct a theory about how a photograph can capture a person’s *Air*. This was

the moment of when the paradigm fitted the image and that “At last, he discovers her true likeness, the "air" that he remembers, in a picture of Henriette aged five” (Dillon, 2011)

But the photograph that created this moment of epiphany seems to be a strange choice. Barthes claims that the image, which he never published, was of his mother as a child, which would be an image that he would not be able to personally relate to. He would never have seen his mother as a child. This immediately raises the question; how can this image remind him of her?

The answer comes further on in the chapter, where he asserts that “In this little girl’s image I saw the kindness which had formed her being immediately and forever, without her having inherited it from anyone.” (Barthes, 1980, p69) It is not a case that Barthes was looking for an image that was a mimetic representation of her, but an image that conformed to the paradigm of the mental composite that he had created. Undoubtedly, he could find other images that would have resembled her kindness in a natural and unforced way at other times in her life, but the image of a child he never knew resonated most deeply with him. It could be that because Barthes was his mother’s caregiver in her last days, that he came to see her as being childlike in her vulnerability and frailty, combined with an innocence that is only capable in childhood became central to the new paradigm of the mental composite. Again, in chapter twenty nine, he confirms this when he wrote “During her illness, I nursed her, held the bowl of tea she liked because it was easier to drink from than a cup; she had become my little girl, uniting for me with that essential child she was in her first photograph” (Barthes, 1980, p72)

He purposefully decided not to identify the person’s Air in a photograph by saying that it was undefinable, ultimately being beyond description and that “a phenomenological description is not, in the relevant sense, a description.” (Scruton, 1974, p132) This again points to the personal nature and interpretation of a person’s *Air* within the photograph, that one person’s interpretation cannot be directly accessed by another. Again, this references the personal paradigm that has been constructed and connects the viewer with the person in the portrait, that each interpretation can lead to a personal manifestation that is unique.



Fig 9: Grandparents on Bench, Photographer and year unknown, probably 1975-80

This phenomenon, and its uniqueness to each viewer can be applied my own family. We have a photograph of my grandparents, *fig9*, where people agree that it captures a true likeness of my grandmother, an element of her *self*, something that is beyond the physical depiction. But the people who agree are the ones that knew her well. It is amongst my immediate family where we all concur that this photograph contains “the possibility of a complete

presentation, more precisely, the possibility of a form of presentation that would fulfil the essence of presentation itself” (Figal, 2015, p101) Not only is there a physical representation, but also the personhood and the character of my Grandmother is also presented, which completes the whole picture. My nieces and nephews who never met her view the image differently, that she is just another person in the portrait and fail to see the phenomenon of her *Air*. They have no prior knowledge of her personality, she passed away before they were born, and so they cannot construct the paradigm essential to the expression of this person’s air.

Barthes started by searching through old photographs of his mother to help him reconstruct a new mental composite, a new paradigm of how he remembered his mother. This led to the moment of epiphany that was triggered by the Winter Gardens Photograph because it fitted into the new definition of his mother. Barthes was remembering his mother the way he wanted to, or perhaps needed to, remember her, which in turn led to the manifestation of her presence to him, described as her *Air*. This supports the notion that a person’s *Air* is undefinable because it relies on personal knowledge unique to each viewer and so verifies why Barthes never published the photograph, no-one else would see his mother’s *air* in the image, all they would see would be just a child.

This process of manifestation, the strength and energy that can be mustered and exerted by the viewer can be quite overpowering. Not only does the photograph come to serve a seemingly pre-ordained function because of the constructed paradigm, but can fulfil the desire to remain in contact with the person who has passed away. Very few art forms come close to achieving this phenomenon and the phenomenon of manifestation is a recognition of “the stupefying power of the

photograph is far superior to that of writing. It is rare that a text can offer the same instantaneity, the same tangibility, the same magic, as a photographic object.” (Baudrillard, 1997, p28)

A central concept of the process of establishing a manifestation of personhood is the viewer experiencing emotions and feelings connected to the person in the image. But what is emotion and feeling? It seems a simple enough question that belies the complexity of an answer. It is tempting to state that an emotion is a feeling, which then leads to the question, what is a feeling? Again, the simple answer is that a feeling is an emotion, but this is rather circular logic that doesn't give any insight except that emotion and feeling could be the same thing. Even the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* recognises the close link between the two concepts, because when the definition for feeling is enquired upon, the answer simply is: *See Emotion*. However, it does highlight the difficult nature of defining emotion and feelings, and as Klaus Scherer states “The concept of ‘emotion’ presents a particularly thorny problem. Even though the term is used very frequently, to the point of being extremely fashionable these days, the question “what is an emotion” rarely generates the same answer from different individuals, scientists or laymen alike.” (Scherer, 2005, p696)

Nevertheless, the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (2017) does offer more insight than just circular logic. It defines emotion as “a state of some kind of arousal, a state that can prompt some activities and interfere with others. These states are associated with characteristic feelings, as they have characteristic bodily expressions.” (Blackburn, 1994, p113) From this definition, an emotion is a state, which can be interpreted as being the mental state of our own humanity and is linked with the characteristic bodily sensations of that humanistic state. There is also a hint by Blackburn that the emotion and the feeling are two separate phenomena, with an emotional mental state being associated with a particular characteristic feeling.

To help demonstrate the proposition that emotion and feeling are two separate phenomena an example is needed. If we look at *fig10*, we see a young child that is deformed, with a growth on her head that is almost as big as her natural head. Then there are bars on the window and the lack of items that are associated with

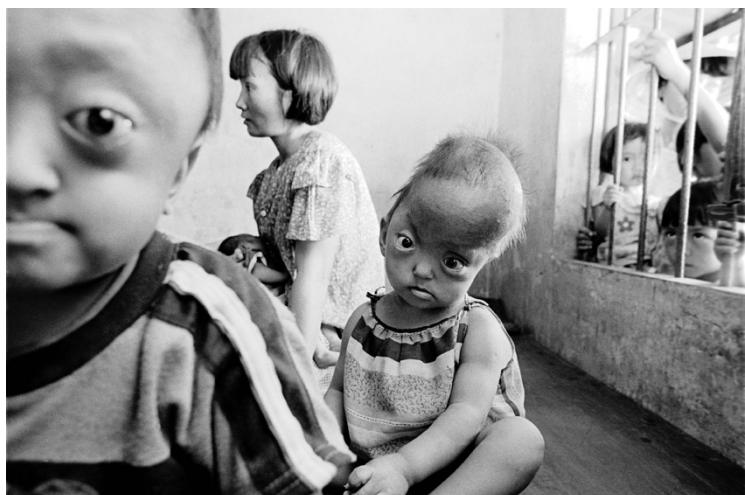


Fig 10: Untitled - James Nachtwey 1998

childhood, such as toys. Then there is her expression, which suggests that she is not fully aware of her predicament, but also shows a sadness and a dull, staring state. This image by Nachtway is incredibly moving, as is so much of his work. The subject matter is arresting and compelling. With looking at this image it produces the general response of sadness, an element of shock but also a sense of powerlessness and it is a case of “uglifying, showing something at its worst, is a more modern function: didactic, it invites an active response.” (Sontag, 2003, p72) The image accesses the emotional responses of the viewer by creating a mental state when denotation and connotation are employed. In return the viewer has a characteristic bodily feeling associated with that emotional response, and so demonstrates not only the separation but also the closeness and symbiotic relationship between emotions and feelings.

From this position, it is possible to notice and appreciate the differences between the emotion and the characteristic feelings, with the emotion being defined as a cognitive state and the feeling as an experiential phenomenon state. So, this phenomenon of a subjective feeling state is linked with the mental emotional state, bodily symptoms, action tendencies and physical expressions, which display that particular subjective feeling state. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Brentano argued that “all the data of our consciousness are divided into two great classes, the class of *physical* and the class of *mental* phenomena... Every idea or presentation which we acquire either through sense perception or imagination is an example of a mental phenomenon” (Brentano, 1874, p245) By realising that it is through our senses that we interact with the world, and with photography through the sense of sight, leads to having a cognitive reaction, that the information is processed by the mind.

However, there is one important consideration. The process of recognition and comprehension through sight of a photograph is not performed on the conscious level, but the subconscious. When a person looks at a photograph there is not a checklist that the viewer works through. If we consider *fig10* the viewer would not consciously think, those shapes look like a head, an arm, etc., but instead recognise those elements immediately and seeing them as a unified whole. It could be argued that this is because we live in a world saturated by imagery, especially photographs, and so the recognition of subject matter within those photographs is almost second nature. Obviously, there are times when the photographer wishes to disrupt this unconscious use of recognition and can use ambiguity within the image. This, in itself draws attention to the viewer’s processes of recognition, denotation and connotation and highlights just how naturally people view photographs.

To help support this theory about emotions and subjective feelings being separate, but also maintaining a symbiotic relationship, it is necessary to look at the work of psychologist Klaus Scherer, who specializes in the psychology of emotion. Klaus Scherer proposed a theory about emotions called the Component Process theory. In this theory proposed in 2005, he asserts that there are five stages to the whole experience, beginning with the cognitive appraisal and ending in the subjective feeling experience. The reason for needing to split the process into separate components is because by “using the term feeling, a single component denoting the subjective experience process, as a synonym for emotion, the total multi-modal component process, produces serious confusions and hampers our understanding of the phenomenon” (Scherer, 2005) Scherer could recognise how confusing it has become because of the terms emotion and feeling are often confused and used to mean the same state, whereas being able to separate and analyse each section separately gave a lucidity that was previously missing.

However, even though there are five sections to the component theory, there is only the need to consider two stages in relation to this thesis. The neurophysiological component deals with how an emotion is identified and quantified within a psychic state, of how the person is able to recognise and identifies their emotional well being. The Subjective Feeling Component is the other section directly linked to this thesis and describes how a feeling can be qualified as a subjective first person experiential phenomenon.

By being able to deconstruct the whole phenomenon does give a level of clarity to something that can seem confusing and shows the separation between an emotion and a subjective feeling. The emotional state happens at the beginning of the process, with the cognitive component because the mind needs to assess any threats or pleasures etc. by using awareness, and then be able to respond to them in kind. When Descartes wrote “so after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind” (Descartes, 1641, p25) he was speaking of awareness, specifically self-awareness – as a cognitive phenomenon. Whilst wishing to avoid the deep and troublesome arguments about human ontology, it does demonstrate the basic function of awareness, that it needs to be the first step. To be aware of something is to note its presence, to acknowledge that something exists, and in the case of visual awareness, that something exists outside of our *self* but within our environment. Awareness is the element of the mind that informs us of our surroundings, it helps us understand and interact within the world around us and is one of the basic functions of the mind.



Returning to *fig10* helps to this point. Looking at the photograph we become aware of the content of the photograph, the subject matter. This is achieved by accessing our memories and finding examples that the image reminds the viewer of in the same way as discussed above concerning Barthes and the Winter Garden Photograph. By accessing our own personal store of memories and experiences the viewer can visually recognise the subject matter, then the mind interprets the image and produces the subjective feeling response. Visual recognition through awareness is the first basic step to interpreting the image and so is fundamental to progressing to having a subjective feeling response to the image.

Moving onto the subjective feeling component and can be defined as where the phenomenon of subjective feeling arises. With this being the culmination of the process and arguably probably the most powerful, this is the part that can seem to overwhelm the progression beforehand and is the dominant part of the process. But by having the ability to respond strongly to an image a viewer is able to experience the phenomenon of a subjective feeling that can become all-encompassing and overpowering, it obscures the mental preparation needed to comprehend such a reaction.

Being able to produce a subjective feeling the human mind has created a tool for its own survival. The subjective feelings experienced has guided the human being through its life, just the same as subjective feelings guided our ancestors. As we are all human everyone can access and use subjective feelings and to be guided by those same feelings. There has been times when our actions have been guided by love, anger or compassion and it is these experiences that have given our lives such a rich and complex meaning. Also, subjective feelings ensured that we avoid risks to our lives, such as wild animals, and guided us towards ways of ensuring our safety, such as being social beings and creating communities.

By using the component process model, it helps to map the progress from a cognitive component through to a subjective feeling component and explains why there is a strong connection between the two. Initially it can seem that the cognitive part of the process is rational and removed from the human experiential process, being interpreted as cold and calculated without having the flair or humanity of the subjective feelings. However, it is more likely that because the process has reached its destination, the creation of a subjective feeling, this is the part which has a larger emphasis.

The cognitive emotions and the subjective feelings are compatible, but there exists the potential for a conflict between the two, because there is a separation. There is a strong link between thinking and feeling, that it is possible to change a subjective feeling by thinking differently and consequently, it is possible to state that an emotion is just a state of mind. This is due to the cognitive emotion and the subjective feeling are part of the same process, even though they are separate, and also allows the individual a level of control over their emotions and feelings.

As stated above, it is important to highlight that this can happen on a subconscious level, that people don't always consciously process emotions and feelings intentionally. It is not a case that a person consciously runs through this structure, mentally ticking off boxes but it is a case that this is an action performed subconsciously and extremely quickly. We are not always consciously making decisions, deciding which actions to follow and the best course of actions to take, but we rely on our initial reactions within our subconscious to guide us through external stimulus. It becomes a case "that the term 'emotional processing' should be replaced with the term 'cognitive-emotional processing' in the recognition of the role of high-level cognitive appraisal processes".

(Power/Dagleish, 2008, p123)

It is even possible to describe the subjective feeling component as a first person experiential phenomenon. This means that a feeling is personal, that it relates to just that one person and in essence, no-one can feel exactly the same emotion. Other people can feel something similar and even extremely closely to reciprocate the subjective feeling, but it is not the same unique experiential phenomenon. This is because of the first-person element, a person is essentially singular and separate to any other entity, so what subjective feelings that person experiences is unique to just that person. There is no shared consciousness, we have a free will to determine our own course of action, which is normally guided by our own emotions and subjective feelings. Because "phenomenology does indeed admit to being a first person study of subjectivity. In this respect the subjectivity is not about the subject matter – consciousness, cognition, experience – since even empirical psychology studies this. The issue concerns the approach: first person" (Gallagher, 2012, p57) demonstrates the singular notion of a subjective feeling, that it is a first person phenomenon and cannot be directly shared with another, only communicated.

They are also experiential because they are a conscious phenomenon, we are aware of our emotional and subjective feeling states. They are a culmination of the process, the end product of the procedure and not a cognitive phenomenon because that component part has already been

processed, and so we *experience* the phenomenon, we subjectively feel its effects. These effects are then noted in our consciousness, the person becomes aware what they are subjectively experiencing, a feeling and the physical effects of that feeling.

There is however, a consequence to this theory of the subjective feeling being led by the cognitive emotional state, which surprisingly embodies elements of existentialism. Initially, this can be seen as a rather bold and irrelevant claim, that viewing a photograph is connected to ontological issues about our human nature, but it does have a relevance that is worth observing. The connections between the arts and existentialism has been noted before “because of its dramatic conception of existence, its widespread use of powerful images and arguments, and its appeal to personal response in its communications, existentialism has always been closely associated with the fine arts.” (Flynn, 2006, p16)

The theory being proposed here is that our subjective feelings are in response to the world. For example, a person will feel fear because they perceive a threat of some kind, and so due to self-preservation, the person will either stand and fight or run away. An existentialist response to this scenario does support that statement, that in response to the environment, the person will either fight or flight due to survival reflexes. This is different to, for example, the design theory that would claim the person enacted the fight or flight response because of a *priori*, that their reaction is preprogrammed into their subconscious, and not their environment, caused the reaction.

This relates to the theory that the subjective feeling transmitted in a photograph because the viewer is reacting to their environment when they see a photograph. In *fig10*, a disfigured child is portrayed and that encourages the subjective feeling within the viewer after the image has been comprehended by the mind. In other words, the viewer is reacting to a change in their environment, the viewing of the photograph and therefore having a subjective feeling experience. It is because of the reaction being environmentally and then cognitively led that links the theory to existentialism.

This is all very interesting, but is it relevant? Does it really matter that the reaction of the viewer is led by the mind and not by human nature or a *priori*? The answer to this is yes, it does matter because this makes the reaction of the viewer personalised instead of being pre-ordained. The reaction is based on previous life experiences, for instance if the viewer of *fig10* is a mother of a newly born child, she will probably have a different emotional and subjective feeling reaction than an unmarried single man living rough on the streets in the same city. The point is that each

emotional and subjective feeling response is different and unique to that person dependent on life experiences and circumstances. Consequently, when elements such as age, social standing, gender, culture, etc., are factored into the decisions of the subjective feeling response, the results will vary widely, and so makes all the decisions individualised.

Consequently, it can support the notion of the photographic language being arbitrary and reflects the discussion earlier about Barthes and the Winter Gardens Photograph. Barthes could choose his reaction by constructing the paradigm that led to his moment of epiphany and connected his subjective feelings with that particular photograph. If the reaction to the Winter Gardens photograph had to be constrained by the viewing of the child as a child, then Barthes's reaction would have been very different.

With being able to make personalised decisions comes freedom, but it comes with a price. As Sartre asserted, we have total freedom to choose whatever we do, but with that freedom comes responsibility. "Man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the whole world and for himself as a way of being." (Sartre, 1943, p323) Consequently, the decisions we make as to how to have a suitable subjective response to the image relies on our personal memories and life experiences, which influence our decisions. But the viewer can choose to ignore these influences. For instance, there is nothing stopping a viewer finding *fig10* the funniest photograph they have ever seen. Their reaction could be condemned on a moral grounding, they could even be negatively subjugated on social media, their friends could abandon them and their life partner could leave them, but they have the freedom to choose this reaction. All of those negative consequences listed are social consequences, but the viewer still has the freedom to choose that reaction. Of when Sartre mentioned responsibility, this is what he meant, that we have the responsibility to have the "right" emotional and subjective feeling response that enables people to be part of a society.

To complement and strengthen the connection between art and existentialism it becomes necessary to introduce the theory of expression in art. There is a rich and varied history to this theory and forms one of the central points of discussion in the philosophical field of Aesthetics. The expression theory concerns itself with the expression and the reaction to the emotion in art, most of the aspects already discussed are central to, and have been informed by, the expression theory.

Expression can be interpreted in two ways, that it is something created by the artist or a phenomenon that is in the viewer. Anne Sheppard makes this point by stating "‘Expression’ has been taken to mean different things by different writers and while some have concentrated on the creative processes of the artist, others have stressed the evoking of emotion in the audience." (Sheppard, 1987, p20) Most of the discussion above has been concerning the interaction between the viewer and the photograph, with the creative process of the artist being overlooked, which does mean that this analysis is biased more towards the reception of the emotion rather than the creation. Consequently, this is a biased and unbalanced viewpoint, but one that is necessary to understand this perspective for the transmission of emotion to work.

With the expression theory, it becomes important to understand the difference between an emotion and a feeling. An emotion is cognitive, meaning that the emotion exists within our psychic sphere and so it is a thought process reacting to an external event. In this case, it is a reaction to a visual stimulus of the photograph, that is noticed by the awareness of the viewer and then processed with their perception and creates the mental emotional psychic sphere. This is followed by the subjective experiential phenomenon of a feeling, which manifests itself after the visual input has been analysed. It seems very unlikely that a feeling can exist without an emotion, as the emotion is the trigger for the subjective feeling, it needs to be able to create that emotional psychic phenomenon before a first person experiential phenomenon can be created. To do this the photograph uses signs, visual cues that show the viewer the emotion as an external visual sign and for these signs to be recognised, they are within a repertoire of established and understandable symbols. Gene Blocker defines this as "Although the feelings are private, the words and their meanings are public. And they must be public if interpersonal communication is to be possible." (Blocker, 1979, p112)

It is this public sphere that makes the expression of emotion possible and understandable. By being able to express our emotions and subjective feelings through photographs, we are able to communicate because a language is being used, and this language is used daily to maintain, build and strengthen or weaken bonds between people. It is an understandable and comprehensible way for groups and societies to be formed, maintaining and enhancing humanity. Dylan Thomas stresses this point with stating "Our common emotional heritage binds humanity together, then, in a way that transcends cultural difference. In all places, and at all times, human beings have shared the same basic emotional repertoire." (Evans, 2001, p8) So, for instance, a frown can signal the emotion of anger and then this expression is picked up by the viewer's use of empathy to create the psychic emotional phenomenon of anger. But these signs are not all culturally based, that a frown

communicated the same emotional and subjective feeling between different cultures, a western European person would understand this sign the same as an east African person, or a south American person as some gestures are universal. It is these emotional external signs that are picked up by the viewer and used to generate those emotional psychic states and it is these signs that are using a public display of emotion to communicate that emotion. It is only by using our knowledge of human society that we recognise these signs and then interpret them accordingly.

By using these signs within the public sphere of emotional expression, emotion and subjective feelings are transmitted in photography. The veracity of the image enhances this aspect further because of the level of realism inherent in the denotation of the photograph and strengthen the emotional transmission. Because these signs are part of the public emotional sphere, they can be read by the viewer and a similar mental emotional state is created as to what is transmitted by the photograph.

However, it is the use of this public sphere of expressing feelings and emotions that remains being the main challenge to both existentialism and the Expression theory. As was explored previously, an emotion or a feeling is a first-person experience, it is very much part of a closed circuit, even though the phenomenon is activated by an event outside of this internal process. Because the subjective feeling is a first-person phenomenon and is exclusive to just that person, the exact level and intensity with all its nuances and subtleties cannot be shared directly with another person. Of what one person feels, it is their own feelings and emotions and not anyone else's. However, every person has the ability to feel a similar emotion to another person because everyone has the same range of emotional responses and subjective feelings.

Nevertheless, subjective feelings can be reciprocated and felt in another person. Even though we cannot directly share exactly the same emotion or feeling as another person, we do reflect and reciprocate the same emotion or feeling. We only need to think of the phenomenon of mob rule, where one emotion dominates a group of people and influences their actions. As Dylan Evans sums up the problem of the lack of surety and a shared emotional and subjective feeling experience by stating: "I can never be sure, for example, that your experience of the colour red, or your sense of the sweetness of sugar, are the same as mine. However, if our subjective experiences were really so radically different, it is difficult to know how we could ever communicate at all" (Evans, 2001, p7-8)

So, how is it, that something which is exclusive to one person, the subjective feeling phenomenon, can be shared with another, especially through photography? How is it that an image can stir someone emotionally or trigger a subjective feeling, or can be used as a tool of expression? Why is it that photography has a power that “arouses our sympathies for experiences that we do not otherwise undergo?” (Scruton, 2009, p115)

The answer to these questions are in two parts, with the first part being the method in which information is transmitted and how the image informs the viewer. As discussed, a photograph is a series of signs, which reflect a social and cultural heritage that can be interpreted by the viewer, but it is the nature of this dynamic that is important. There is a narrative that runs through how a sign works, a way in which it informs and communicates with the viewer, and this narrative is in the second person. It is because of the second person narrative that “the medium itself is considered transparent. The propositions carried through the medium are unbiased and therefore true.” (Sekula, 1975, p454)

To explore this dynamic further an example is needed. In *fig11* we see an expressive photograph of a man pointing a gun at the photographer William Klein at close range. The boy is expressing anger. The denotation of the image tells the viewer what they will see and it is this process that is performed from the second person narrative perspective. A second person narrative is a way of communicating a message that tells the viewer something. For instance, a first-person narrative is a case of “this is what I see” and the second person narrative is “this is what I show you”. So, when a photographer takes an image they are capturing what they see and this is the first-person perspective because it is exclusively from their own perception and experiences. A second person narrative then shows the viewer what the photographer saw. The photograph that Klein took shows two boys, with one of them pointing the gun at close range at the photographer, but it is the photograph showing this, not the photographer.

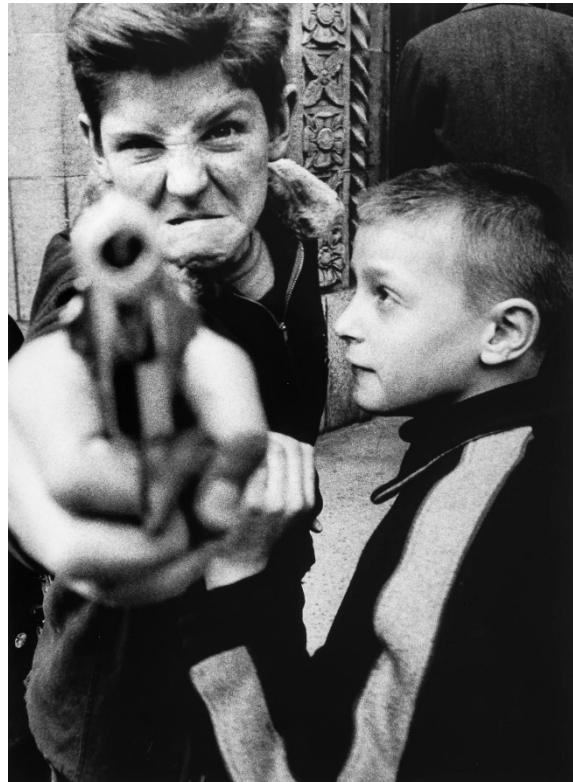


Fig 11: Gun, New York 1955 – William Klein

The distinction might be a subtle one, but it needs emphasising. As Berger claims, "It is because photography has no language of its own, because it quotes rather than translates." (Berger, 1967, p69) emphasises that the photograph is a message and a message needs to be a transmitter. With Berger highlighting that a photograph "quotes", he means that the photograph copies something that is original, and that originality belongs to the initial source, not the photographer. A photograph offers no translation or interpretation, that belongs to the authorship of the photographer, but the image presents what is depicted. Again, it is one of the fundamental functions of the photograph, or any message, to transmit information. It is not a case of what is being transmitted that is the issue, because there are such things as empty signifiers where their meaning and definition is fluid or non-existent, but the fact the mechanism exists for the transmission to happen, that it is possible for that message to be communicated. A good analogy of a second person narrative is an instruction book that comes with self-assembly furniture, because this shows the person building the furniture how to put it together, the same way that the photograph tells the viewer how to read the image.

This is also part of the reason why a definition can get lost in the translation. If the second person narrative of the photograph isn't explicit enough, then it might fail to show the intent of the photographer. If the photographer fails to emphasise certain elements within the subject matter of the image, to make parts of the image have a stronger second person narrative than other elements, then an incoherent message could be transmitted. It is only by making "a judgement on the subject-matter as interesting only so far as it is transformed by exaggeration, in a word, stylized." (Sontag, 1966, p19) that a clear message and use of the second person narrative will transmit a consistent message. Ambiguity does play a part in enticing the viewer into the image, it can be visually intriguing to hold the viewer's attention, but it is a fine balancing act. Too much ambiguity weakens the second person narrative, whereas too much second person narrative makes the photograph too literal and uninteresting.

The second part of the dynamic relies on the viewer of the image. Humans are social animals, we live in communities and are connected together in a cultural and abstract empirical way, and one emotion that makes this possible is empathy. This emotion binds people together, helps build communities and intimate emotional bonds. It is this emotion that indirectly allows one person to feel emotionally connected with another. Empathy can be considered to be "a process by which the psychological state of another is simulated by an observer while the observer maintains his or her



own well-defined, perspective of self. Consideration of self, while considering others, is a component of the process of taking another's perspective." (Vann, 2017)

Empathy is a powerful tool that our minds have to make people into social beings. It is because of empathy that we form communities, which have helped human beings to survive through strength in numbers. It is also because of empathy we can emotionally understand other people, we can relate to another person's humanity and we can respond with empathy to visual signals. For instance, it is possible to receive a sense of anger from the *fig11* because of the facial expression of the youth with the gun and it's also possible to sense shock at this action, that it has become "expressive of emotion, rather than actual expressions of emotion." (Graham, 1997, p27)

Empathy is always a reaction to something, usually an external stimulus and can be triggered visually, but it is important to understand that empathy is just the emotion which makes that connection. The experience of a subjective feeling happens after empathising with the person in the portrait, whereas empathy remains neutral, its sole function is to make a connection, a bridge from one closed circuit to another closed circuit. We have all been in situations where we have heard someone speaking and we feel a type of resonance with their ideas or expressions, and so we feel a sense of connection with them. Because of the veracity of the photograph, and because of the nature of the image having a second person narrative, our sense of empathy connects with these visual representations and are then processed into being experiential subjective feelings.

It becomes a case that the photographer takes the photograph, which then communicates using the second person narrative. This trigger's the emotion of empathy in the viewer to search for any emotional or experiential feeling signs within the image. If the portrait is of someone well known to the viewer, such as a family portrait, this could generate a high sense of empathy. Then, empathy introduces the rest of the emotional or experiential feeling spectrum, such as happiness, love, anger, etc. Indeed, it can be seen as empathy acts like the key that unlocks "the source of such quintessentially human experiences" (Cooper, 1999, p105)

Also, because empathy, like all emotions, is cognitively led, it can interact quickly and on a subconscious level. Some people have a highly-developed sense of empathy and so can understand and interact with the emotions of others quickly and easily, whereas other people have a low sense of empathy and consequently have trouble reading or understanding the emotions of others. This can then lead to different emotional interpretations of the same image and can also contribute to

the definition being lost in the interpretation because the level of empathy used differs to the empathy of the photographer when they first took the photograph.

When a photographer takes a portrait that produces a subjective feeling in themselves and tries to capture that phenomenon, what they are in fact capturing are a series of signs that will show that particular subjective feeling state. They are capturing an expression of emotion or subjective feelings and then the photograph becomes expressive of that particular subjective feeling phenomenon. This can be summed up as “here we find no less than three objects: the subject; the photograph; and our minds. Somehow, these dance together, jumping from step to step and so seeming to occupy different spaces until we become master photographers and they unify in an experience – which encompasses all three.” (Bray, 2013, p19-20) Then when the image is viewed, the viewer’s empathy potentially connects with these visual signs, the expressive nature of the image, and so the photograph resonates with the viewer through the initial emotion of empathy. Hence empathy is often an emotion that is overlooked but is fundamental in how we view and interact with images.

However, there is another issue that needs to be explored. As seen above there is an explanation of how the manifestation of the person can produce an emotional and subjective feeling response, but the issue remains, how did this meaning and definition get attributed to the Winter Garden photograph by Barthes? Is it a case of “what is at issue is the response that is predicated on the assumption of presence, not on the fact of representation.” (Freedberg, 1989, p28)

To say that Barthes was looking for just a representation of his mother seems inadequate. He needed to find a suitable representation, but to choose a photograph of his mother as a child as being appropriate because of her childlike state only answers part of the question. It explains the motivation for the choice, but as previously mentioned any photograph could have been chosen, why this particular image? The answer to this question is because that particular photograph was a partially empty signifier and so could be made into an icon.



Fig 12: Stock photograph of a chair  
Photographer unknown

To be able to explain this concept, the first place to start is to establish the motivation of the sign. To put it simply, it is how close the connotation is to the denotation and “if a photograph is a photograph of a subject, it follows that the subject exists” (Scruton, 1983, p360). Because the subject exists, and the image becomes a symbol for that subject, the motivation of that symbol depends on how strictly the connotation of that symbol relates to the subject in reality. So, for example *fig12* is a photograph of a chair. If the definition for *fig12* is that it is a chair, an object for someone to sit on, then the connotation is highly motivated by the sign. But if the connotation was that

this object is a suitable tool for another purpose, such as an object to stand on, then it is less motivated because it is not the object’s original function. If this was taken further and the connotation was to use the chair for fire fighting, then it is unmotivated because the connotation bears no resemblance to the subject in reality.

There are three different classifications of motivation; the indexical, the iconic and the symbolic. If the sign motivation is indexical then it closely resembles what the object does in reality, if the sign motivation is symbolic, then it has no relation to the function of the object in the real world. If the definition is somewhere between these two extremes, then the image becomes iconic. At this point it becomes necessary to note the relationship between the denotation and the connotation and “it is natural enough to consider the relation between these works and what they are of or about a semantic one (reference, denotation, standing for, symbolizing). And if the representational is to be understood in terms of this semantic relation it is reasonable to hold that to be representational is to be a symbol of a certain kind.” (Walton, 1974, p349)

It is also worth mentioning that the motivation of the sign can be influenced by the system of semiotics used. As previously mentioned there are two forms of semiotics, a triadic and a didactic system. If a triadic system is used then the sign would be more indexical because the object is explicitly linked to the object. But if the didactic system is used then because there is no explicit link between the object and the connotation, an iconic or symbolic connotation could be applied.

However, there also exists something called an empty signifier. This is something that has no meaning attributed to it and so when seen there is no connotation. These can be fairly common and a good example is when someone encounters a foreign language for the first time. For example if I was to start using the word *stuhl*, then the reader might not know what I mean. It can't be denied that the word exists, it is printed on the page and so its existence is unquestionable, and the reader will know that it's a word because it uses the same letters as the language of this dissertation, which is English. But it's not an English word. The chances of the word being invented for this essay is remote because of the structure of the word, it is a mixture of vowels and consonants in an order that makes it understandable and can be spoken. The reader might deduce that because it uses the roman alphabet that it comes from a European language, which would have a different structure than English.

It is not until it is revealed that the word stands for chair in German that it has a connotation. Beforehand, there could be no connotation because that word in an English structure has no meaning. Because there was no meaning to the word, then anything could have been attributed to it. It could stand for tiger, or bed, or sink, or anything because the connotation has the potential to be totally arbitrary. It was not until it was revealed that it was the German word for chair that an understandable concept for the connotation could enter the empty connotational space that was bereft of meaning.

The photograph acts in the same way. Because the image is composed of signs that have a relationship with each other, the image produces a code. This code is then interpreted by the viewer into an understandable message by the using a cultural and social interpretation. As Bate remarks, "in photography, codes are combined to produce a rhetorical argument. By themselves, codes are meaningless, like phonemes in language. It is only when codes are put together in specific combinations that they are effective in what we call a 'good photograph'" (Bate, 2009, p36)

When Barthes saw the Winter Gardens photograph he saw an image that had a partial connotation. With the photograph being an image of his mother as a child, it could still be identified as his mother, there was an existing connotation. However, the connotation was one just of identity, there was no personhood because Barthes could never of known his mother as a child, that scenario is simply impossible. Consequently, the paradigm which had been constructed of her personhood could fill the empty space because that particular photograph was partially empty. It does become a

case of “‘seeing’ and ‘seeing as’ are only part of the artwork. Here we can rely on a figurative representation that can be seen or interpreted.” (Arnold, 2015, p77)

For example, if we look at *fig13* we have a picture of a woman called Julie. All the information available is that she is a relatively young woman called Julie, who might have a pet budgie as she is holding a bird. If we then look at the wider context, the photographer made a series of portraits and was published in a book called *Small Town Inertia*, which documents the effects of illnesses and poverty in a small community.



Fig 13: Julie by Jim Mortram

This is all the information that is available. There is no statement about her situation, age, likes, dislikes, her career or anything at all. All that is available is her name, the subject matter in the image and the context of the image being included in the book. With this being the case, the connotation is only partially filled because there are questions still to be answered to provide a complete picture. A physical representation in this context is inadequate since “the history of the body’s representation in art, then has been more occupied with expectations or aspirations rather than with veracity.” (O’Reilly, 2009, p17)

It was the same situation that Barthes faced when he saw the Winter Gardens photograph and so could attribute a meaning that was personal to him and have that connotation unchallenged by any other narrative. The image provided an identity, his mother, but because there was no other context, the connotation could be what was most meaningful for him.

As discussed earlier, to help clarify and distinguish between the different levels of motivation, the relativity of the object to the interpretation is split into three categories, the indexical, the iconic and the symbolic. The indexical and the symbolic are both the extreme ends of the scale, that the indexical definition closely resembles the definition of the object in reality, and the symbolic has virtually no connection in reality. However, the iconic is the interpretation in the middle, that is a

mixture of the two and as Daniel Chandler asserts “the more a signifier is constrained by the signified, the more ‘motivated’ the sign is: iconic signs are highly motivated; symbolic signs are unmotivated.” (Chandler, 2007, p38)

From this position it is possible to see why the image became iconic for Barthes. The photograph could not be indexical because its original context had been lost. There might be a sense of nostalgia or fondness for the image, but as to the photograph relating to an event, a physical place and time, that context has been lost. The place has been mentioned, but even this is not certain, and as the photograph was undated it could almost be a generic image of a person in their childhood. As Barthes pointed out, “Certainly the image is not the reality but at least it its perfect analogon and its exact analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph. Thus can be seen the special status of the photographic image: it is a message without a code.” (Barthes, 1978, p196)

The image could not be symbolic because there is enough context included in the image. This was his mother in her childhood, which is enough to link the image to a certain family structure and to also include an anchorage of her identity. This does limit the connotation to being about Barthes mother because “we are concerned here with knowledge of the historical world, and that is always a world constituted and formed by the human mind” (Gadamer, 1989, p222) This link with the historical world provided enough of a catalyst for the sense of connection with the image, enough for the sense of connection with her personhood.

But the image could be classed as iconic even though the parameters of the connotation have been redefined by Barthes, there remains enough anchorage within the image to place it between the two extremes. Also, when we think of what an icon actually is, an image that points towards a deeper and more meaningful interpretation and has a religious origin, it comes as no surprise that “the image behind the concept of commodity, on the other hand, is the fetish or idol, an object of superstition, fantasy and obsessive behavior. When these concepts are seen in their concrete form, their relationship becomes clearer. Both are “hyper-icons”” (Mitchell, 1986, p162).

Barthes chose the Winter Gardens photograph because it was a partially empty signifier, which can be classified as an icon. This is because the motivation of the sign in the image was of the right strength. It was neither too strong or too weak, but enough to provide an original context for the deeper connotation that Barthes would add to the image. It is because of this quality that it demonstrates that icons can be enigmatic and it is worth considering that their meaning can be fluid

because of their arbitrary nature and a certain reliance on context, both for the viewer and the image.

## **Beauty, Power and Truth**

When a portrait of someone is taken, some images are more valued than others. In images the person can appear to be taller or slimmer or more beautiful or handsome that show the person in a certain way that either flatters the sitter, or casts them in a humorous light, or exaggerates one of their features. This is only natural as we want to have photographs of our friends, relatives and loved ones to represent a quality of their personality that is admired. It is also possible that if the compositional quality of the image is good, such as soft lighting, employing the rule of thirds and is well exposed then the personal quality of the sitter is also increased.

This attitude leads to a beautification of the image and the function of attraction that is part of the concept of beauty is introduced. There is ample evidence for this as it is a common theme when discussing the nature of beauty, for example “when our interest is entirely taken up by a thing, as it appears in our perception, and independently of any use to which it might be put, then do we speak of beauty.” (Scruton, 2009, p17) Also, beauty becomes a tool for the photographer to use as a way of generating interest in their work, an element of attraction, where they attempt to make the picture as accessible as possible, to entice the viewer into the image and relate to the subject matter.

Clearly beauty can play a central role in the portrait. It can help the viewer to access the image on a more intimate level and to confirm the paradigm the viewer has constructed, that they see what they expect to see. An image of a friend or loved one confirms beliefs about that person, that they were good company, possibly had similar beliefs and attitudes the viewer can relate to. Again, beauty plays a part in how the viewer accesses the image, that beauty has the function of attraction. It is a case that “beauty, then, is not the precondition but rather the result of aesthetic contemplation, of a kind of collaboration between the viewer and the work.” (Prettejohn, 2005, p22)

However, when we consider the effect of attraction via beauty combining with empathy, then the attraction of beauty can act like a powerful magnet. With empathy being the equivalent to an emotional antenna that is searching for something to connect with, then the attraction of beauty is an element that cannot be ignored. The element of attraction within beauty appeals to the attention of the viewer and is then held, potentially mesmerising and immersing the viewer. This produces a first person phenomenon of subjective feeling that the viewer recognises as beauty, and,



“that phenomenon does raise the question of where beauty fits in the normal, or abnormal, course of human life.” (Danto, 2006, p71)



Fig 14: Tuna Fishing, Sicily, Italy 1991 - Sebastião Salgado

The dynamic of attraction through beauty can be seen in *Fig14*. In this image, we see Sicilian fishermen waiting for the Tuna, with the emphasis placed onto the person on the right-hand side of the frame. He seems to be acting as a figurehead, leading the group forward with the promise of reward. He seems both heroic and yet anxious, but resolute in his task. Compositionally this image

uses the rule of thirds, both horizontally and vertically, and also encapsulate the classical feel of black and white photography. There is a sense of balance and harmony in the image, with the photographer implicitly agreeing, not challenging their actions, and being part of the community of fishermen. Salgado is well versed in producing beautiful imagery, images that show a unity and a harmony between the photographer and his subject matter, but his images uses a concept of beauty where “its beauty is ambivalent, troubling and strong. Is this the power of the aesthetic? What statement if any does it make?” (Nair, 2011, p138) By using this ambivalent beauty, a strong connection with the viewer is established and it becomes easy to feel part of the group, that it is possible to empathise with their plight and for the image to be accessible.

The form of beauty that is used in *fig14* could be an example of free beauty, a concept proposed by Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Judgement* in 1790. According to Kant free beauty does not rely on the subject matter, but is created more by the viewer. It is a case that the sense of beauty is free from being associated with the subject matter or interpretation, and is more reliant on the viewer having an aesthetic experience because of the overall image. To achieve this sense of beauty without association, the viewer will need to feel “confident that we had purged away all of our interests, and all thought of the work’s purposes, then we should be truly entitled to call it beautiful in a pure judgement of taste” (Prettejohn, 2005, p50) So, with *fig14* there needs to be a sense of separation,

that we do not identify too strongly with the subject matter, but instead allow the aesthetic of the photograph to connect with our own values of taste and judgement.

Unfortunately, even though Kant was right to assert that beauty is generated by the viewer and not the image, this concept of free beauty is a contradiction in itself. If all association is taken away from the image then the function of the image is removed. By removing the function, then the purpose of the image is also removed, and as photography is a language of signs, the image is reduced to being empty signifiers. This means that the objects depicted would have no meaning and beauty bereft of meaning lacks depth and is reduced to being a pretty arrangement of subject matter. If we were to accept the concept of free beauty, then it would mean that beauty could exist without an object to beautify, and so beauty could be totally spontaneous, which then leads to the conclusion that it is possible to have a first person subjective experience about nothing.

Beauty does have a level of objectification, that for the phenomenon of the subjective feeling of beauty to happen, something needs to be the catalyst for that phenomenon. It becomes a case that the composition of the image is arranged to a cultural sense of beauty, and consequently becomes totally arbitrary and is dependent on that particular culture. The importance of the cultural quality of beauty is not to be underplayed because it remains possible for anyone to experience the phenomenon of the aesthetic subjective feeling of beauty about anything, but this is reliant on the viewer's personal life history combined with their cultural heritage.

With the element of beauty in the image acting as an attraction and with the viewer's sense of empathy connecting to that attraction, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the more

beauty the image encapsulates, the stronger the attraction is. It then stands to reason, that the more an image is beautified then the stronger the attraction is to the viewer and the more the image conforms to the cultural definition of beauty, which leads to a more powerful attraction to the image.

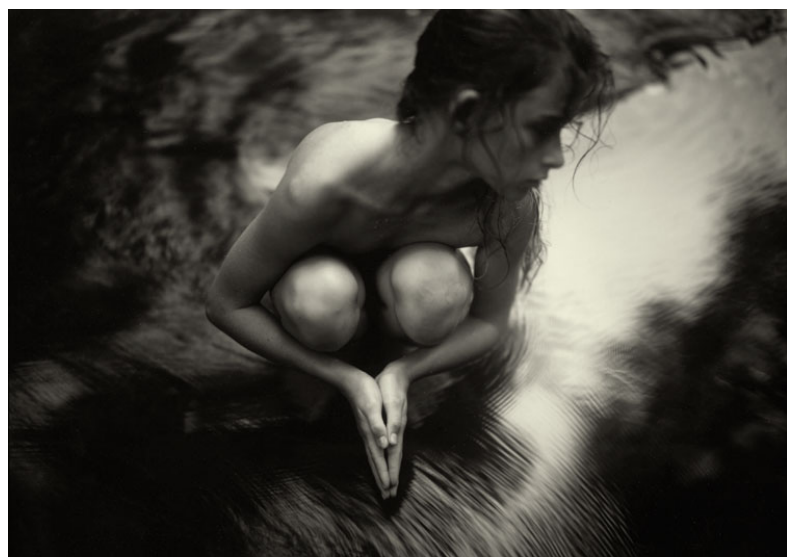


Fig 15: From the series Immediate family 1984-91 - Sally Mann

Again, this phenomenon can be witnessed in *fig15*, a photograph of Sally Mann’s daughter kneeling in water and how the beautification of the image can be hypnotic. The subtle tones of the water, the pose of the child with smooth skin tones, the composition of isolating her against the water adds so much to the attraction of the image through beauty. Then when the cultural heritage of the visual arts, with the values placed on the nude and also water nymphs adds yet another, more culturally deeper sense of beauty. There is a sense of innocence, cultural heritage and compositional finesse that makes this image rich with the qualities of beauty. If all of these qualities that the viewer can bring to the image are discounted, such as in Kant’s theory of free beauty, then all that would be seen is a young girl kneeling in water, looking to one side.

However, there is another dynamic that occurs when beauty is used within an image, which is predominately used within portraiture. At the beginning it was noted that people collect images of their friends and families that cast them with a positive connotation. The person could be smiling or enjoying an activity or with possessions they are proud of such as a new car, and this in turn helps the viewer to remember them in a positive way. Some of the images would have been altered in a slight way, such as smoother skin, or flattering lighting so the portrait becomes more beautiful. But it becomes a case that what is happening is a shift in values. For instance, a photograph of a spouse or loved one, will be intentionally beautified to make the spouse look more attractive, a way of making the sitter exude certain qualities of youthfulness or a body shape that emphasises fitness and well-being, but it is the photograph that is made to look more beautiful and not the spouse. The image is beautified and then the value of that beauty is transferred onto the subject matter. Thus, “the primitive notion of the efficacy of images presumes that images possess the qualities of real



Fig 16: Angelina Jolie - Photographer unknown

things, but our inclination is to attribute to real things the qualities of an image” (Sontag, 1977, p58) An example of this phenomenon is *fig16*, which compares two images of Angelina Jolie, with the picture on the left unenhanced being compared with an enhanced photograph on

the right, where a cultural definition of beauty has been exaggerated and so imbues the qualities of youthfulness and health.

This phenomenon is common and evidence for this is practically everywhere. Every time an image is “photoshopped” to remove wrinkles, or to reduce waist sizes, or manipulated in any way, those qualities are not being added to the person. If it was then we literally would have a world without any physical flaws and everything would look perfect, with “aesthetic creation a way out of the dilemma of self-knowledge or really just another version of it, because it makes one take the imaginary for the real.” (Bowie, 2003, p69) The person remains the same, but the image is made to either increase or decrease certain values to emphasise a quality within the photograph and then these values are attributed to the subject matter so that they may be seen in a more flattering way.

It is also worth considering that this dynamic is not just limited to photographs, but was also a practice of portrait painters using body doubles. It is well known that when the portrait artist wanted to represent the perfect human being, they would produce a painting that was basically a composite image, for instance a muscular torso would be modelled from one person and then arms from another. Gombrich comments on this practice by stating “People often think that what the artists did was to look at many models and to leave out any features they did not like; that they started by carefully copying the appearance of a real man, and then beautifies it by omitting any irregularities or traits which did not conform to their idea of a perfect body.” (Gombrich, 1989, p103) With all these different elements combined, they exemplify the perfect person in physical nature and, consequently increase the level of attraction by emphasising a cultural standard of beauty.

The idea that physical beauty represents an inner beauty can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. A person that is seen as beautiful was seen as being more open and warm, more welcoming and approachable, that the attainment of a physical beauty is the culmination of having virtuous qualities such as emotional balance and self-control. The ancient Greeks were well known for valuing physical fitness and athleticism, after all they invented the Olympics, and there was an assumption that physical athleticism led to emotional balance because of the mental discipline involved. Umberto Eco makes this point when he asserts “The beautiful object is an object that by virtue of its form delights the senses, especially sight and hearing. But those aspects perceivable with the senses are not the only factors that express the beauty of the object: in the case of the human body an important role is also played by the qualities of the soul and the personality, which are perceived by the mind’s eye more than by the eye of the body.” (Eco, 2004, p41) Consequently,

the attainment of beauty has more value than just a physical attraction, there is the assumption of emotional stability and discipline and these values are also attributed to the person depicted in the portrait.

However, by emphasising and increasing the level of beauty, the significant form of the photograph is altered. The concept of the significant form is of how the photograph appears to make the viewer feel, of how they interact with the aesthetic emotions. For instance, a scene of action could make the viewer feel excited, or photographs of a funeral could make the viewer feel sad, but each of these scenes could be photographed in a certain way to make them beautiful, and so accessing the aesthetic emotions and subjective feelings. By adjusting the denotation and connotation of the photograph, the lines and tones etc., the significant form is altered because it changes the reaction to the aesthetic emotions. Clive Bell explicitly links the significant form with the visual arts when he wrote "In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I shall call "significant form"; and "significant form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art." (Bell, 1914, p4)

By being able to manipulate the significant form of the photograph to emphasise certain aesthetic values means that these values are then transferred onto the person depicted in the photograph. In *fig16*, the Angelina Jolie photograph has been enhanced and so does appear to be someone healthier and more youthful, that because of the enhanced beauty the viewer is more attracted to the image on the right rather than the image on the left. This is a tool that is often used in the celebrity image, where they are intentionally beautified to exaggerate their own image, to help make the person that is projected from the photograph more convincing and believable. However, with this being the case, the images "are never 'objective'. The unedited presentation of 'reality' is rarely available to us." (Davis, 2005, p174)

Again, the consequence of this is that the value of beauty could be communicated either too strongly or too weakly. Because beauty is not an inherent quality of the photograph but is a value that is manipulated to conform to a cultural value, it becomes another tool to influence the communication between the viewer and the photograph. This influences the interpretation of the image, the connotation. By "reiterating these compositional devices from image to image not only eliminates distracting details of place but also heightens perceptions as they unfold over time." (Anon, 2010, p93) This has an influence on how believable the image is, if this value is taken too far

then it becomes too obvious and can be held to ridicule, or too weak to be unnoticed. But what makes this issue exciting is that everyone will see the photograph differently. The differences might be small or large, but they will exist. It also means that there is no right or wrong way to interact with an image as this is a purely personal experience for each individual.

With this emphasis being placed on the individual it can lead to the conclusion that personal taste is dominant in viewing the photograph. Indeed, the impression that the viewer is in control and has made the decisions by themselves, that the choices which were made were their own choices, they have been able to choose the function of the image, how the photograph is to be interpreted and how they react to the image. There has also been some assertion that these actions are arbitrary, that it is the viewer making all of the decisions themselves, that they are relying on their own resources to form their conclusions, either consciously or unconsciously.

But there is a situation and a scenario of where the viewer is fooled. Even though they have the sense of being in control and still exercise a sense of power, it is only power that they wield; control has been subtly coerced by the phenomenon of culture.

The first place to begin is the definition of power and immediately we are confronted with an issue. There are many different types of power. For instance, there is political power, military power, personal power, religious power, etc. The list could be generating examples *ad infinitum*, and demonstrates that "power is a contested concept. No one definition is accepted by all who use the word, and people's choice of definition reflects their interests and values." (Nye, 2011, p5) However, for the sake of this dissertation, the definition that shall be used is one of personal power. This can be defined as having the ability and / or freedom to act in a particular way. So, for instance, an act of agreeing with something or someone is seen as an act of personal power and to see a recognisable person in a portrait, and experiencing the phenomenon of manifestation and contact, that is also an act of personal power. It then can also mean to relate to a portrait within a certain way is also an act of personal power, whether it is to agree or disagree with what is presented. In essence, personal power is an act, a decision, a choice that is actively made by the viewer.

It is because of this sense of empowerment that the notion of the viewer making arbitrary decisions is so strong. The viewer has enough knowledge to make judgements and a freedom to make a choice that is suitable and applicable to them. They have enough self determination to make decisions independent of influences, except ones that the viewer sees as their own. It is through a sense of empowerment that the impression of being able to make arbitrary decisions originates.

Indeed, this sense of empowerment can be so strong that “liberty is valuable, whatever its consequences.” (Wolff, 2016, p124).

But, even within the definition of personal power, there are different types of power. Two of the most dominant are reward or coercive power. Reward power means that there are positive consequences to exercising that particular sense of power, that the decisions are in line with a wider and more complex network of decisions. This can be seen as an act of compliance because by agreeing to agree with a wider set of choices, the viewer is then joining that social group, and in effect forms a social contract. In return the person benefits from being part of that society and as “each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.” (Rousseau, 1762, p648)

With coercive power the situation is rather different. Instead of agreeing and becoming compliant with a wider system or society, coercive power is used when the decisions of disagreeing have greater negative consequences rather than positive. For example, if an individual decides to take an item from a shop without paying for it, in other words stealing, they are being non-compliant with the wider rules of society, the law. The person will then risk isolation, possible incarceration and a criminal record from the wider system. By being non-compliant to society, demonstrates that “coercive power is most effective, however, when the threat of violence or other punishment is sufficient in itself to get the target to accede to the demand.” (Dugan, 2003, <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/threats>)

However, reward and coercive power structures are not the final motivators in exercising personal power. The power behind these two concepts is reference power. Reference power relies on knowledge and this will influence the use of either reward or coercive power. For instance, if the viewer decides that *fig17* is a photograph of a celebrity who is Scarlett Johansson then this is an example of reward power that is influenced by



Fig 17: Scarlett Johansson - Mario Sorrenti 2009

reference power. The decision is in compliance with the knowledge of who Scarlett Johansson is, her status as a celebrity and her physical appearance. None of this is challenged because the reference power is so large since she is a well-known actress with an extremely high profile. It is possible that a viewer could mistake her for a different celebrity in *fig17* as she is adopting the classic 'Marylin Monroe' look but this is unlikely as the referencing to her real identity is so strong. It is even worth mentioning that by adopting this look, she is adopting another structure of reference power by relating her image to that of Marylin Monroe and in so adopting the cultural attributes belonging to the iconic figure of Marylin Monroe. By doing so, Johansson is demonstrating that "when an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, are what they appear to be." (Goffman, 1959, p28)

It is at this point where we get to reference power that the need for value and meaning are introduced. Because what is being referenced has a cultural definition, it embodies a meaning and so consequently it carries a cultural value. Again, with *fig17*, by Scarlett Johansson adopting the look of Marylin Monroe she is accessing the cultural value of an icon, someone who became the personification of female beauty and male desire. By accessing this cultural reference meaning generates a value that empowers the reference power and then strengthens the reward power. By employing this structure of power "it refers to the way in which agency (my actions, for example) interact with the wider social structure (the context of my actions)." (Thompson, 2007, p11) By following this suggested structure of using reward power, with the reward being able to access the cultural definitions of Marylin Monroe, makes the viewer choose this definition over any rival definition because this reference is the strongest force of power.

But what is being referenced? It could be said that attraction, female beauty, femininity, the female form or youthfulness are being used as references, but this would provide a limited explanation and misunderstands the phenomenon of power as it avoids why these elements are being referenced.

There is a social structure of power that has been dominant for hundreds of years but remained unnoticed until the early 1970s, and this is called the male gaze. Over the course of hundreds of years, the viewer of an image would be assumed to be male and so images were produced to appeal to the male psyche. This could be along the lines of the male being the protector of a vulnerable



woman, a mythical Knight in shining armour, or showing a man to be strong and muscular, or by using the power of his intellect managing to solve the world's problems.

This then meant that the woman would be depicted as being weaker, needing protection, and being reliant on the man to be her saviour. Consequently, the dominance of man would be unchallenged and his superiority confirmed. Then when we reconsider *fig17* and the pose, the clothing and her expression, the male gaze takes on a sexual connotation. Johansson is reclining on what could be a leopard rug, she is wearing a basque, a form of underwear. Her eyes are half closed, her lipstick is a dark vibrant red and the curves and suppleness of her body have been exaggerated. Her pose makes her vulnerable and inviting to the male viewer and has been designed to convey an image of femininity that is compliant with male domination. Indeed, Berger provides a good summary of the male gaze by stating "One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at... Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (Berger, 1972, p47)

It is then because of this cultural heritage that a male dominant and sexual value can be attributed to *fig17*. Because this photograph has been taken referencing the values of vulnerability, passiveness, voluptuousness and submissiveness it appeals to the cultural phenomenon of the male gaze. By accessing this particular structure of dominance and control, the image is appealing to the traditional view of our social structure and the values placed upon that structure. But it is when this structure is adopted and internalised by the viewer that the image can really appeal as a personal choice with a sense of empowerment.

However, something has already happened. The viewer still has the sense of power, of feeling emboldened and empowered by the decisions they are making, but they have lost control of that power. It was not the viewer making a totally arbitrary decision to exercise their sense of power in the conclusion that Scarlett Johansson can look like Marilyn Monroe, but it was a cultural decision, and so this directed that sense of power. In other words, the viewer had the power to choose, but culture ensured the decision would be complicit to this wider network and leads to the paradox of being free, independent and at liberty to make their own choices, as long as those choices comply with the dominant culture. The viewer is being manipulated into being someone who is "a spectator who is suitably sensitive, suitably informed, and, if necessary, suitably prompted." (Wollheim, 1998, p396)

The subtlety of this phenomenon is astonishing. It means that reference power is controlling the viewer's actions, thought processes, decisions, likes and dislikes. This is the reason why certain images are more successful than others, because they can embody a wider and larger meaning and value and become a more dominant sense of reference power. Even if we revisit the image of the disfigured child by James Natchway, *fig10*, there is still the reference power of the 'correct' response, because of the emotion of empathy gluing our culture together and all of us being social beings. Because everyone in society is so embedded in their culture that "cinema, figurative painting, the novel and folktales act merely as reference points that help to create the maximum contingent meaning" (Cotton, 2014, p52) defines how images are approached, the use of tokens and types to generate functions.

There is an old saying that "we can't see the wood for the trees" and this contains more than an element of truth. With using reference power so frequently the viewer is totally immersed in those definitions, values and meanings. It becomes nearly instinctive and subconscious to use reference power as it is used so commonly. Consequently, the viewer is almost blind to this structure as they are so embedded in their culture that it becomes virtually impossible to see it. If we are asked to define a culture, for example; Britishness, the chances are that the answer provided would be long on platitudes but short on definitions. We could resort to the stereotypes such as the royal family, red telephones boxes and an English breakfast, but to define the British culture succinctly and concisely is virtually impossible, partly because we are deeply embedded in that culture. This does however, demonstrate that our values are "at any rate largely predetermined by the traditional mannerisms, by symbolic conventions, and by the love of absolute beauty." (Santayana, 1967, p261)

Thus, we need look no further than the male gaze to find an example of power without control. The idea that an artwork was made for male appreciation from a male perspective, was considered the natural order and was unquestioned until the 1970s. For centuries, this dynamic went unnoticed and was considered the correct way to appreciate art, especially the nude. Consequently because of its dominance it generated a great amount of meaning and value, which then went on to strengthen the cultural reference power. It then follows that with the use of reward power, the viewer agreeing with the cultural norm and becoming compliant to the dominant social view, is then being controlled by the cultural reference power. This would be accepted as the right choice because it was the socially dominant view that "in most popular representations it seems that men look and women are looked at. In film, on television, in the press and in most popular narratives men are shown to be in control of the gaze, women are controlled by it. Men act; women are acted upon"

(Gamman/Marshment, 1988, p1) It would be even possible to claim that this became a positive feedback loop, that the reference power of the male gaze controls the reward power and so confirms the validity of the male gaze. Because it would go unchallenged, more meaning and value are added to the reference power, which then strengthens the attraction of the reward power, and so on.

And so here lies the dilemma of photography. It can make the viewer feel empowered by relating to the image, but in fact they are being steered by the subtlety of culture. With this being the case and with the emphasis being placed on culture to produce a definition, how much trust can be placed within that connotation? If it is a case that when Barthes came across the Winter Gardens photograph of his mother as a child, he felt capable of trusting his belief that the image was a true likeness of her, what made that trust something he could believe in? Indeed, how can any viewer have any trust in the image if it is cultural standards that have been internalised by using reference and reward power?

A point has now been reached that produces a conflict. As has been previously stated, the viewer is at liberty to make totally arbitrary decisions about the connotation of the image. However, the connotation needs to have a basis in which the viewer can believe in and so steers them away from making totally random conclusions. But this connotation is influenced and guided by cultural practices that are internalised by the viewer and not based upon a physical empirical reality. In other words, the viewer can decide anything, but culture will ensure that you only have one choice.

However, this dilemma about having a freedom of choice with only one option has an unexpectedly positive consequence. By having only one choice that is supported by the dominant culture gives a sense of reassurance and truthfulness. This is because the conclusion is supported by a web of allegedly factual knowledge which produces a conclusion that has a sense of logic and reason. For instance, if we consider the triadic system of semiotics, it could be argued that it is based upon using two premises to form a conclusion. The object and the Representum are used as the premises, to say what the item is and then this leads to the Interpretum of what that object does in the empirical world. But it was also noted that this style of semiotics can be limiting to the connotation because the link to the empirical world inhibits the interpretation.

The point is not the style of semiotics used, whether it is triadic or didactic, but behind both classifications of semiotics, a system of logic and reason is employed. There is no element of

randomness and the assumptions placed within the connotation are constrained within the limits of a logical structure. From this position, it is possible to appreciate the limits of logic and reason which create a sense of order and manageability and so we “assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful” (Hume, 1748, p36). This is not normally a problem because the logic and reason dynamic is usually used to deal with the empirical world, and so helps people to navigate and interact with the wider world. The viewer can believe what they see, it is this version of the truth, the accumulation of evidence that leads to forming a belief.

This can be thought of being similar to a scientific molecular model, such as *fig18*. It can seem that all of the different elements have a relationship to each other, that they are placed in positions where they have more than one connection. It is the same with truth, that each piece of evidence connects and relates to all the other pieces of evidence. This is because relating pieces of evidence relies on a certain amount of logic and deduction which is then built upon social norms and influences. Or that the subjective feelings relate to power and control because of how the subjective feeling response is controlled by the culture we live in.

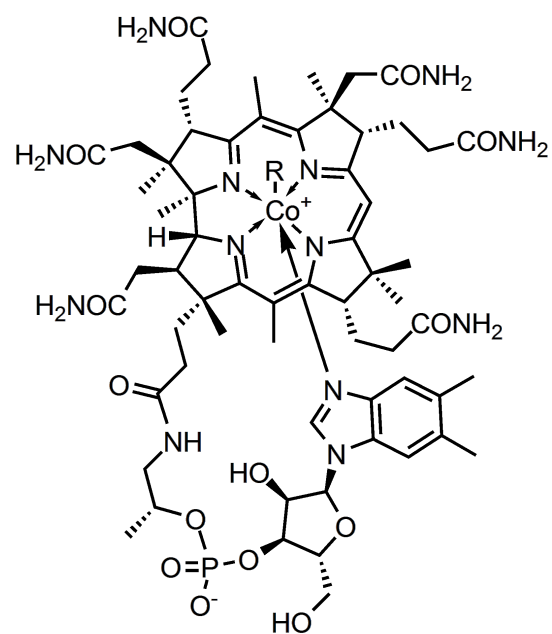


Fig 18: Molecular structure diagram

Everything relates to everything. Certain elements will overlap because those are the areas that are closest and provide the strongest bonds and connections. Other evidential elements will appear more tenuous and remote because they have less in common and are more central to its piece of evidence, but it cannot be denied that each section forms part of a greater structure.

What is being described here is the theory of structuralism. To give a brief overview, structuralism is the concept that will “focus on the internal structure of cultural objects and, more importantly, the underlying structures that make them possible.” (Culler, 1998) With focusing on structuralism, importance is given to how elements relate to each other, how closely they can bind together and strengthen each other.

Structuralism is not a new theory, it first emerged in the 1960s and one of its main contributors was Barthes. In his essay *The Photographic Message*, written in 1961, he develops structuralism in relation to photography and realises that the image cannot stand alone, that it has to relate to the wider world of culture, society and reality. This is emphasised when he states that “the structure of the photograph is not an isolated structure” (Barthes, 1977, p16) Because of this relationship, importance not only needs to be paid to how and why the image is influenced by an external structure, but also how and why the image influences culture, society and reality.

But, structuralism has two main weaknesses. As has been mentioned before, the limits of logic and reason can be restrictive and constraining and structuralism relies on logic and reason to maintain its structure. This means that even though the structure of denotation and connotation does exist and can build a definition that is rich in references, those references are limited to how they relate to each other. If these references are followed too closely then it can inhibit the creative and imaginative process of reading the photograph.

The other main weakness in structuralism is subtler but equally profound. Because the structure exists, it then assumes that this applies to everyone, and to a certain degree it does, and so diminishes the sense of individuality in the viewer. With this being the case, the viewer is treated as a collective whole and not an individual person. The concepts and ideas expressed in this dissertation have a sense of universality to them, that they can be applied to anyone who is viewing a photograph. It is this assumption that helps and hinders the viewer, that some concepts can be explored but these are from the position of being applied to a collective and not an individual.

However, there is a concept which is called Photographic Truth. This concept proposes that what is depicted within the photograph as being honest and true to reality, relying on the belief that the veracity of the image can be beyond question. As the realism of the photograph can be seen as being the centre of its own definition, it can be asserted that “Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we are shown a photograph of it.” (Sontag, 1977, p5) But, instead of being wary and cautious about interpretations and questioning the concept of photographic truth, the viewer is prepared to place their trust in the belief of the honesty of the photograph and take a leap of faith. It is because of having faith in their interpretation, that they trust what they see is beyond doubt, and so the concept of photographic truth is born.

So, what is faith? Hebrews 11:1 is often quoted when the question “what is faith?” is asked, and it states, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope and certain of what we do not see” (St Paul, 2005, p915) What is interesting about this quote is that faith does not rely on confirmation in the physical world, of trusting the evidence of our eyes, but of what is not seen, which is our inner emotional and our personal subjective feeling world. This element of faith has also been noted by others, that relying on an evidential and logical enquiry is inadequate. For instance, Kierkegaard asserts that “Faith does not simply result from a scientific inquiry; it does not come directly at all. On the contrary, in this objectivity one tends to lose the infinite personal interestedness in passion which is the condition of faith” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p376)

Before going further, it is necessary to differentiate between faith and belief, and the role that the concept of truth plays. The answer here is the function of evidence in the construction of a belief, that the definition reflects what actually happens. It is this definition which leads to the formation of something believable, and from there, a belief that it is truthful, honest and unquestionable. It is this evidence that produces a network, a structure, that holds the belief together because “truths do not stand and fall independently but are held in a network with other truths, all of which mutually support each other.” (Baggini, 2017, p96-7)

For instance, if we consider *fig18*, a photograph by Annie Leibovitz of John Lennon and Yoko Ono taken in 1980. If we note the pose of him embracing her in an almost foetal position can be

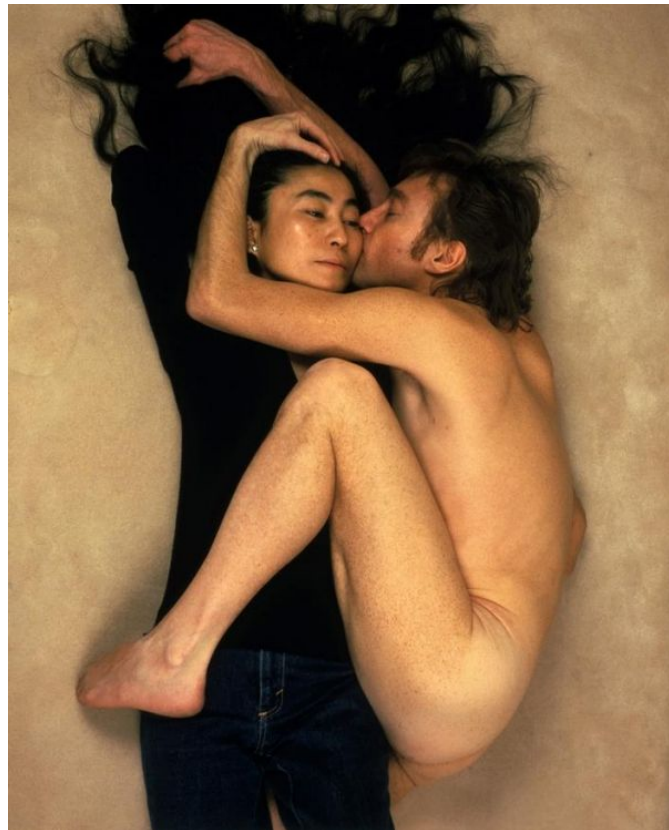


Fig 18: Annie Leibovitz – John Lennon and Yoko Ono

interpreted various ways with using meaning and values. We could say that this pose challenges the conservative value of the male being the strong and dominant person in the relationship. By relying on a cultural interpretation instead of an empirical factual definition, the viewer acknowledges that “perhaps they function as expressions of intellectual or emotional habits or attitudes.” (Blackburn,

2005, p125) By using this meaning, the definition is not relying on an empirical fact but a cultural meaning. Then when this is supported by the level of importance a viewer could give this definition leads to attributing a value to that particular meaning.

But what makes this confusing is that the structure used to assert this meaning is imitating a logical process. It could be argued that Lennon's pose implies subservience to Ono and her pose offering support for Lennon. It then becomes possible to use these two observations as the premises to form the conclusion that the photograph demonstrates the matriarchal dominance in the relationship. Because the structure is exactly the same as deductive and inductive reasoning, it can give the impression of truthfulness because it is supported by a web of knowledge. It is this holistic approach to forming the concept of the truth that makes it so believable and gives substance to any conclusion reached. Ockham nicely sums this up by stating "that arguments consist of propositions and propositions of terms. So a term is nothing but a component of a proposition." (Ockham, 1318, p152)

Both of those premises are based upon meanings which give the conclusion a significant value. It can seem as if the evidence supports the conclusion, but the evidence is created with using meanings and values that have a cultural significance and not a physical interpretation. Because there is nothing tangible about the premises used, because there is no physical attribution to those premises, just a cultural significance, means that the conclusion could be erroneous from a different cultural perspective. Consequently, it is possible to arrive at a different conclusion with the same evidence, in this case *fig18*, because "in dealing with propositions, we are dealing in the first instance with symbols, and if we attribute significance to groups of symbols which have no significance, we shall fall into the error of admitting unrealities." (Russell, 1919, p177)

This is where the leap of faith comes in. With using a logical structure to produce a connotation, but with the premises being either a cultural or subjective phenomenon - such as thoughts, emotions, subjective feelings or cultural habits - the viewer is then able to step beyond the limits of logic and reason and exercise the use of meaning and value. It is this switch in the origin of the premises, but not the structure, that forms the foundation for photographic truth. As soon as the viewer makes this switch, the image is interpreted in an entirely different way because "the transition from a set of ostensibly empirical claims to another set that belonged to an entirely different category" (Gardiner, 1988, p72)

By doing so they are exercising their sense of arbitrariness about the photograph as they can come to any conclusion and then have faith in that conclusion. As noted earlier “there is also a subjective element in faith” (Vernon, 2009, p199) and this is because faith uses meaning and value with a logical structure without the limits of logic and reason. Consequently, faith is to be found beyond the limits of reason and logic because those processes can lead to a restrictive interpretation based upon the empirical world. It is a case that when interacting with reality, reason and logic do play a significant role in navigating our path through the world, but to have an entire belief system built purely on reason and logic would be reductive and will lead to very circular thinking. There would be no creativity, no imagination and so our lives would be stifled and restricted to just one perspective, with all the limitations that implies. Logic and reason would be defining logic and reason and so leads to greater use of logic and reason, a circular pattern that would be invisible because there is no alternative, nothing to contrast logic and reason and so would go unnoticed.

To have faith in the image means that the photograph needs to be approached in a different way. Certainly, the use of logic and reason does make the image accessible, but when the interpretation is too closely linked to the empirical world, then limitations are created. As noted before, photography uses a visual language and “this is the case that meaning is a matter of language, not objects. It is a question of the way we talk about things, not a feature of things themselves, like texture, weight or colour.” (Eagleton, 2007, p1) It is in the world of emotion and subjective feelings that faith resides and becomes empowering and it is this sense of empowerment which makes faith such a powerful tool.

Ultimately it comes down to the difference between belief and faith. To believe something, the facts are usually based in reality and supported by logic and reason, whereas faith is created by emotions and subjective feelings employing meanings and values. As both use the same dynamic, relying on evidence or premises to support the conclusion, it becomes fairly straightforward to swap between the two. This can lead to confusion but also helps both systems to support each other to reach varying conclusions, but does also mean that “The question still recurs, on what process of argument this *inference* is founded? Where is the medium, the interposing ideas, which join propositions so very wide of each other?” (Hume, 1748/2008, p436)

The compatibility of the two systems will always remain questionable. But the benefit of being able to combine reason and logic with value and meaning, or belief and faith, leads to a combination that does give some answers, but also delivers flexibility and confusion. With this being the case, the



viewer is still entitled to faith in their deductions of the image and it is this faith which powers the commitment to photographic truth. Consequently, even though the photograph can be described as a facsimile of reality, it can encompass a million different definitions each as valid and as contradictory as there are people in the world.

## Conclusion

With this dissertation drawing to a close it becomes necessary to form a conclusion, to sum up all that has been said on the nature of achieving an emotional connection to a person in a portrait. To help achieve this an example is needed to demonstrate how the theory can work as a unified whole.



Fig19: Annie Leibovitz: Prince, 2016

Even before discussing the photograph the function of the image has already been set with the previous sentence. The image needs to be a portrait that can demonstrate the proposed theory about portraiture. An image that can form a connection with the viewer to help them achieve a sense of contact with the person depicted. Also, the person depicted needs to be someone who is familiar to most people and so a celebrity will be a better choice than a personal family member.

In *fig19* we see a portrait of the singer Prince, taken by Annie Leibovitz. The portrait fulfils the function that has already been set as Prince is

known worldwide with an extremely high profile, even after his death.

He is recognisable by using the system of semiotics, with noting the lines, tones and colours of the image the viewer can identify who the person is. The system of semiotics used, either the didactic or the triadic systems will both reach the same conclusion, that this is a portrait of the singer Prince. This could be because there is no ambiguity in the image as identifying the person seems to be the main aim of the image.

With recognising the celebrity depicted invokes the knowledge of the viewer, they recall what they know about him. It could be that they remember his songs, or attending his concerts or watching

him perform on television and by doing so the viewer is establishing a link between themselves and the subject matter within the image. This process personalises their reaction to the image because the viewer is relying on personal history and knowledge, of what, where and when his music, concerts, or appearances on television and so helps them to relate to the portrait and personalises their reactions.

By performing this action the viewer is constructing a paradigm of Prince's personality. The more knowledge and experiences the viewer has of Prince, then the larger and more personal the paradigm is. It could be a case that a particular song which he wrote and performed relates to an important moment in the viewer's life, or maybe an interview he gave once resonated with the viewer strongly and affected their outlook and perception of their life. As asserted before, the larger the amount of personal memories and knowledge the viewer has the stronger the connection, and so produces a larger sense of achieving contact with him through this constructed paradigm.

It is this process achieving a sense of contact through connotation that leads to having an emotional and subjective feeling reaction. By using the component theory it became possible to assert that an emotion is cognitively led, leading to a subjective feeling response. With this being the case, the portrait of Prince can invoke a sense of sadness because of his early death, or a sense of joy because of his music as the viewer relates the image to their own personal connotations. But it becomes important to remember that the emotions or subjective feelings that are experienced is due to the viewer's personal experiences and so can be totally arbitrary. They can choose how they respond and how strongly they relate to the image.

However, and at the risk of creating a contradiction, these reactions are not always arbitrary. Even though the choice to create an arbitrary connotation exists, it rarely happens because of the effect of empathy. It is this emotion that creates connections with other people and why we have the ability to respond emotionally with each other. A good example is mob rule, where a particular emotion takes hold of a crowd, such as anger, and they become unified with that emotion.

Empathy has become important because of being able to build bridges between people. Human beings are social creatures who have built communities and have learnt that a group has a better

chance of survival than an individual. As a consequence of this communication between each other is a primary importance and it is empathy which enables humans to communicate emotionally with each other.

By producing a paradigm of the personality of Prince and how the viewer relates to this pseudo personality is then projected onto the image within the portrait and so turns the image into an icon. With the viewer using their personal knowledge, life history and experiences, the portrait becomes more than just a depiction of a person, instead it can seem to take on a life of its own. The image now defines what the viewer wants it to define, which could be that Prince was the greatest musical artist of all times or an overhyped and overrated celebrity, but regardless of the eventual connotations, it is that definition which is projected onto the portrait. However, for the portrait to be an icon there needs to be an initial lack of definition to allow the new definition to take hold as an icon needs to be a partially vacant signifier. This basically means that once a definition has been reached, then that definition cannot be shifted and replaced by another definition. This is not to say that the original definition cannot be modified because the original definition will have enough flexibility to accommodate an altered definition. But if the definition was replaced then the new definition would struggle to gain anchorage within the connotation of the portrait because it has already been filled with a definition.

There are also other factors which influence the connotation of the portrait. *Fig15* is an exceptionally beautiful image, the composition is virtually symmetrical, the lighting produces a contrast that emphasises the facial details and the colours are rich. The texture of the skin emphasises the detail within the portrait and Prince's expression with his eyes closed looks peaceful. No doubt there has been a significant amount of post-production editing with the image to emphasise these points, but it has been achieved to such a high standard that it accentuates the level of beauty to an almost sublime level.

With achieving such a high level of beauty can also influence the connotation and ensure that the paradigm of the personhood created by the viewer reflects this beauty. Is it a case asking the question, can you imagine Prince – depicted here with a peaceful expression – committing a violent act? It seems almost inconceivable that the person depicted would hurt anyone and so the connotation of the viewer needs to comply with this depiction. To have the connotation of Prince

being a violent individual that had an uncontrollable temper would be at odds with his expression of serenity and peace. It could be that because of the viewer's sense of empathy that they relate to the peaceful nature of the image and so produce a connotation that supports this expression. It also the sense of harmony and balance within the image, achieved through the symmetry that further emphasises this conclusion, and it is the harmony and balance which produces the sense of beauty within the image.

This also highlights another issue, being that the viewer is complying to a cultural standard of beauty. It becomes a case that a cultural definition is being used instead of the viewer's, that the viewer has relinquished their independence in favour of conforming to a cultural norm. But it becomes important to realise that the viewer is not aware of this phenomenon because the cultural definitions have been internalised and adopted by the viewer as they are still under the impression that it is personal and empowering decisions which produces the paradigm of personhood.

All of this culminates in the notion of photographic truth. The evidence provided by the viewer through their personal history, knowledge and experiences was then formed into a paradigm. Within this paradigm all the elements of evidence relate to each other and produces a believable sense of personhood which can be projected onto the portrait. It is this process that can be known as constructionism, a theory where a conclusion is built upon various elements of evidence relating to each other. By doing so, the viewer is constructing a web of knowledge that is believable, and when a certain point is reached, a leap of faith is made that the personhood is a true and honest depiction of the personality of the subject within the portrait. Once this has been achieved, then an emotional and a subjective feeling reaction to the portrait can, and does, happen.

But it is important to mention that this theory of producing a sense of contact with the person in the portrait does not always follow the same structure as laid out in this dissertation. Because all of the sections relate to each other it becomes a case that different elements can happen in a different order. For instance, a sense of photographic truth could happen on just a couple of elements of personal knowledge and then have more added after the sense of beauty has been acknowledged. Or that that the function of the image is defined after the image is used, that it is possible to have the image influence the context of its use rather than the context using the image.

When we look at a photograph, we have a choice. We can choose to believe something totally random, or something extremely conventional and limiting, or something in between. We have total freedom within our grasp every time and it can take a brave person to exercise that freedom and think beyond our constructed norms. Perhaps it is these people can be seen as true innovators or total madmen “and yet all rational beings, simply in virtue of their rationality, seem disposed to make these judgements.” (Scruton, 2001, p100)

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