

14-10-20 [Metz, C (1985) Photography and Fetish. *October*. Vol. 34 (Autumn) pp. 81-90]

(81) Some basic differences between film + photography. Precisely defined because of determinant influence on the respective status of both in relation to fetish and fetishism.

1 Spatio temporal size of the lexis (Hjelmslev: the lexis is the socialized unit of reading, of reception. In sculpture the statue in music the piece). Photography the sheet of paper silent, is smaller than cinematic lexis. The cinematic lexis is enlarged by the sound, movement etc. It is determined by the filmmaker. One side a free re-writing time on the other an imposed reading time. Thanks to smallness and possibility for a lingering look, photography is better fit for fetish.

Also social use.. Film = collective entertainment, mostly fictional not accessible to audience. Photography high degree of social recognition that of the presumed real; mostly private life etc. But this is ambiguous because while used for social practices, also considered as works of art.

Photography very often means souvenir, keepsake. While social reception of film is mainly originated towards a show business like or imaginary referent the real referent is felt to be dominant in photography.

Both are fundamentally indexical (Pierce: the process of signification (semiosis) in which the signifier is bound to the referent not by a social convention (=symbol) similarity (icon) but by actual contiguity or connection to the world. In this sense film and photography are close to each other. Prints of real objects the chemical image often looks like the object, therefore it is an (index and an icon) Codified patterns of treatment of the image and of choice or organisation of content. In cinema the initially indexical power of the cinema turning frequently into a realist guarantee for the unreal.

(83) Photography, remains closer to the pure index. Stubbornly pointing to the print of what was, but no longer is..

For cinema movement and plurality both imply time. Opposed to the timelessness of photography which is comparable to the timelessness and unconscious of memory. Cinema adds phonic, nonphonic and musical sounds. One of the properties of sounds is its expansion. Development in time.

The importance of immobility and silence to the photographic authority, the non-filmic nature of this authority.

The importance of immobility and silence to photographic authority, the nonfilmic nature of this authority, leads to some remarks on the relation between photography and death.

(84) Death is linked to photography in different ways. The social practice of keeping photographs in memory of loved ones who are no longer alive. There's another real death which everybody undergoes each day. Each day we draw closer to our own death. The person who has been photographed is dead. Dubois remarks that with each photograph a tiny piece of time is pushed backward by the next.

Maintaining the memory of being dead as dead. (85) Object libido wishing to accompany her in death and sometimes does, yet the narcissistic claims the right to live.

Funeral rites which exist in all societies have a double dialectically articulated signification; a remembering of the dead. But a remembering as well as that they are dead and that life continues for others.

In all photographs we have this same act of cutting off a piece of space and time. Of keeping it unchanged while the world around us continually changes. Of making a compromise between conservation and death.

At this point, the problem of the space off frame in film and photography has to be raised. The fetish is related to death through terms of castration and fear. To the off frame in terms of the look glance or gaze.

(86) Terrified of the deprivation of a penis.

The compromise consists in making the seen retrospectively unseen by a disavowal of perception, and in stopping the look once and for all on an object the fetish with respect to the moment of the primal glance. Just prior to the place of the terrifying absence.

The fetish has two chains of meaning; metonymically the contiguous place of the lack.

And metaphorically an equivalent of the penis; replacing an absence by a presence. The filmic off frame space is substantial the photographic is subtle. The filmic off frame has to do with a person which is on frame one moment may be off frame the next and so on.

(87) In photography the person who is off frame will never be on frame. The spectator has no empirical knowledge on the content of the off frame but at the same time cannot help imagining the off frame, hallucinating it, dreaming it.

The punctum: subjective, the point of sudden emotion.

The off frame effect in photography results from a singular and definitive cutting off.

The photograph itself the "in_frame" the abducted part space the place of presence and fullness although undermined and haunted by the feel of the exterior, its borderlines, the left the lost, even if close by, the aura shares many properties of the fetish. The familiar photographs people carry with them

(88) The film etc etc... Film cannot be touched, cannot be carried, can not be handled.

Last difference. The spectator does not confound the signifier with the referent, she or he knows what a representation is, but nevertheless has a strange feeling of reality.

The nature of what we believe. Film disseminates belief whereas photography is able to fix it. The photographic effect is not produced from diversity, from itinerancy or inner migrations, multiple juxtapositions or arrangements. It is the effect of laser lightning a sudden violent illumination. On a limited petrified surface. : again the fetish and death. Where film lets us believe more things photography lets us believe only one.

(89) it is possible to consider psychoanalysis as the founding myth of our emotional modernity.