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I see in Camera Lucida not only a multivalent performance of incomplete mourning but also a troubled meditation on the kinds of violence potentially mobilized by the image. In bringing to the fore the question of violence, I cannot help but recall Moten's critique of the presumptive silence of the commodity in Marx, and the moral concerns about representation foregrounded in Saidiya Hartman's claim that "Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and terrible." The moral hazard, for Hartman, extends from a troubling erasure (or banalization) of singularity effected by *any* act of re-presentation. Hartman warns against the "benumbing effects of the spectacle" amidst the "precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator." Barthes' text, in light of its negotiation of the roles of witness and spectator, can perhaps shed some light on the crisis of representation Hartman's claim places us in.

In those early moments in Camera Lucida when Barthes first discloses his anxiety over the pose, an anxiety which owes to the camera's power to rend the subject into discrete, total objects (a snapshot of oneself looking impish posits that impishness as an essential fact of the person's being) which may or *may not* conform to his own 'mental image' of himself, Barthes touches upon the photograph's violent agency. I use the term agency here on account of Barthes' characterization of the photograph as an object that speaks, as when he writes "The photograph does not necessarily say what is no longer, but only and for certain what has been." While the temptation for readers is to displace the looming specter of violence onto Barthes' figure of the punctum, to contain violence within that figure which creates a private wound which elicits affect, holds our attention, allows metonymic expansion, and so forth, the photograph's superorogatory act of wounding (so much more savage than the punctum's mere "prick" is able to convey) drills a deeper hole that opens up on the ideological problem of conflating singularity with self-possession.

Toward the end of Camera Lucida, Barthes professes that "The photograph is violent: not because it shows violent things, but because on each occasion it fills the sight by force, and because in it nothing can be refused or transformed." (91) The photograph's threat, in a sense, resides in its exertion of a captivating force, a capacity to seize and hold the spectator in a kind of suspended and non-productive temporality; to put the subject in a state of paralysis that mimes the structure of what the photograph *does*: reproduce a single instant to infinity. The photograph's threat also extends from its capacity to silence the subject or even overwrite him, as when "it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory. One day, some friends were talking about their childhood memories; they had any number; but I, who had just been looking at my old photographs, had none left."

Yet despite Barthes' assertion elsewhere that the photograph's *noeme* is its intractability – the certainty that the object, the camera, and the operator *were undeniably there* – he says very little about the presence of the photographer, the photograph's very condition of possibility. While Barthes sees the object caught on film as appearing for him (his mother's singularity becoming as present to him as it ever could be, given the fact of her death), he does not provide a balanced account of the presence of the photographer / operator. While an earstwhile consideration of the Operator appears in Camera Lucida's early stages, the figure is largely absent by the time we reach Barthes' (melancholy) meditation on the death of his mother. What is missing from Barthes' text is a comprehensive account of all those persons who speak through the photograph. What I want to propose here is a reading of the spectral presence of the Operator as the ostensibly elided name of the father, as the voice (or force) of prohibition that might sever Barthes' captivation by the Maternal gaze. I want to explore how Barthes' identification with the ideological figure of the sovereign subject – its fantasy of an insular self-possessedness – effectively 'silences' the father's voice, thereby disrupting its potentially productive, emancipating severing of the (spectacular) umbilical between mother and son.

Barthes writes early in Camera Lucida that photography "is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity. / This disturbance is ultimately one of ownership.

Law has expressed it in its way: to whom does the photograph belong?" (12) Barthes makes clear that he (re)cognizes himself primarily in his sovereign subjectivity; we see this evidenced by his fixation on dualisms between partial and Total objects ("what I see is that I have become Total-Image / others – the Other – do not dispossess me of myself, they turn me, ferociously, into an object." Here he must own himself such that no one else owns him), public and private rights ("the 'private life' is nothing but that zone of space, of time, where I am not an image, an object. It is my political right to be a subject which I must protect.") In other words, it is his political right to *not* be made an object But the articulation of this political right does not simply circumscribe a private zone in which the subject remains a subject because he is *not* fractured by the Other's objectifying gaze, rendered a mere commodity. It also designates a subject whose singularity is predicated on a *certain way* of seeing and feeling. On page 21 he writes, "…could I retain an affective intentionality, a view of the object which was immediately steeped in desire, repulsion, nostalgia, euphoria? / keeping with me, like a treasure, my desire or my grief / to explore [Photography] not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think." Note here the use of the rhetorics of capitalist accumulation: "treasure", "retain."

As the text unfolds, however, we see that the photograph in fact figures as a kind of assault that threatens to hijack possession of the established way of *seeing* that anchors the subject's sense of (his own) singularity, a sense that derives from a kind of that Barthes attributes to his private(-ized) practices of constituting meaning by way of faculties of vision and attention that are exclusively under the subject's control. When Barthes avers, "the detail which interests me is not, or at least is not strictly, intentional, and probably must not be so / I dismiss all knowledge, all culture, I refuse to inherit anything from another eye than my own," he reveals a resistance to a plurality of vision – his refusal creates not simply a "blind-field" but also a "deaf-field" that renders mute the intentionality of the photographer (along with the puncturing force of a punctum that has yet to come into being), thereby foreclosing on the possibility of a radically different way of seeing self, world, and one's being-in-the-world. Not surprisingly, this (primal) scene of recalcitrance in which Barthes describes himself as a "child" follows an account of his refusal to see in the photograph of two retarded children at an institution in New Jersey precisely those "monstrous heads and pathetic profiles" the photographer wished to draw attention to by situating the children at the center of the visual frame, and in profile (which serves to emphasize their exaggerated forms.) In short, Barthes' childish insistence on his own way of seeing (and the details he is willing to see) blinds him from the Father's vision (or 'voice') – the external force of address that in an Oedipal frame facilitates the passage of the subject from Oedipal family to larger social order.

My critique is not to say that recovering the voice of the father would necessarily allow Barthes to successfully mourn the passing of his mother – to invest in new objects, to open himself up to the formation of new attachments – but it might be one way to begin cultivating a utopian space of possibility, one that might allow for a new subjectivity which, in contrast to the Proustian Narrator who insists not only upon suffering, "but upon respecting the originality of [his] suffering" – a subject who in essence proclaims "I hurt, therefore I am" – might at least potentially restore to him the optimistic futurity his circuit of melancholy feeling disavows.