

Analysis of Pulitzer Prize Winning Photographs Based on Studium and Punctum Theory

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Abstract:- The study mainly aims to analyze the Pulitzer Prize winning photographs of Daniel Berehulak using Roland Barthes's 'Studium' and 'Punctum' theory that was projected in *Camera Lucida*. The paper attempts to study these aspects through surface analysis of the photographs (five selected photographs) from 2017 Pulitzer Prize Breaking News category in photojournalism, based on the scorn for human life within the Philippines. The surface analysis includes the cultural, historical and social meanings extracted via semiotic study (Studium) and the distinctive striking feature in each photograph that produce a meaning without any recognizable symbolic system (Punctum). This meaning will be unique in reaction of the individual spectator of the images.

Keywords:- Studium, Punctum, Cultural, spectator, semiotics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Photography at this time has the peculiar dominion in manufacturing its effects numbly and invisibly over the globe. With the invention of web, the sphere of photography has full-grown remarkably in a mere snap. It has already dominated the lives of individuals particularly the youth. Photography currently, as associate degree sort, applied with the trendy technology has become the stepping stone for a larger development. Photojournalism is a specific form of journalism that employs pictures in order to narrate a news story. It is currently typically understood to refer solely to still pictures, however in certain cases the term additionally refers to video utilized in broadcast journalism.

Roland Barthes, in his book *Camera Lucida* elucidates the theory of photographic meanings with two relevant factors in an image, the Studium and Punctum. Studium is the component that evokes interest in an exceedingly photographic image. It shows the intention of the cameraman however, we tend to expertise this intention in reverse as spectators. Culture and history are relevant implications within studium. Punctum is an object or the part of a photograph that jumps out as a striking feature from it. It can be beside studium, but it creates an element which rises from the scene on the photograph interrupting studium and fills the entire image. Punctum is the unusual detail that attracts you to a photograph. The studium considering aesthetic formalisms and experiencing sympathy for the photographic subject. In distinction, the punctum was a lot of immediate and enclosed feelings of

intense affiliation between the viewer and the photographic subject. The punctum was felt as a shock that perforated through the analytical reception of the studium. Whereas the studium indexed detached sympathy, the punctum created associative emotional wound.

The Pulitzer Prize is an award given in the field of online journalism, newspaper, magazine, literature and art where the categories range from photography to music. Daniel Berehulak is an Australian freelance photojournalist, based in Mexico. He was awarded with two Pulitzer prizes in 2015 and 2017. In 2015, his coverage of the Ebola epidemic in the African region won the award for Feature Photography and in 2017 he was awarded under breaking news photography category for his coverage of the anti-drug campaign within the Philippines, depicting brutal and violent homicides. Daniel has visited over sixty countries covering history-shaping events together with the Republic of Iraq war, the trial of Saddam Husain, child labour in Asian countries, Asian nation elections and also the comeback of Benazir Bhutto to Pakistan. He has also documented folks handling the aftermath of the Japan wave and also the urban centre disaster.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In Dona Schwartz's *Visual ethnography: Using photography in qualitative research* (1989), explains that photography in qualitative analysis proposes a replacement in ethnographical analysis. By using inherent obscurities of photographic symbolic process, the qualitative analysis shapes the unique properties of photographic expression. Responses to ethnographical images of a rural farm community were recorded throughout cluster interview sessions and analysed in relevancy extra ethnographical information gathered so as to review cognitive content continuity and alter across generations in farm families. Discussions of photography within the aborning traditions of visual social science and social science are involved with two principal areas. The employment of still images as a method tool in social analysis, and also the use of images as a method of presenting social analysis. The inclination to treat photographs as unbiased proof disregards the convention-bound processes of each image creation and interpretation. So as to profit social analysis, the employment of photographic ways should be grounded within the interactive context within which images acquire that means.

Patricia Lange's Emotional expressions of the studium and punctum on YouTube infant memorials (2013) focuses on how the individuals showing emotions towards the memorial videos created by people who have suffered the loss of their loved ones. Semiotic analysis determine two states that people experience emotions on interacting with pictures and videos of individuals who have passed away. The primary is that the studium, or detached style of sympathy, and therefore the second is that the punctum, or immediate emotional wound. An analysis of many hundred comments denote to videos on YouTube suggests that some people expertise a style of the point that is not restricted to the feelings of person one is aware of directly. However is commonly activated through sympathetic feelings towards YouTube participants experiencing similar styles of mourning.

Douglas Harper's "Talking about pictures", a case for photo elicitation is a definition of picture stimulus and a history of its development in social science and anthropology. The importance of picture stimulus in these disciplines, wherever the best range of studies have taken place. The paper conjointly presents sensible concerns from a frequent researcher and concludes that picture stimulus enlarges the chances of standard enquiry. Additionally, the paper argues that picture is a stimulus which evokes data, feelings, and reminiscences that square measure attributable to the photograph's explicit style of illustration.

Sarah J Kember's Virtual life of Photography explains that though photography is proliferating and diversifying, we tend to still don't grasp what it is, so as to seek out out what it is, we tend to look into it from each the skin and also the inside: we tend to take into account each the condition of photography, and its metaphysics. New media studies, science and technology studies, and alternative connected fields facilitate to illuminate the condition of photography, or its exteriority. The article proposes that photography is often understood through the terms of memory and intuition. Memory, constitutes the virtual life of photography, and intuition, as a way of understanding.

George Powell's blog on photography states that Barthes cites the journalistic images as relevant examples for the studium aspect. Meanwhile, the proper understanding of the punctum concept will help a photographer to make powerful images. Punctum is very different and personal for each individual. This could be your memories about your childhood that comes to your mind the moment you look at a photograph.

Roland Barthes in his book Camera Lucida differentiates between a common interests in a scene, which he calls the studium, and something that arises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces - the punctum. He supposes that the punctum in the images he cites are necessarily accidental.

III. METHOD

The research method used is qualitative analysis, since the study is based on the surface analysis of photographs to

identify the studium and punctum aspects. The researcher has selected five Pulitzer Prize winning photographs of Daniel Berehulak from the breaking news category. The Studium aspect will be explained by the subjective surface analysis of the cultural, historical and social contexts of each photographs. The punctum aspects will be studied through document analysis-that includes textual data in the form of comments from the spectators available online for each selected photograph.

IV. OBJECTIVE

This research paper intends to analyse and interpret a photograph and focus on the surface analysis and exceptional striking features using Roland Barthes' Studium and Punctum theory. It helps people to gain insight into the technical and philosophical aspects of a photograph being taken and viewed. Hence, this research will help photographers/photojournalists to examine snapshots captured on a different perspective and dimension, which is emotionally, culturally, socially and historically relevant.

V. ANALYSIS

In the analysis part an attempt has been made to analyse the surface structure and the exclusive feature with five different photographs which was taken by the Pulitzer Prize winner Daniel Berehulak in the field of photojournalism under Breaking News Category and the same has been interpreted by using the stadium and punctum theory and the comments that are available online. Each photograph depicts the violence in Philippines and the chaos that prevails in the peoples' lives. The comments portray a way to analyse the way people react and connect themselves with the photographic subjects and the situations.



Fig 1:- The body of Romeo Fontanilla

Heavy rain falls on a dead body of Romeo Joel Torres Fontanilla.

The image got a number of comments where the people explains on how the body of the person is not attended by anyone also the lonely and sorrowful visual of the rain. Also, how the people suffering in a place where crime is lurking in each and every corner. People where sympathetic in their response as a person's dead body is lying without any importance.

According to the theory the Studium aspect can be explained through how the image brings out the poignant atmosphere with dark backgrounds and the falling rain, the silent street also brings out the sadness in one's mind when viewing this photograph. We can see people standing behind which is a striking feature where their helpless situation can be identified and they seem least bothered about the incident.



Fig 2:- Riding in Tandem

Michael Araja who went to the shop when he was shot dead by two men on motorcycle and his body lying on the sidewalk where the two police men examines the scene.

People share their views explaining the vulnerability and the unsafe environment for a person to go outside his home, further comments explains on how the people are experiencing it and that they should be more careful with their neighbourhood. Many have blamed the police force as they do not ensure the protection of the people.

The theory can be applied and the Studium aspect can be seen through the street with dim light and the policemen firing their torchlight on the dead body which is lying on the road and the girls and boys standing behind where they look at the body from a small gully. The Punctum aspect can be bought out from the shop opened behind and the word "Fortune" being displayed in front of the shop brings out a striking aspect in the photograph.



Fig 3:- Don't be a pusher and an addict like him

The image brings out the visual from the living room where Florjohn Cruz was killed by armed men who barged into the house. As they cleaned the room, they found a cardboard sign which said "Pusher at Adik Wag Tularan" -- "Don't be a pusher and an addict like him."

This was a bloody sight for the social media where the people commented on the blood and the image of Virgin Mary being placed where the person was killed. Also the tight space where he was trapped is being discussed among the viewers.

According to the theory, the Studium can be seen through the way things are being stacked in the cupboard and the light coloured wall with a tight space. Punctum can be observed where the family altar where an image of Virgin Mary is placed near the bloody scene, also the two bright coloured clothes hanging catches the eye of viewer.



Fig 4:- Brothers with the same fate

At the morgue, bodies were stacked like firewood where Danilo and his brother Aljon who were found dead under a bridge within a week's gap. Their mother took three weeks to scrape together loan and donations for their funeral.

People reacted in a sympathetic manner seeing the pile of dead body which are stacked together, many criticised the way the bodies are kept and also how the morgue feels like a tight space. Most people felt the need to increase resources and the conditions of the morgue.

The Studium aspect can be seen through the white coloured floor and wall with people being bought in and stacked up. Punctum can be examined by the water bottle which is a striking feature to see inside a morgue. People were disturbed by the subjects in the photograph and the conditions of the morgue.



Fig 5:- Living with the dead

The picture shows a man and woman cooking for their two month old twins where they live in a tent erected on top of a tombstone. With the number of killings increasing cemeteries have become gathering places.

People's view explains on how they felt the struggle of a couple in feeding their babies, many have commented on the unexpected fate of the people living there. Exploring the comments, we can see many people relating themselves to the photographic subject. They felt very much connected to this image as some of the viewers might have experienced similar situations. Many suggested that the authorities should do the needful for their people.

According to the theory the bright light among the dim background brings out a warm scene, the moonlit sky and the buildings show the aspect of Studium. The Punctum can be observed from the dog standing in front of the tent and how the roof of the tent catches the eye of the viewer to feel the struggle that the family is going through. These becomes a striking feature in the image.

VI. CONCLUSION

The punctum aspect strikes the viewers more as they have an intense connection towards the situation of the photographic subjects. Expressions of sympathy are analysed throughout the comments and the feeling of detachment creates an intense emotional wound. The viewers experienced sympathetic reactions not only to the photographic subjects but also to the photographer. Several comments have indexed an emotional wound by the experience of actual or fear of loss. Mainly the Punctum aspect can be derived from the people's comments as they get more involved in seeing the photographic subjects and the similar situation that they have faced before. Therefore, we can say that it is not only the visual aspect of the photographs but a feeling of being connected with that unique feature or the subjects in the photograph makes people react to it. Future studies might focus on the differences of the studium and punctum through comments to gain more knowledge on how people experience emotions when viewing the photographs.

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