

The Way of the *Bricoleuse*: Experiments in Documentary Filmmaking

Abstract

In this article I explore the way experimental documentary film practitioners may utilise the methodology of the *bricoleuse* in order to create films. I reference my experiments in documentary film practice—mediations of memory, place and subjectivities—where I deploy hybrid filmic strategies of critical realism and fictional enactment. The *bricoleuse* may use footage obtained through pocket cameras, mobile devices, stills, archive or found footage—including their own past films, analogue and digital—using a digital database to store footage, to provide her with an endless storehouse of digital documents that can easily be accessed and reused in infinite ways to create new practice (Baron 2014, 142). I analyse in particular *My Private Life II* (2015) where I used the footage from an earlier film, *My Private Life* (2014), to create a split screen view; and my short documentary essay film, *Breathing Still* (2018), (shown at The Mobile Innovation Network and Association [MINA] in 2018), a short epistolary film addressed to Rosa Luxemburg and shot on a pocket camera (Canon G9X).

Keywords

Documentary; bricoleuse; database narrative; mobile filmmaking; still and moving images; activist film; pocket camera

Introduction

In this article I discuss my methodology as a *bricoleuse* in my documentary filmmaking practice and explore the added benefits that mobile filmmaking has brought. I discuss how the use of a pocket camera (Canon G9X) to capture still and moving images in my

short film *Breathing Still* (2018) complemented the use of a digital database as an organizing tool of files and folders. The database provided in its associative possibilities, new creative opportunities to experiment in my documentary filmmaking practice. My films aim to bypass perceived constraints of evidence, authenticity or certainty and the use of hybrid filmic strategies of critical realism and fictional enactment offer a flexibility that may open a window on to distinctive and original ways of mediating historical events. The development of mobile digital media has opened new possibilities for a more intimate and immediate access to subjects and locations; to enable filming alone and unencumbered by heavy film equipment and crews; to reconsider my methodology in new and fruitful ways in the mediation of memory and history. The storage structure of data in folders and files in a digital database is helpful in the creation of a non-linear narrative since footage is easily accessed and new and different associative relationships between images and sounds may be created, discarded or repeated with ease. This is of value to my practice where I aim to use the footage stored in the database more than once in order to create new works. It allows me to make a single film or a series of films of varied lengths, free from perceived constraints of ‘time slots’ found in the mainstream film industry and broadcast television.

Experiments in documentary filmmaking

I begin with my recent experimental documentary films—cinematic mediations of memory and history, place and subjectivities, including autobiography—where my aim is to question the notion of a need to provide evidence or authenticity; to avoid perceived constraints of certainty and reliability and in the creation of fragmented non-linear narratives where the final films may be shown in diverse screening spaces. In my

films I take an essayistic approach akin to the notion of a *bricoleuse*, or the “handy woman”, who does not work to a pre-conceived rational plan but experiments with various different arrangements of elements to see if they will ‘work’ or not.¹ To this end I explore the opportunities and limitations in the use of hybrid filmic strategies, including realism; fictional enactments; voice-overs; the re-filming of analogue footage; the use of different formats and resolutions, including the use of stills and footage obtained through a pocket camera; and I consider the effects of scale in diverse screening spaces on the spectatorial experience and interaction with my films. In experimental documentary films the use of fictional enactment offers the freedom to call upon the imagined, to evoke and to engage with subjectivities in order to enrich and expand the spectatorial effects of realism while enabling the film to remain a documentary. Many of my films are located in places of traumatic events such as war or are suffering the effects of economic globalization; in the mediation of place I explore the concept that place may be foregrounded in my films, not for its aesthetic qualities, but as a character to interact with memory and subjects. I discuss my extensive use of disconnected subjective voices in a range of tenses, which may create clashes of temporalities between sound and image. My film practice is also centred on the representation of my self to create a form of ‘subjective cinema’ where embodied authors perform themselves in the first-person mode (Rascaroli, 2009). This approach has become increasingly prevalent in recent years in Practice as Research (PaR) carried out from within the academy.

The logic of the database

¹ The term *bricoleur* was first coined by Lévi-Strauss. He notes that the *bricoleur* works by means of signs, signs that “address somebody” (Lévi-Strauss 1968, 20).

There has been a great deal of discussion around the use of the digital database in the development of new media, including the making of CDs, DVDs, the new art object, multimedia, interactivity and video games. The term is used, for example, to reference an editorial bin/folder, an associative assemblage, an embracing of the repurposing of personal and public archives. The database is as much an organising principle as it is a structure of contemporary post-production processes. Manovich, a digital theorist was the first to coin the term ‘database filmmaking’, observing that in computer science the database is defined as a structured collection of data, organized for fast search and retrieval and therefore it is anything but a simple collection of items (Manovich n.d., 218).² In my practice I gather footage for storage until it is required and the database structure lends itself to use of this footage in multiple ways; to experiment with cinematic language and the construction of non-linear narratives. I do not preplan a film through a written script of scenes and sequences, but I do give prior thought to aesthetic considerations and I loosely plan what I intend to film; I bear in mind that the final structure will be found through the editing. In my pre-production plan I consider who and what I might film; where I will film; what I would like my subjects to say or do; the length of takes and whether to use static or moving shots; whether to shoot in the day or night and I plan the type of framing I will use. In the production stage I use this plan as a guide and I also rely on the element of chance encounters during filming that I consider may later prove useful; in my experience chance occurrences may radically change a film’s discourse. I rely on these chance encounters to enrich a film’s meaning. I bear in mind that in a world of multiplying images—increasingly obtained through mobile phone cameras—there is the danger that the collection of multiple images and

² The database has many uses but here I restrict my discussion to the way that I utilize some of its benefits in my documentary film practice.

sounds without any preplanning or purpose into a database may become an end in itself—to form an archive of lost memory without purpose. Sequences collected in a database need to have some intentionality through a discursive structure that they do not possess as inert footage in order to become relevant or meaningful (Ellis 2012, 125).

I suggest that the digital database can be usefully utilized for the construction of experimental documentary films where my aim is for images and sounds to convey multiple meanings, thus enabling less reliance on plot. As Kracauer points out: ‘Plot insists that images carry only one meaning—whatever is significant to the narrative. Take away the plot and one is left with images that are indeterminate, their multiple (poetic) meanings left intact’ (Kracauer 1960, 68). Once the file is edited, exported and projected in the way the filmmaker wants, the completed film may be easily shown in any form of screen, black box or gallery and the particular experience is no different to watching any other film in that form. The database provenance may be discarded.

In my films I place great store on what may be lying just outside the frame to allow the spectator the possibility to imagine what may lie beyond since my aim is for reflection and sensation; the expressive and the poetic. In watching an edited film there is always an aura of loss, where the spectator may imagine what was not included. Sobchack observes this gives some films poetic power: ‘The poetic power of some films and art for the spectator are the sensations of the “missing presences [that] crowd the imagination”’ (Sobchack 2003, 67). Increasingly in today’s digital era, films will be uploaded for screening via the Internet and it may be seen on the smaller frames of the computer, mobile phone, TV or laptop and this poetic sensation may be lost; however,

it is possible that watching a film on a screen while wearing headphones may offer a greater immersive sensation where the poetic may be maintained.

My documentary films

In my three autobiographical films, *My Private Life* (2014), *My Private Life II* (2015) and *The Border Crossing* (2011) I adopted an auto-ethnographic approach which Catherine Russell describes as ‘a form of “self fashioning”, where the ethnographer comes to represent themselves within the film as a fiction, inscribing a doubleness within the ethnographic text’ (Russell, 1999). Russell points out that in this approach ‘a common feature is the first person voice-over that is intensely and unambiguously subjective’ (Russell, 1999). Lebow argues that first person filmmaking always carries with it a challenge to the notion of the possibility of a unified subject (Lebow, 2012). She observes that where the filmmaker is both the subject and the object of the gaze she is necessarily divided but it is that very division which makes first person filmmaking so complex, co-implicated and, indeed, so compelling (Lebow, 2012). In these films, my intention was to strip down dramatic conflict to allow the exploration of internal conflict through other means such as location, observation of daily routines, disconnection of sound and image to hint at the subjects: emotional, psychological and spiritual realities (Mason, 145).

The Border Crossing and *My Private Life* were shot over a period of two or three years. Some pre-planning was carried out, bearing in mind the needs of the subject and location and for the provision of chance encounters with subjects and place. In *The Border Crossing*, I used fragments from an unfinished text I wrote years earlier, consisting of descriptions of my journey through the Basque country in Spain and

France and a sexual attack. The fact of the incomprehensibility of the violent experience continues to haunt me and has led to its non-assimilation through direct recall. In attempting to mediate my memories of trauma through the production of a documentary film I faced specific problems. Memories of traumatic events are generally temporally fragmented and contain elisions. Classic linear narrative conventions where events are placed in a sequential order with a clear beginning, middle and an end were therefore insufficient as a mode to represent memory of trauma due to the difficulty of fixing memory of traumatic events to specific moments in time. Therefore, in *The Border Crossing* I chose to evoke memory through the construction of a non-linear narrative that appears closer to poetry in order to suggest memory. Repetition of images, and sounds disconnected from images played a central role in the construction of the film.

My Private Life (2013) is a 63-minute film. It explores the turbulent effect of my father's unacknowledged sexuality on my familial history. It tells something about my parents' early lives, their marriage and divorce; my mother's remarriage and violence at the hands of my stepfather and my parents' decision to live together again. I filmed the routines of daily lives and conversations to camera inside my parents' small flat in north London; I also filmed the exteriors of several houses where they had lived together and separately during the course of their lives. I also recorded conversations with each parent about their life stories. I intended to use these recordings as voice-overs in the editing to mingle with my voice-over. I began with my mother but this process was not completed by her death after a year of filming. In the aftermath of her death I carried on filming my father and continued with the voice recordings. I also recorded myself talking to camera in my own flat commenting on events that happened during filming. I stopped filming immediately after my father without warning moved

house. I found the narrative structure through the editing process. The film is divided into three sections, the first two structured around my father and my mother and the last around my father and me. My parents talk about the shared memories of their lives together and their lives apart. With the structure in place I filmed my hands constructing a model of a terraced house. I chose to carry this out in a studio in order to create a performative element in the film's narrative; these sequences are intercut throughout the film until the house is 'built'; cobwebs of glue thread their way over the windows, evoking my failure to achieve any revelations of secrets that may rebuild familial relationships.

In 2015 I made *My Private Life II*, a 25-minute, split-screen version of the original film. I used the database of images to re-edit the footage. My aim was to reflect on the different possibilities of format, narrative and editing choices; to expand the idea of uncertainty and lack of closure since the text may always continue in new forms. Each of the three central characters occupy a single frame (sometimes moving to another frame) within the single screen, evoking confinement and estrangement from each other; the narrative has a chronological structure—but the forward flow and drive of narrative linearity is disrupted by the effect of the horizontal viewing of the three screens and the repetition of images. The pace and rhythm of the editing is faster than the earlier film. At the heart of this methodology is the use of repetition in images, gesture and sound to allow a reconsideration of the film's discourse. According to Agamben 'Repetition is not the return of the identical; it is not the same as such that returns. The force and the grace of repetition, the novelty it brings us, is the return as the possibility of what was' (Agamben, 2002). A reframing of the narrative structure allows for a new reading of the original text, creating fragmentation, not through the

narrative, but through repetition of images and in the use of split screens within the single frame of the film to create an additional reference point and potential re-assessment of the original mediation in the spectator's imagination.³

For each film I obtained audio-visual digital footage in varied resolutions without preconception of the finished film. In the editing I may assemble and edit text, voice-over, chapter headings or deploy digital manipulation in order to create a linkage in the disparate sounds and images. The footage stored in the database may be used multiple times in different ways in new films. This methodology provided me with the freedom to overcome the perceived constraints of consistency in production values and linear narrative structures. Mason argues that: 'There is an implicit acknowledgement within database film-making that there are many sides to a story, just as there are many meanings to an image, and it is this that makes it, arguably, a more democratic, less prescriptive, mode of address' (Mason 2012, 154). My approach as a *bricoleuse* 'making do' with what is to hand allows me to experiment with a hybridity of filmic strategies and interdisciplinarity. In 'making do' with what is to hand, it is only when the collected elements are ordered does their significance to the project become clear. Once the elements are collected in the database the transformation of the elements is obtained through editing; one alteration to an element will affect all the others. This releases the *bricoleuse* from constraints in the conventions of mainstream filmmaking through genre, the necessity for a linear narrative structure, or the requirement for consistency in production values of images and sounds; as a *bricoleuse* I had the freedom to construct my films through hybrid filmic strategies, and editing the film,

³ I discuss the methodology I deployed in *My Private Life II* in Blurred Boundaries: remediation of found footage in experimental autobiographical documentary filmmaking, *Media Practice & Education* Vol. 18, No. 1, 2017.

using a transformational convergence of disparate elements to remix and construct new cultural meanings (Rossi, 2013). Kluge refers to this type of editing as ‘constellation editing’ where images are edited together with direct links or grammatical connections rather than narrative connections in order to create non-linear narratives:

Constellational filmmaking is a gravitational power, like the sun. It is not linked by hinges to the planets and the moons. They’re quite independent, you see, but the gravitational power brings them into Newton’s order. Complete galaxies function like this...This is independent from direct links. It has gaps. It is a montage. ...Without direct link, without grammatical connections, you show context. (Kluge qtd. in Thomas, n.d.).

The pocket camera and the camera phone

In the production of *The Border Crossing* and the two *My Private Life* films intimacy with my subjects was very important; working without a formal film crew, often completely alone, without artificial lighting or large cameras removed distractions.⁴ However, juggling the camera, sound and lights as a self-shooter at the same time as interacting with my subjects was difficult and I often failed to capture useful spontaneous events. I therefore chose to use a small pocket camera to shoot my next film, *Breathing Still* (2018). Leo Berkeley, in a reflection on the making of his documentary essay film, *the 57* (2013), an exploration of his travels on the number 57 tram in Melbourne, Australia, discusses the advantages of using a mobile phone to shoot his film:

⁴ In my documentary *Secret Heart* (1994), a 16mm film about young women with learning disabilities, they were very unsettled by the presence of a male film crew; one young woman was also upset by the close proximity to her head of the large microphone on a boom.

Shot over an extended period of time intermittently and taking advantage of what may happen to arrive was expedited by the extreme portability of a mobile camera. In aiming to film the everyday and on occasion the not-so-everyday a larger camera would have been more intrusive and produced a different creative outcome. (Berkeley, 27).

The camera phone is now ubiquitous. It has developed from its low origins of high pixellation, desaturated colour and poor sound to high resolution HD obtained through apps, and has shifted the boundaries between professional and nonprofessional practice into a space that Berkeley terms an “in-between space” (Berkeley) that positions the filmmaker outside the mainstream industry and mass media. Schleser points out that camera phones have become part of our everyday lives:

These developments will not replace existing media channels, but rather converge with them and more significantly can also provide an alternative to them. Alternative is understood here as positioning filmmaking outside the mass media production environment either in a web 2.0 commercial enterprise or an alternative political context. (Schleser 2013, 94).

As Keep observes: ‘the mobile phone [...] is a central part of a convergence culture that is transforming our understanding of media and communication in the new millennium (Keep 2014, 15). For my short film *Breathing Still* (2018), an activist film, I chose to use a pocket camera because it was more solid and robust than a camera phone, had great portability, took high quality stills and HD moving image and since my aim was towards the poetic, I did not capture sync sound. This meant I could design a soundscape in the editing, that gave me more control to create a hybrid of mimetic

realism with the poetic. *Breathing Still* was conceived as a spontaneous response to a significant moment in recent German history, a general election in 2017, when the right-wing nationalist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was poised to take seats for the first time in the National Parliament. The AfD subsequently became the largest opposition party. My aim was to contrast two different historical periods, drawing parallels between past and present through the production of an activist film that may contribute to social change. It is an epistolary film—a mediation of history and memory through images of streets, posters and buildings in Berlin—addressed to the revolutionary Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, assassinated in 1919 by the Freikorps—disaffected soldiers who later facilitated Hitler’s elevation to power. It is constructed primarily through stills. I bore in mind Kluge’s argument that explorations of significant moments in history inflect the ‘past and future in equal measures [and] require the corresponding artistic approach, able to encompass a backward and forward perspective into history’ (Kluge in Nagib 2011, 83). I bore in mind that the mimetic realist approach as a reductive method does not encourage action.

The reduction to objectivity and simple facts actually has an altogether negative effect: bad reality proves its staying power [...] if I watch a documentary about South Africa, I not only register that the events are occurring. I also feel disheartened, because sitting there in front of the television screen, I cannot change them. (Kluge 2019, 158).

However, in the era of mobile phone cameras it is increasingly likely that the armchair viewer may also be the producer of their own content generated through their own camera phones and uploaded to social media. They may be very familiar with the subject of an activist film. In a discussion of the role of the witness in significant

political events, Kapur notes that: ‘witnessing begins to occur at multiple levels—*within, with and because of* [their emphasis] mediation of technology. Access to the media itself become hybridized as the embodied presence of the witness is negotiated by various screens-smartphones, desktops, tablets etc etc.’ (Kapur, 2018). The effect of this multiple witnessing may be overwhelming for the spectator. My aim therefore in *Breathing Still* was to construct a temporal space for spectatorial reflection and sensation rather than short-lived outrage, to create a discursive structure to encourage political resistance through action. The footage lends itself to—and is intended for—its potential use in future films.

The flâneuse

In *Breathing Still*, I carried out the dual role of filmmaker and performative role of a flâneuse, wandered alone through Berlin streets with my pocket camera, photographing houses, streets and posters and memorials. Berlin is rich in memorialization of its own turbulent history; walking through the streets and riding trams and trains is like travelling through an archive of memory—history experienced in the present. Referring to his own mobile filmmaking, Kossoff asks whether ‘the mobile phone facilitates the contemporary flâneur? That is the urban wanderer who individualizes time and space by remaining outside of the metropolitan crowds and the cut and thrust of the city’ (Kossoff 2014, 39). In its scope of a close proximity to subjects and objects, the camera phone or pocket camera has a great advantage for the flâneuse over a larger camera; where a large camera distorts the body and creates a visible physical barrier between filmmaker and subjects and objects, the camera phone or pocket camera is unobtrusive and close to the filmmaker’s body. While any camera may draw attention, the

multiplicity of phones and screens nowadays does not single out the mobile phone filmmaker for particular attention.

Fig. 1 *Stolpersteine* in *Breathing Still*, (Daniels) (2018) (screenshot)

In my earlier films I used stills from archive footage when moving image was unavailable to me in order to conjoin past and present. I also used contemporaneous still photographs within moving image sequences, to provide temporal rupture through the different format, point of view and focal length to the sequence, a spectatorial sensation of distantiating and on occasion, a ghostly effect. Pennell points out that the hybridization of cinematic strategies with the present convergence of media platforms has undermined assumptions about the ontological distinction between still and moving images. She notes that:

The merging of still image and moving image has highlighted the complex and malleable nature of images, and the temporal and perceptual experiences they are capable of producing. It follows then, that the experience of time that is generated through a combinatory approach to photograph and film, is also malleable and can be shaped according to particular strategies, in relation to specific contexts and ends. (Pennell 2019, 2).

In my earlier films I often took static shots on a locked-off camera, where only the movement of a leaf on a bush or tree within the frame indicated duration, and on occasion since there was no perceptible movement at all within the 'moving image' frame, any perceived distinction between the moving and still image was blurred and ambiguous. The effect of the use of the still image within a moving image sequence

creates a rupture and concentrates spectatorial focus. The spectator may speculate on what may lie outside the space of the frame since there is no distraction of movement to alert the eye to different parts of the frame. The temporal effect suggests an instant in time but if after a while there is a slight movement in the frame to alert the spectator that the image is moving there is another rupture. This effect contrasts to the effect of the freeze frame where there may be a direct comparison between the continuity of pre-existing movement and the sudden shock of a halt to proceedings, drawing the spectator's immediate attention. Mulvey concludes that: 'The reality recorded by the photograph relates exclusively to its moment of registration; that is, it represents a moment extracted from the continuity of historical time [...] The moving image, on the contrary, cannot escape from duration, or from beginnings and ends, or from the patterns that lie between them' (Mulvey 2006, 13-5). Mulvey observes that there are moments that can now be viewed through digital technology that can separate from the narrative whole or take on the heightened quality of a tableau where moments of beauty or meaning can be found before the image is reactivated and then continue to affect the image once it is reactivated (Mulvey, 28). 'Moving-images are apt at providing horizontal information, pushing a story forward, while photographs are equally apt at providing vertical information, enabling viewers to penetrate deeper into a moment [...] A series of stills may add poetic reflection to the linearity of a scene' (Mason, 156). Since the footage I collected in Berlin for *Breathing Still* consists almost entirely of stills, their subsequent cropping and editing to create sequences linked by my guiding voice-over gives the illusion at times of movement. The sensation of movement, even though sequences consist of a series of stills, pushes the film forward but moves away from realism into poetic reflection. On other occasions a single still provides the vertical information that Mason highlights. The use of the pocket camera to capture stills that

may be edited into a moving image film may also be understood as helping to ‘configure our relationship with photography and has promoted a reimagining and remediation of the tropes associated with traditional cinema and photography’ (Keep, 15).

As I have said many of my decisions in the filmmaking process are made instinctively during filming itself and I rely on chance encounters and ‘what is at hand’ to build a database of heterogeneous images and sound based on my evaluation of their potential; they may form part of the film later. I had not intended to use moving image in Berlin for *Breathing Still*, but when I shot some video on the pocket camera at random in order to check the quality of the footage, one of the shots turned out to have some value. The image shows a tourist boat on the canal where Luxemburg’s body was thrown after her death. Behind me on the bank of the canal where I was standing is a memorial to Luxemburg. Tourists on the boat deck, looking directly at the camera, wave at me, or the camera or at someone behind me. During the editing, I cut in stills of the memorial, then cut to this shot, slowing it down and editing my voice over the image: ‘Are they waving to you Rosa?’ My intention was to use this slowed down moving image to draw attention to the ambiguous nature of gesture, in order to create what MacDougall describes as what is essential in the pure nature of the moving image, ‘a cinematic moment’, neither signifier nor signified, but unsignified (MacDougall 1998, 49). A similar moment occurs in *The Border Crossing*, in a static shot of an empty corridor. The image consists of walls, divided by vertical door frames and closed doors, parallel to the vertical edges of the frame. An orange carpet divides the wooden floor. The effect is one of enclosure. After six seconds of silence there is a momentary low buzzing noise, the light on the walls in the foreground of the image darkens, that may create a sensation of spectatorial disquiet. The buzzing sound has no direct signification. I consider this

to be another example of a cinematic moment that I find valuable in the exploration of trauma in my films.

Fig. 2. *Breathing Still*, (Daniels) (2018) (screenshot)

Fig. 3. *The Border Crossing*, (Daniels) (2013) (screenshot)

In *Breathing Still* I embedded my fictionalized self into the film in my dual role of subject and author through extensive voice-over in the form of an address to my 'heroine' Rosa Luxemburg; this method lent itself to experimentation, the poetic and the uncertain. In the construction of the film in post-production I aimed for a hybrid structure consisting of a poetic non-linear narrative. I scripted and recorded my voice-over and I added written text in order to create a linkage to the sounds and images. The stills were added to the database, edited extensively through cropping, enlarging some areas of the still, and digital manipulation and the new versions uploaded to the database. Later I added found footage of the election celebrations. The freedom I found through my use of a database of hybrid footage extends to my choices of screens; *Breathing Still* may be shown in a black box in a single viewing or looped to play continuously on a monitor in any choice of site. The footage gathered in the database for *Breathing Still* will be used again in the next epistolary essay film addressed to Rosa Luxemburg, *Resisters* that I am currently making in Berlin.

Conclusion

In the methodology of the *bricoleuse* where images and sounds are collected without extensive pre-planning in the creation of non-linear narrative experimental documentary films through what Kluge describes as ‘constellation editing’, the use of the pocket camera and digital database has enormous value. A pocket camera is solid and robust, has great portability, dispenses the need for a film crew and takes high quality stills and HD moving image. A film may be edited within the computer, drawing on this world of images and sounds and the final film itself may be stored in the database to form a personal archive. However, while my films are open access and can be viewed on any screen I am conscious of the unintended effect of scale in viewing possibilities. Susan Stewart compares the viewing of a film on the screen of a mobile phone to looking at a miniature art object where ‘the miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time. [...] The reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday life world, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its ‘use value’ transformed into the infinite time of reverie’ (Stewart 1993, 65). A further concern is that the database is inert and therefore its storage capacity as an archive of memories may eventually be boundless. What does this infinite capacity for the collection of vast quantities of memories imply for future generations? Sobchack warns of the potential dangers of the database to memory:

The database’s hierarchical order becomes labyrinthine—comprehensive but incomprehensible, a vast and boundless maze of images and sounds, dreams, and visions in which one follows, backtracks, veers off, gets lost in multiple trajectories, all the time weaving tenuous threads of association into the endless teleology and texture of desire. (Sobchack, 67).

Sobchack questions the stability of the re-ordering of these ‘unstable bits of experience. Here, there is no fixed data or information requiring mere *re-collection* (her emphasis); here, from the first, are only unstable bits of experience, disordered as they are *re-remembered*’ (Sobchack). For my experimental documentary practice the immediate value of the pocket camera and the database is in their ease of use as tools and from there the value is in my intentionality, how I may render the footage relevant or meaningful and viewed on screens of my choice.

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