

Recollect: Snippets of Self

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Abstract

This writing explores the place of personal testimony against broader political landscapes of official histories and narratives. It looks at home video footage and family photographs as part of the visual portrait of a curated record of the autobiographical self. I reflect on the process of the making my documentary film, *Fraternal*, which explores the history and memory of my own family. The film is set against the backdrop of the political situation in southern Africa during the 1980s, when my parents left South Africa and my twin brother and I were born in Zimbabwe, and the 1990s, when my family returned to South Africa after the unbanning of the ANC. The film is predominantly comprised of personal home video footage: a mixture of Super 8mm, Hi8 and DV. The film was employed as a methodological instrument to explore the theoretical landscape where I located my mode of practice in Barthes's punctum and autoethnography. This writing explores both the film and what emerged from the making of it, how I mobilised the archive and how the film provided an anchor for my own subjective journey into my past and my future.

Prelude

"After the event has ended, the picture will still exist..." writes Susan Sontag in her often-quoted work, *On Photography*.¹ Family images we collect of our lives serve as personal and intimate records of ourselves our narrative, our autobiography, our lingering existence. Arguably one of the most visceral ways in which memory is kept alive is through artefact. Through the photographs and their accompanying stories through the clothes worn to an event, the blanket that lulled one to sleep, the love letters that have remained unburned. These artefacts are also digital through the selfies, texts, videos and emails in ever-growing inboxes. The digital, analogue and real worlds leave indelible traces of the moments we have lived and offer space for quiet reflection. Some years ago, I accessed my family's home-movie archive to piece together a narrative. As an experienced video editor and director, I found myself making a film to develop a clearer picture of the stories that were told to me as a child. I began to blend these stories based on the images in the home movies with memories as I had experienced them.



Figure 1: poster for *Fraternal*, 2015

My twin brother was moving to Germany and I felt wrenched from my relationship with him, and my place in our shared world. We have a close bond, having shared numerous experiences, such as first days of school, birthdays, school dances, moving house the sync of a twinned existence. The film *Fraternal* was developed from the huge repository of archived “memories” that my parents had documented of our childhood.² Photographs were taken and many turned into slides, Polaroids were shared, Super 8mm footage was shot and audiotapes were recorded. The majority of the content featured my twin brother and I playing in the promising light of post-independence Zimbabwe. They show the rhythm of the 1980s and the footage did not yet have the edge of Pinterest perfection. The documented images were not widely shared and were primarily for my grandparents, who lived in the United States of America.

Prolepsis: Beginning a Conversation

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Film clip 1: opening sequence

In general, the opening sequences of a film introduce its style, its theme and sets the viewing contract with the audience. *Fraternal* begins with a prolepsis of my brother at the airport before his departure from Johannesburg, which is intercut with scenes from our childhood. It sets up our relationship from our twin childhood past to our present adult lives. Just as memory is a multifaceted imaginative space of actual events and can collapse different senses of time, the film’s opening sequence juxtaposes disparate audiovisuals in a layered way from various sources, creating a spatially and temporally indeterminate space connecting the past with the present.

The past visuals are of my brother, father and I flying kites against a cloudless day. This seems to be an idealised time, a relishing of days gone by, shot in Super 8mm film, which further stimulates these feelings of nostalgia. The visuals are augmented with diegetic sounds of the environment, in addition to the whirl of a film projector. I have also added layers of non-diegetic sound: my mother interacting with my brother and I, coupled with present-day interview and sound snippets of my mother’s journalistic news reports from her current affairs radio talk shows from the 1980s and 1990s. The radio sound snippets I have used are representational of more

traditional archive material news bulletins stating the facts of the day. However, these more traditional pieces of archive are in fact the outtakes from my mother's reports to the various radio stations she worked for while my parents were in exile in Zimbabwe, and thus still private, more unseen moments of archive. While *Fraternal* is contextualised by the broader historical backdrop of the socio-political context of my childhood, it is done from a personal perspective, using voice sound snippets and interviews from different eras with visuals from the 1980s. These temporal collapses lead to a sense of foreshadowing of the emotional, political and technological futures of the film narrative. "Once again that identity is inscribed not only in history but in technologies of representation."³

My mother directed the archival home footage, and she is often heard goading us to "smile for the camera" moments I've sometimes chosen to include in the montage. This complicated relationship between my mother, the footage and myself seems to indicate what Marianne Hirsch describes as postmemory: "the relationship between an object, the creator of the object and a medium or mediator of that relationship."⁴ The object in this case is the ethnographic footage, the creator of the object is my mother, and the mediator of that relationship is my role as the film-maker. As Hirsch expounds, this relationship object, creator and mediator all have their own separate but linked relationships with each other.⁵ By using the archival footage in combination with material I filmed specifically for *Fraternal*, I aimed to expose these interlinked relationships: how my life's narrative was shaped by both the creator (my mother) and the object (the ethnographic footage) and my appropriation of the footage for the film. Using an approach termed "memory work", coupled with the idea of Hirsch's postmemory leads me to an ownership of the archival material and a way to develop an (auto)biography through making the film.⁶ As Jyoti Mistry notes, "8mm film or 'home-movies' firstly produce in themselves as a medium an autobiographical quality owing to their provenance; the conditions of their production."⁷

A Shoebox of Photos

Two factors led my parents to create an extensive repository of family home movies and photographs. First, my mother is an American and lived in Zimbabwe from 1982 to 1990 while the country was meeting the challenges of its independence in 1980 after decades of colonialism. My mother felt the pressure to send home reassuring images of her new life with her South African husband and young family in Zimbabwe. Second, since my parents were in political exile from South Africa, they were largely unable to travel back to South Africa to visit their friends or my father's family. We lived in a kind of limbo, working towards and waiting for political change in South Africa, dislocated from both the home countries of my parents. Their photographs and films assumed an even greater importance than the usual chronicling of young children's lives. My family was, in a sense, "homeless" and in the absence of a material space we could call "ours", these images provided a profound sense of belonging.

This belonging or "home" in the photographs and home movies is in part metaphoric and in part constructed from the visual documents of my family archive. This duality echoes my experience of being a twin. It represents liminality, an intimate notion of difference in sameness, akin to the difference between memory and reality and informed the aesthetic choices I employed in the film. I operated in the space between memory and truth, the grief of separation between past and present and the connect and disconnect between the personal and the political. It is these conceptual paradigms that enriched the crafting of the film from the home video footage. The autobiographical story I tell in the film is both informed by, and also counter to, the story found in the footage, both concordant and discordant with my twin brother's version of the narrative. These "collapses" between boundaries provide a playful, pluralistic approach to the making of sense of self in a cinematic way. The many paradigms that coexist within the film do not exist in binary relation to each other, but rather exist in

conversation and challenge the dichotomy of subject-object relations.

Senior Millennial

I was born in 1982, on the cusp of being a millennial I am not a digital native and the analogue era was a very solid part of my early life. When I was making this film in the early 2010s, I did not have a smart phone that could capture imagery with significant quality. To make this film I had to ask my grandmother to ship dusty Super 8mm reels, which I converted to DVD and then to digital files. It felt like a treasure trove and indeed 8mm footage of this time in Zimbabwe was unusual and a luxury afforded to us by my American mother and her parents who could post the film stock. Today, an extensive contemporary family archive in digital formats is not so unusual. Many hours of footage are shot on smart phones and prosumer cameras often right from the moment of birth, and applications for documenting and sharing selfies and family images like Facebook, Instagram and twitter are parts of everyday environments that enable storytelling with ease and immediacy. Sharing and consuming autobiographical experiences and the first-person narrative is the Internet's "mother tongue". The vessels of memory are no longer shoeboxes under the bed, but gigabytes of data that exist in the virtual spaces of the cloud. But the photographing or shooting of family life is still an act of identity, memory and communication, just with a different rhythm. With changing technologies, the social practice of making home videos has adapted the quantity and speed of the digital image is incomparable to the time-consuming and expensive nature of analogue formats. The impulse for documenting the self also seems to have shifted in network culture, where "the self produced by networked auto/biography isn't the sole focus: the self is positioned in a complex web of production and consumption, part of a community of life narrators writing themselves *and* others in ways that make them identifiable to the network itself."⁸ These digital images often feed into applications that automatically create an archive or a life narrative as content accumulates over time without the chore (or joy) of making a photo album with paper and glue. Sometimes even google or your iPhone creates a video just *for you*, unasked a pop-up on your phone indicating "a memory" automatically generated for your consumption. With the networked image, or video content, you may know its first date of "sharing", but not its afterlife, where it may be plagiarised, ridiculed, adored or edited. The afterlife is long and varied. In contrast to the vast online consuming audience, my small extended family was the only audience for the home videos.

Consider the example of home video footage not cell phone, but digital which has become a YouTube hit. The clip is called "Charlie Bit My Finger". The 55-second video clip has had over 338 million views, and remains the most viewed YouTube video that is not a professional music video. The clips feature two baby brothers in the backseat of a car, while the younger brother bites the older sibling's finger and giggles. Their father, Howard Davies-Carr, claims the video clip was only meant for an audience of one, he tells the British *Sunday Times* that "the clip only went up as I wanted to share it with the boys' godfather. I was naive about the whole YouTube thing. It became viral and once that happened there was nothing I could do. People have sent lovely comments and messages and I now upload a new video of the boys every six weeks."⁹

This must be the most vivid example of the changing interaction with private family home video footage as it moved into a public realm where viewers of the footage are no longer relations and close friends, but are rather a world of strangers. In fact, the video clip of over-exposed visuals shot with an unsteady hand has been viewed more times by other people than actual family members of the little boys on screen. The footage's digital nature allowed it to be easily and swiftly uploaded onto the Internet, where it reached the status of a cultural meme.

New online self-narration is open-ended, continuously offering itself up for engagement, unlike the three-act structure film I crafted in *Fraternal*.

*The networked auto/biography of [social networking sites], but also, to different degrees, of the Web in general is a life narrative told serially, even in fragments, inscribing the moment (as captured in Facebook's status update prompt, "What's on your mind?"). As part of a series, rather than a definitive take on a whole life or even an experience, it is concisely told, with the expectation that it will be regularly updated to keep the network experience going.*¹⁰

My parents' videos were more closed, with a particular, narrow audience in mind, and were not up for "public" comment as on the Internet. This audience engagement with online content of home video seems to indicate that the big driver to document is the audience in the greater network of mostly strangers, rather than anyone directly linked to the individual. Kara Van Cleaf, through her study of "Mommy Bloggers", talks about this change as a move away from second-wave feminism's political use of the first-person narrative to a sense of commodification as these bloggers (or "influencers") peddle products in their narratives. Van Cleaf speaks about movements from the "personal-for-political to personal-for-production" and how "the feminist project of situating women's experiences within a larger social contest as a way to effect change... has disappeared."¹¹ She continues:

*today, when personal experience meets up with digital technology, it is mined instead for two intertwined forms of value production: emotional and economic. Emotional value comes from the "crowdsourcing" of validation... economic value comes from the way online platforms turn such digital expression of care into content, which the proprietors of social media platforms leverage for profits via data accumulation, advertising, and website traffic.*¹²

Finding Myself in the Footage

Psychologist David Pillemer suggests "human experience is conceived as a process of constructing and reconstructing a life narrative."¹³ He indicates that we have a desire to make sense of ourselves by constructing a life story, or an autobiographical self, made up of perceived/remembered events that we deem important. The photographed images of our lives are one way in which we can construct this narrative. Important moments and people are eternalised in photographs they serve as the visual backup (or inspiration) for the narrative structure of the self. "Photographs furnish evidence" they provide testament to our existence and confirmation of our narrative.¹⁴ Marianne Hirsch, in *The Familial Gaze* (1999), notes that since the invention of the "Kodak" by George Eastman in 1888 "the camera has become the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and self-representation the primary means by which family memory is perpetuated, by which the family's story is told."¹⁵

Family images are so integral to the family set-up that, as Sontag states, there would be a sense of loss if you did not have this archive to look back on "not to take pictures of one's children, particularly when they are small, is a sign of parental indifference."¹⁶ The act of photographing your children displays an investment in their future a sense of hereditary pride. "Through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness."¹⁷ The ritual around the taking and preserving of family images is linked to the creation of a family narrative, and thus a narrative of the self. In today's networked society, sharing pictures of your family with your social networks of friends, colleagues and even strangers is the naturalised social norm.

The ritual of family photography is usually centred on pockets of documentation there is an extra focus on

birthdays, on weddings, on anything that indicates ceremony and is thus deemed worthy of recording for posterity. These are the packaged highlights of a life well lived: smiling faces, a new car, presents, a new-born baby. Seldom are the darker moments recorded. Hirsch notes that in her own exploration of the family archive, that “I [Hirsch] can begin to see how certain images repeat themselves in our lives in over-determined ways, and I [Hirsch] can wonder about the sources of these repetitions and the ‘unconscious optics’ that structure the life of every family.”¹⁸

In my family archive, I noticed these “repetitions” in both the home-video footage and the still photographs. Through close analysis of family photographs and home videos I was able to mine these images to reveal the “unconscious optics” behind the images that Hirsch speaks of, and I was able to embroider stories from these revelations. There seemed to me, and perhaps this speaks to the nostalgia for my own childhood era, an honesty in these filmed moments. The analogue technology did not allow the “ugly shots” to be edited in camera, or the bad pictures to be deleted these images were from a “simpler” time of available light and amateur footage that was not immediately viewable but could only be reviewed after the film was processed as was required of analogue mediums. “The delete button reduces the chances of discovering hidden truth in photographs: a blurred face that becomes a poignant representation of absence and loss; a bad expression that turns into a cherished quality; closed eyes that reflect the proximity of death; a stranger in the background that becomes a lover or a friend.”¹⁹

My personal archive provided the foundation from which to creatively explore the stories that lie beyond the frame. The home videos gesture at silence, gaps and holes in the narrative; sometimes there was no sound, sometimes the footage cuts off in the middle of an action. I was free to discover the material, to fill in the silences and gaps with my own memories or even completely fictionalise others. I reworked my own narrative, which led to new thoughts about old stories. How we talk about our lives is often a negotiation between creative licence, hard facts and personal reflection and the film *Fraternal* allowed for the exploration of the new insights by engaging with my family archive.

Looking Back Hurts Me

When I looked at my home video archive, it awakened within me a renewed nostalgia, a connection with a golden past, that sense of both pleasure and pain when you look at an old photograph or moving image. Roland Barthes wrote about these feelings in his frank and personal *Camera Lucida*. He speaks of this pang induced by the very sight of a photograph, dubbing it the *punctum* “that prick and shock of recognition, that unique and very personal response to the photographic detail that attracts and repels us at the same time.”²⁰ Barthes states that “a photograph’s punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).”²¹ The *punctum* is the personal connection felt with an image that reaches out and “slaps you in the face”. During the process of making *Fraternal* I felt constantly “bruised” by the footage and by my engagement with my past, a past that became increasingly less and less simple with every interview conducted, every rough cut, and every viewing. The film narrative is fashioned into three acts in which I explore personal narratives while grounding this is in the wider socio-political history of Zimbabwe and South Africa. The political climate in each of these countries features in the film as an echo of the personal narrative.

“Part one: when we were a baby” serves as the introduction to my brother and I and the domestic milieu. The phrase “when we were a baby” stems from the phrase my brother and I used to describe ourselves to our parents in our early years, when we collapsed any sense of our individualism and described ourselves as one. This is echoed in the unified happiness of Zimbabwe’s independence and the singular goal of ending apartheid in

South Africa. “Part two: sibling rivalry” exposes the obstacles and setbacks faced by my brother and I as the main characters and begins the political narrative of South Africa’s wobbly road to democracy. “Part three: sweet sorrow” provides the resolution of my relationship with my twin brother, which becomes increasingly distanced just as the dream of “rainbow nation” in South Africa breaks apart.²² Each part is progressively shorter until the film’s climax; this is a storytelling tactic often employed to create pace and a sense of suspense.

Part one ends with a photograph of my brother getting a hug from Nelson Mandela during Mandela’s visit to Harare, Zimbabwe, a few weeks after his release from prison as it cross-fades into another picture of my brother, now older and back in South Africa. This moment with Mandela shows us at a time of great hope and promise in Southern Africa in the early 1990s, which mirrors the simple happiness of our twin closeness at the time. Part two begins with text on-screen:

When Mandela was released everything changed. We left Zimbabwe. We left our golden childhood behind, packed it all up, the lofty ideals and memories. We visited granny, but not Mickey Mouse. And then launched ourselves into The New South Africa, The Rainbow Nation.

From a political perspective there was an energy and a hope in this move the anticipation of a democratic South Africa under a new dispensation. Anti-apartheid activist Albie Sachs wrote at the time, “the only questions are how to end the system as rapidly as possible and how to ensure the new society which replaces it lives up to the ideas of the South African people and the world community.”²³

In addition, the political change in the film is marked with an aesthetic change; the words “Part two: sibling rivalry” appear over digital snow, visually and aurally guiding the viewer into a new era with the shift in technology. It is no longer the analogue visuals of Super 8mm, but now the age of early digital video formats, Hi8 and DV, as South Africa enters a new political epoch. This transition in the film is echoed in a third manner through the transition of my brother and I from childhood to adolescence, visually depicted as the family crosses over a pontoon bridge, and so the film narrative enters its second part.

In Part two, my relationship with my brother seems to break down, which is paralleled with South Africa’s dismantling of apartheid and its new-found democracy. As Sachs put it, “all revolutions are impossible until they happen; then they become inevitable. South Africa has for long been trembling under the impossible and the inevitable.”²⁴ From a domestic and personal perspective, my relationship with my brother seemed so strong that it was “impossible” it would ever break down, while intellectually and psychologically it was “inevitable” that our relationship would change as we got older.

Part three is different to the other sections of the film as it represents something that was not captured in the archival home videos. This part of the film deals with the breakdown of my relationship with my brother. This was a subtle, internal process not a moment in which my mother would have turned the camera on. In contrast, the representation of our closeness was easy, because I had a wealth of footage showing us together. To show our separation was harder, and more painful. When trying to edit these sequences I began to notice things I had not seen before, small moments of my brother’s frustration and my oblivion. With a new “lens” and an editor’s hand on the old footage I could reveal that the relationship as I remembered, or imagined it, was different from what (some of) the footage revealed. As Sontag asserts, “the picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture.”²⁵ Even if intellectually we may know that a picture can be posed, a life narrative can be constructed, and that everything we see on social media is not the

truth we still respond emotionally to images as if they do exhibit our lives. In making the film I forced myself to let go.

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Film clip 2: performance sequence *Fraternal*, 2015

Performing the Archive

In making the film I not only used the archival footage, but also recorded sequences in which I performed the ritual of home video. I re-enacted certain sequences from existing home videos and staged similar situations. The relationship between my mother's footage and my own is very intimately connected. I worked with "performing" in what Michael Renov defines as domestic ethnography: "the documentation [is] of family members or, less literally, of people with whom the maker has maintained long-standing everyday relations and has thus achieved a level of casual intimacy."²⁶ He speaks of a "consanguinity and co(i)mplication"²⁷ at the core of this kind of documentation, stating that "[f]or the domestic ethnographer, there is no fully outside position available".²⁸ As I reclaim the footage for myself, I seem to become my mother through my mimicry of her behaviour as the family documenter. I am at once myself in the footage the little girl depicted in the ethnographic footage and the film-maker the director of the sequences cut from the old footage, and the director of the creation of new additional footage. This relationship is not always easy to understand, as Stella Bruzzi explains, referring to the on-screen presence of "real" characters in documentaries, such as Nick Broomfield who also performs himself on screen, "because it throws into sharp relief previously held notions of fixity of meaning and documentary 'truth'."²⁹

Renov speaks of "domestic ethnography [offering] up the maker and her subject locked in a family embrace; indeed, as we have seen, subject/object positions are at times reversed."³⁰ In the same way that I was the object of my mother's home video, I have now become the subject as I reclaim the footage as my own. In a cyclical manner, I have taken the film-making baton from her. In the crafting of the film I wanted to honour the provenance of the footage, both the feeling of childhood and the amateur, unprofessional nature of home-video footage. I decided to mimic the production scenario of home video only ever using consumer-level equipment and only ever myself or a family member as "crew". In my mimicry I utilise the film language of the home video in order to link it to the "original" archival footage. This is purposeful to engender the new footage with a sense of frankness and give it an aesthetic relation to the original home-video footage. "Amateurism is encoded in a visual style which operates in association with the first-person point of view to position a work as a self-produced, less manufactured, more truthful expression of the autobiographical impulse."³¹ This performance serves to complicate the relationship between the "original" footage and my staged footage. Bruzzi terms the performative documentary 'a mode, which emphasises and indeed constructs a film around the often hidden aspect of performance, whether on the part of the documentary subjects or the film-makers'.³² When I re-stage certain events mimicking fairground visits, trampoline jumping, beach outings and the repetitive making of a gingerbread house my aim is to imply the cyclical nature of memory created through domestic and family rituals. The visual repetitions cue conceptual repetitions, while the technical changes make visible my directorial hand in the re-staging. The different technical film formats reveal shifts in grain and texture, displaying the passage of time manifest in the shift from analogue to digital.

My mother's modelling of us as twins in the footage is what creates the memory of my closeness of my relationship with my brother, which is actively highlighted through my repetition or mimicry of her behaviour. I

actively perform and stage “the twins” for the auto-ethnography in the film. “The performative element within the framework of non-fiction is thereby an alienating, distancing device, not one which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film’s content.”³³ This style of mixing past and present, as Bruzzi notes, requires work to enter into this subjective dream-like memory world, where old and new footage flow, and it becomes difficult to discern which is my mother’s posturing and which is mine. Bruzzi’s statement that “reality does exist and that it can be represented without such a representation either invalidating or having to be synonymous with the reality that preceded it” seems to extend to autobiographical memory.³⁴ The footage the original ethnographic footage, the repurposed ethnographic footage and the newly shot footage work together to enhance the story, each adding their own perspective to the narrative. “The point to stress is that for this mode of [domestic] ethnography, the desire for the other is, at every moment, embroiled with the question of self-knowledge; it is the all too familiar rather than the exotic that holds sway.”³⁵

Fraternal is drawn from a subjectivity or interior knowledge, which is the expectation of an autobiography an expectation that the audience will learn inner thoughts that could not be known in any other way “documentaries are a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and, at heart, a performance.”³⁶ Bruzzi argues “a documentary only comes into being as it is performed, that although its factual basis (or document) can pre-date any recording or representation of it, the film itself is necessarily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality.”³⁷

My reconstructions are meanings produced from the juxtaposition of the new and old images. There is a departure from continuity editing as the temporal shifts create a visual jarring produced from the differences in the physicality of my myself and my brother’s adult selves in new the footage and the childhood footage but a further contrast is the shift between analogue and digital. This is a reference to Sergei Eisenstein’s intellectual montage where “the juxtaposition of two concrete images leads to an abstract concept not fully contained in either of the two images”.³⁸ This echoes Barthes’s *punctum* and begs the idea that if meaning changes over time, what happens when one re-enacts the past? It evokes the connection between past and present, while also revealing the disconnect. A liminal spot between the past and the present in the footage serves as a prompt to transport one to that space, but the engagement happens in the mind, in the realm of the imaginary.

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Film clip 3: obstruction sequence *Fraternal*, 2015

Thinking Back Hurts Others

Working with home footage meant grappling with my own issues, but it also meant asking my family to walk that path with me. By choosing to expose myself, I made a choice on their behalf, to expose them. I had a great deal of resistance from my brother, who I had failed to realise in the tripartite relationship “between an object, the creator of the object and a medium or mediator of that relationship.”³⁹ To this relationship I needed to add another: the object that I was representing included the relationship between my brother and I, and thus he was also part of this. My brother wasn’t sure what I was going to reveal or if he wanted to share anything about his life publicly in the making of the film. In the same way as parents in network society document and share everyday moments about their parenting journey sometimes even through an account they have created under the name for their infant children I was sharing that which was *not only* mine. In some moments during my film-making trajectory, my brother actively refused to be a part of the process, which was unnerving for me as a filmmaker and painful as a sister. This is an ethical quandary that is always present in documentary.

In moments I pleaded with him as the film-maker that I would show him what was in the footage, but realising at the same time that there is no inherent idea of truth in the footage, and that I would be weaving my own subjective reality into the material. Making *Fraternal* meant working in two registers simultaneously: the affected, pertaining to the emotional, and also offering rigorously dispassionate critique. Barthes writes about this dissonance too: “My desire to write on Photography, correspond[s] to a discomfort I had always suffered from: the uneasiness of being a subject torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, I incorporated his resistance in the film as part of the ethical space of how representation is negotiated.

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Film clip 4: end sequence *Fraternal*, 2015

Finding a Narrative End

Part three of the film provides a subtle, implicit context for the political by gesturing towards the complexities of South Africa's democracy beyond just the “rainbow nation”, while also indicating the end of the childhood relationship between my brother and I as my brother asserts his individuation, something I had seemingly ignored or been unaware of. Part three includes a re-staging of the making of a gingerbread house that was introduced in Part two of the documentary. This is the first time I make use of the re-staging motif without intercutting it with the past. I choose to no longer remain faithful to the original home-video footage. The aim is to take ownership of the staging and the experience of making the gingerbread this is *my* gingerbread footage and not an intellectual montage in Eisenstein's sense. The footage looks completely different in the era of the High Definition images and I take the liberty to use bolder shots and not just reshoot similar shots to the archival material. The metaphor of the gingerbread house also becomes a reference to how my brother and I are now making our own homes separately and in different geographical places.

The film's climax comes when my brother tells me that he does not define himself as a twin “I'm not a twin, I'm Alex” he betrays one of the strongest parts of what I thought was *our* shared life's narrative. He renounces the core of what I thought was *our* shared being. By leaving, he urges me to the realisation that I have constructed an identity for myself that includes him in a way that is not true for him. In that realisation I also harbour complex feelings for my mother, who I feel in childish reactivity misled me with her idealised notion of twin-unity that she projected through the family photographs and home videos. Suddenly I feel very alone in the footage that used to be home and which once provided a sense of belonging.

Postscript

During the making of this film I was destabilised with regards to how I felt about this relationship with my twin brother as I mined the archival home footage. Yet it allowed a deeper connection with my brother and a more refined sense of who we are, and what we mean to each other. It afforded me the space to consider my relationship with the political landscape of my country and my continent. But *Fraternal* also aimed to make vivid a collective experience “for the struggle involves people not abstractions”, where there is beauty in the everyday, beauty in the banality of the everyday-ness.⁴¹ In the screenings that the film has had, I have been surprised and touched by the audiences' connection to the material. Seeing my family invites them to draw connections with their own family, their own pasts and their own childhood. These resonances are what an artist

seeks to make vivid and what invites reflection on memories through images.

Footnotes

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