The Storytelling Memory

Memoir & Myth Within my Practice

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1. An Introduction to the Themes and Concerns Within my Practice

Reflecting back through my research over the last two years to the beginning of this three-part inquiry, I can now identify how my interest in memory developed. In particular, my interest in 'autobiographical' memory and how our perception of the past, and of 'self', informs our lives and the stories we tell ourselves, the stories in which we live.
Initially, I was concerned with finding a way to portray the many 'layers' of human nature and in the gap between what is 'real' and what is 'perceived', the veneer we present to the world and the inner lives we keep hidden. (Fig.1).

fig.1 The Beast Within

These images from my interpretation of 'Little Red-Riding Hood' show how I was attempting to conceal and reveal the duality of Red's character. By layering with and painting onto transparent paper my aim was to reveal that Red and The Wolf were one and the same, The Bad Wolf living hidden beneath the surface of the innocent exterior of the woman.

As my practice developed it became apparent to me that what I was truly concerned with was autobiographical memory and how our memory of the past shapes everything we think, feel and do. Memory, emotional memory, false memories and memory as a 'creative storyteller' become, quite literally, the story of our lives.
In the first stage of this project, I explored the potential of fairy tales as a vehicle with which to tell some of my own 'stories'. Later, I understood that I was searching for a 'safe' way to share my own memories which removed me from the immediacy of my past. In 'The Uses of Enchantment'[1], Bruno Bettleheim discusses the use of fairy tales as a means for children to explore some of the darker aspects of life. He suggests that children need dark fairy stories to deal with their inner turmoil and fears about life and death. Fairy tales then are a way for an audience to understand in simple terms the traumas of their own life. I began exploring this theory in my own practice by using three fairy tales to tell three stories from my own past. In this way, I was bringing fairy tale and memory together in such a way that I was hoping to create something new out of the difficulties from my own past.
This was not, I believe, a purely narcissistic urge to 'tell my story', nor a means of art therapy, but rather a desire to communicate the hidden beauty of our sometimes difficult human existence and to show the universal desires, fears and yearnings that we sometimes keep buried under the every day mundanity of our lives. I explored this further in my presentation by looking into the notion of 'saudade'[2] – the 'enjoyable melancholy'

1 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (London: Penguin, 1991)

2 Saudade is a Portuguese word which has no direct translation into English. In his paper 'An Anatomy of Saudade', George Monteiro describes it as having 'had as many meanings as there have been individual beings familiar with its concept … Even those who are most skeptical seem to find in the idea of Saudade either uneasiness or comfort – or, better still, both simultaneously … It is usually translated as nostalgia, which is incorrect. Nostalgia implies a comfort … Saudade expresses an enjoyable melancholy.' George Monteiro, 'An Anatomy of Saudade', *Portuguese American Journal*, July 21st 2013.

of emotional memory – and attempted to define this somewhat indefinable feeling by seeking out examples of melancholic pleasure as depicted in film, literature and art, and as experienced and recorded in the memoirs of real lives. At the same time, I began exploring the theory of 'precious fragments'[3] by recording my memories almost as they happened, creating images from the 'fragments' I thought I would remember in the future. This became 'Collecting Echoes' (Fig.2), my first book.

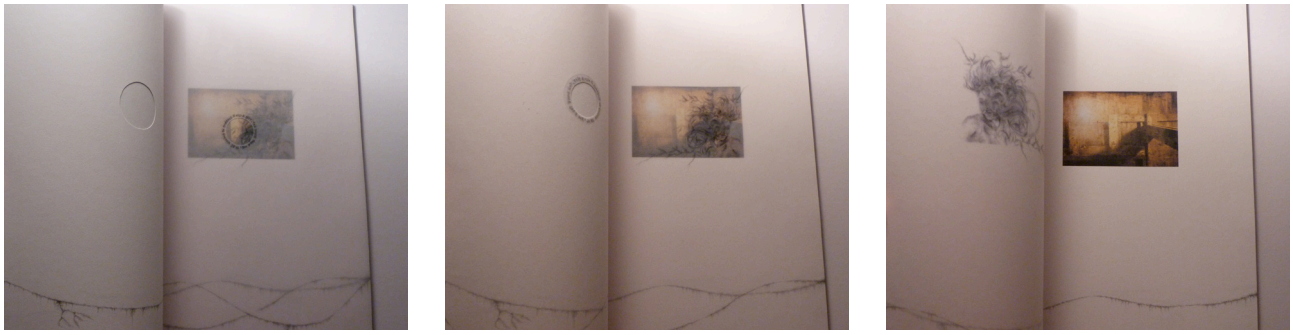

Fig.2

'Collecting Echoes' was a meditation on the 'precious fragments' of memory and the moments which become the traces of tomorrow. From my website: www.lisawrenchillustration.co.uk: 'A memory is like an echo. Each time we hear it, it fades a little, but sometimes we go on hearing it even when the sound itself has utterly vanished. The book is built in layers using photography, transparent paper, drawing and cut-outs, each image assembling and disassembling, showing the passage of time.'

In this paper I will be exploring the subject of emotional autobiographical memory and in particular the theory of 'The Storytelling Memory' and how the myth-making of personal history has influenced the way I approach my work within the context of memoir. In particular, that it is the 'narrative truth' rather than the 'historical truth'[4], which shapes our impression of the world:

> 'Stories make us human' and 'learning to re-frame our interpretations of reality' is the key to our experience of life.'[5]

Whilst my interest in this subject is largely centred around taking memoir and creating a memory myth from my own autobiography, I am also particularly interested in how I might create a more immersive experience for an audience, one which might entice a viewer towards exploring their own imagination and memory in response. By discussing the work of other relevant practitioners and by looking at various media; in particular contemporary fine art, photography, film and theatre, my aim is to reflect on and contextualise my practice within these theories and identify the strategies and ideas I feel are likely to be most effective at communicating these philosophies to an audience.

3 A term coined by memory researcher and cognitive psychologist, Marigold Linton (b. 1936).
4 Oliver Sacks, 'Speak Memory', *The New York Review of Books*, 60.3 February 21st 2013.
5 Oliver Sacks, 'Speak Memory', *The New York Review of Books*, 60.3 February 21st 2013.

2. Memory and The Myth of Self

The workings of memory and how we re-imagine our past are what lie at the foundation of my practice. My work takes place where fairy tale and memory overlap, in the stories we tell ourselves and in the way we imagine and continually re-imagine our past in the creation of new narratives which fit the way we see ourselves and our place in time, space and history. The moments of today which become the traces, the 'precious fragments' of tomorrow. By turning memory into story my aim is to take what was, in reality, 'ordinary' and make it extraordinary, to fill the missing gaps between the remembered 'fragments' of memory, with story.
During the first part of this project, I struggled to define what my work was about, and what it was that I was attempting to communicate to an audience. I was initially concerned with exploring a broad spectrum of human nature, particularly those aspects which are often kept hidden below the surface of our everyday lives, the hopes, dreams, fears and obsessions which drive our decisions and our whims. My search for a vehicle through which to explore these themes led me initially into looking at the history of fairy tales and to the characters who inhabit them.
At this time I also had a desire to explore some of the experiences from my own life. I knew that I didn't want to get explicitly involved in the telling of my own 'autobiography', but I felt that I had gained certain insights into life, enough insight that I wished to share what I had learned. It was (essential to me and my view of life and my place in it) an 'emotional' investigation, an attempt to make sense of our perceptions of ourselves and our pasts and in particular how I see myself as a storyteller of the human experience:

'We wish to talk to each other about life and death, about love, despair, loss and innocence … We seek a means of exchange … Instinctively, we go to our store of private associations for our authority to speak of these weighty issues. We find, in our details and broken, obscured images, the language of symbol. Here, memory impulsively reaches out and embraces imagination … It isn't a lie, but an act of necessity, as the innate urge to locate truth always is.'[6]

My way of exploring some of these 'stories' from my life was to remove myself from their immediacy by portraying them as fairy tales. And in order to translate memory into story I was attempting to use fairy tale and the images of fairy tale as symbols of my autobiographical experience. (Fig.3.)

Fig.3

From left to right: Little Red-Riding Hood, The Red Shoes and The Little Mermaid

The three fairy tales that I chose: Red-Riding Hood, The Red Shoes and The Little Mermaid, were symbolic representations crafted from my own autobiographical memories. Red-Riding Hood was the representation of the inner struggle of duality and repressed desires. The Red Shoes of the physical and psychological struggle out of serious illness and The Little Mermaid, transcendence and redemption through the quest for love and spiritual freedom.

6 Patricia Hampl, *I Could Tell You Stories*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), Page 31.

Later, it became apparent that there was a certain personal myth-making at work here. Of course, we all like to imagine ourselves as heroes of our own story:

'We spend our lives crafting stories that make us the noble – if flawed – protagonist of first person dramas. A life story is a 'personal myth' about who we are deep down – where we came from, how we got this way, and what it all means.'[7]

We are all conditioned to think like this: Me. Myself. I. *I* am the main protagonist of my life. Everything that exists in the universe is in front of *me*, behind *me*. Everything I see, hear and touch I see with *my* eyes, hear through *my* ears, touch with *my* hands. And after all …

'Even truly awful people don't know they are antagonists. Hitler, for example, thought he was a brave knight who would vanquish evil and bring on a thousand years of paradise on earth.'[8]

But my desire here wasn't simply to interpret my past into a story.
The myth-making I am referring to, or the myth-making which I was attempting to create, is the myth-making which takes a single human experience and turns it into something larger. Into a universal story which might transcend its mundane roots and communicate to an audience the passions, fears and hopes which connect us all.
In 'The Uses of Enchantment' Bruno Bettelheim argues that fairy tales can help children to make sense of the adult world and to find a place within it where their sometimes baffling emotions can begin to be explored and understood. Fairy tale, myth and story are safe places for them, as an audience, to explore their imaginations, their deep fears and desires. In story they are free.
I wish to argue that this need for story, for myth, is not just confined to children. As adults, we seek meaning and purpose in our lives and occasionally struggle to make sense of the seemingly random and unexpected events which sometimes befall us. We look for patterns in the chaos of life and usually find the answers to our questions wanting. In 'The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life'[9] Thomas Moore argues that we need myth in order to live more deeply, to give articulation to those parts of our inner selves which cannot be easily expressed:

'One of the purposes of mythology is to transport our imagination to a level beyond the factual, giving full articulation to matters that can't be measured – things like love, hate, death, fear and evil – and noticing themes that underlie surface events and understandings'.[10]

There was a clear desire within me then, firstly to take my own story and translate it into myth, and secondly, to share the myth with an audience.
In her meditation on memoir, 'I Could Tell You Stories' Patricia Hampl writes about the poet Sylvia Plath as having a spiritual vocation and a desire for transformation through her writing:

'She saw writing as "a trust, a creative pledge to affirm life, hell and heaven, mud and marble."'[11]

And an entry in Plath's journals reads:

'One cannot help but wish for those situations that make us heroic, living to the hilt of our total resources.'[12]

It is the survivor's desire to bear witness, to speak about pain and loss not for its own sake, or for the sake of autobiography, but to speak for others who may not have the ability or freedom to speak for themselves.

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7 Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), Page 162.
8 Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal*, Page 170.
9 Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997).
10 Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, Page 233-234
11 Patricia Hampl, *I Could Tell You Stories*, Page 138.
12 Sylvia Plath, *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), Page 96.

3. Regarding Process - Peeling Back the Layers

In my practice to date I have been working with the still image through drawing, print, photography and layering. In the early stages of this enquiry I searched for a visual language which would enable me to communicate some of my ideas about the layers of human nature and about the fears and desires which are concealed just below the surface of our everyday lives. I initially began working with translucent paper as a narrative device which would reveal, by peeling back the layers, an alternative 'truth' or 'reality'. (Fig.4).
As my research into autobiographical memory evolved, I became interested in very particular aspects of memory which I wished to communicate through my work: False memories[13], how our present day bias affects the way we remember the past, 'precious fragments', 'Proustian' memory[14] and in particular the 'enjoyable melancholy' of 'saudade'. As these themes have developed in my research I have continued to search for ways that I can apply them more effectively into my practice.

Fig.4

In sequence these images depict, through the turning of the page, a ship at sea fading into a tiny paper boat and what at first appears to be a landmass simultaneously revealed as the prone figure of a woman lying on some rocks.
My attempt here was to reveal through the device of translucent paper, a narrative that is not what it at first appears to be. The image of the ship sailing for home is revealed as little more than a fantasy of the woman waiting on the shore. What is taking place in our imagination is often not what is taking place in our reality.

Having identified the concerns and themes within my practice, I then began looking at different creative media and practitioners to identify how others are exploring some of the same themes of autobiographical memory and how they might be interpreting this idea of memory, of the self, as myth. And how, by exploring personal history, a larger, more universal narrative can be communicated to an audience. Some of the questions I was asking myself were: What kind of an emotional response does an audience have when confronted with these works? And is it possible to communicate these themes to an audience to such an extent that something akin to 'saudade' might be provoked? When an artist creates work based on their own personal memories, particularly when that memory is fragmented and incomplete, does the viewer, or an audience, fill the missing gaps with their own memory and imagination? And by what process, or what media, are other practitioners communicating these themes? To try and answer some of these questions, I will begin here by discussing the work of several practitioners and media within the context of these themes and my own practice as it has evolved.

13 'False Memory Syndrome' is a term used to describe a condition in which a person's identity and interpersonal relationships centre around a memory of a traumatic experience that is objectively false but that the person strongly believes. A deeply controversial topic made notorious through the research of Elizabeth Loftus (b.1944) throughout the 1990s which revealed that it is possible to implant or create false memories by suggestive techniques used in therapy.

14 In his novel 'In Search of Lost Time', Marcel Proust describes how, when his protagonist dips a piece of cake into his tea, the taste evokes a sudden emotional memory. He describes how this kind of memory does not necessarily recall the actual memory, but simply the feelings that would have accompanied it. This feeling, which can sometimes trigger an intense emotional rush, is known as a 'Proustian' memory.

4. Precious Fragments

Karola Pezzaro (Fig.5, 6 & 7) is a textile artist. Her choice of materials give her work a fragile delicacy and each piece tells a story from her daily life and personal history. Her concerns are with the fragility of life, personal memory, the visible and the invisible and about how memory is imagined and renewed.

Fig.5

'Au Bord de l'eau' 2012, detail, mixed media.
Karola Pezzaro

The work 'Au Bord de l'eau' covers five square meters and consists of embroidered silk bags with different content. On these bags are embroidered texts about memories, time and places.
From the catalogue: 'Sitting by the sea, the sand feels dry and warm, I let it go through my fingers, find rings of shell, formerly cones, the sea has sanded them into shape, maybe by moving along the rocks here, I put them together, create a collection, the sea roars, no sounds, no man in sight, only sand, rings and a sea to the horizon.'

Fig.6

'The Name and The Country' 2010, nine pieces.
Karola Pezzaro

The Name and The Country was created after a conversation with the artist's mother, prompting her to investigate her family history on her father's side and its tragic links to Auschwitz. The nine stacks of transparent silk contain hidden pictures and embroidered text. Below each stack is a small object.

From the catalogue: ' Between all those names was also the name I got from my father, written in different ways … we never talked about it at home, my mother tore pictures from her albums before she was interned, she enclosed them in a biscuit tin and gave that to a Chinese friend in custody, small black and white or sepia photos …'

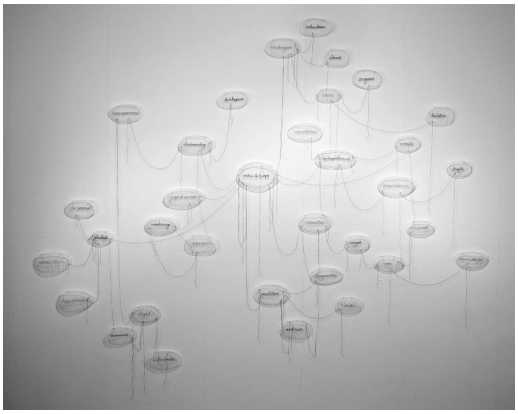

Fig.7

'Between Time' 2010, Embroidery.
Karola Pezzaro

The work 'Between Time' consists of small clouds of transparent stitching that have been pinned to the wall. Words have been embroidered on these supports and some of the cloudlets are connected to each other by a barely visible, fragile thread. From the catalogue: 'A conversation with father, in my mind I walk with him through the streets of the city, the past is sometimes closer than recent times, an hour between two seconds, time stretching like elastic, trying to grab something I cannot catch, memories, connections, organising connections as it was an electrical play.'

What drew me to the work of Karola Pezzaro, besides her subject matter, was her choice of materials. Autobiographical memory is so fragile. We remember our history in random, disjointed fragments which we string together on delicate threads into new, imagined stories. Her use of embroidery, lace, transparent fabrics and thread serve as a metaphor for the fragility of memory, for the small details and the fragments you perceive from the corner of your eye.
As an 'audience', or viewer, I feel compelled to step in closer and examine each work in detail. I wish to linger and gaze, to read the concealed words and look into and below the surface to what is hidden. Whilst I do this, I am thinking of the lives which exist within these tantalising fragments and I am left with a sense of the passage of time and of the countless untold stories we carry within us.
As my enquiry into autobiographical memory deepened, I became particularly interested in this idea of 'fragments' as a narrative device and as a means of telling a personal story. Like Karola Pezzaro I wished to communicate a sense of fragility, of time passing, of the invisible – or of an untold story just out of the realm of remembering - and also a sense of that melancholy joy, of 'saudade', which often comes when we are remembering the past.
I began by recording the present as it was happening to me (Fig.8 & Fig.9), through photography (which I will discuss in more depth later), by paying attention to and taking note of the details, the 'fragments' of my environment:

'We know that when we look out at a visual scene, we don't actually see the scene in its entirety; We see fragments that are later stitched together to create the illusion of a unified scene.'[15]

Fig.8

Seen here are three of the images altered in photoshop. They are images of a boat which I have a particular connection to in my personal history and each of the images, in its intimate detail, serves as a strong reminder of the whole. Taken in this way, however, they are abstracted representations of a larger picture which can now only be reconstructed in my memory as story.

My intention at this point was to take these images, these 'fragments', and rebuild them through the use of drawing and layers into a reconstructed *story* of the memory, thus enticing an audience, by means of concealment, into a larger, imagined narrative.
As with Karola Pezzaro, the enticement comes from provoking a curiosity in the viewer: What is hidden? What is just beyond reach? What has been forgotten? What part of this story is not being told? And can we now, as a viewer being offered a glimpse of this past, ever know the whole story? And do we *need* to know the whole story? As the viewer, can we bring our own narrative into this story? Does the viewer fill the gaps with their own imaginings in the same way that I, as the creator, have filled the gaps in my memory with story?

15 Charles Fernyhough, *Pieces of Light*, (London: Profile Books, 2012), Page 12.

Fig.9

Seen here, the photographs now have a layer of drawing on translucent paper. The 'fragments' now have action, the hint of a scene playing out, the suggestion of a larger narrative taking place.

To explore these questions, I set about compiling what was now at this point a set of fifteen seemingly disparate images into a book (Collecting Echoes, Fig.2) to find out if it was possible to make a narrative from these fragments of memory without telling an obvious story. Would a reader be able to find enough connection within these images and the text to create, in their own imagination, a sense of a whole?
Or, as Charles Fernyhough suggests:

'The crucial thing seems to be the way in which fragments of remembered experience are integrated into a coherent whole by parts of the brain that are involved in stitching together autobiographical memories.'[16]

5. On Photography

When I began using photography in 'Collecting Echoes' I was thinking primarily about fragments and also about capturing a sense of the enjoyable melancholy of saudade. When I view a photograph, be it a personal photograph from my own past, or an unknown photograph from history, there is for me primarily a sense of time passing. To view an image which is a moment in time creates a yearning curiosity about what else was happening outside the picture at that precise moment, and if the photograph contains people, what were they doing the minute before the photograph was taken and what were they doing a minute later?

'Looking at a photograph, I inevitably include in my scrutiny the thought of that instant, however brief, in which a real thing happened to be motionless in front of the eye.'[17]

In other words, I find myself imagining a wider narrative than that which is visible.
It is precisely because it is a fragment, a moment, that a photograph has so much poignancy:

'A beautiful subject can be the object of rueful feelings, because it has aged or decayed or no longer exists. All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'[18]

16 Charles Fernyhough, *Pieces of Light*, Page 21.
17 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, (London: Vintage, 2000), Page 78.
18 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), Page 15.

Fig.10

Christina at The Beach circa 1913, Mervyn O'Gorman

A good example of this would be my own personal response to the autochrome photographs of Mervyn O' Gorman.[19] (Fig.10)
Taken in and around 1913, these images of the photographer's daughter capture a moment which has been forever sealed within this small frame of space and time. Looking at these images, I am struck by the simple notion of how a photograph can show a person being so very much *there*, in that moment, at a particular point in their lives, and the invitation here seems to be for the viewer to feel, to imagine, what was beyond this image and what happened to the girl afterwards. Ultimately, it is the knowledge that this girl - captured here so perfectly in her youth - is no longer living which creates the feelings of reflection on one's own short life and the reminder of how we are all hurtling helplessly towards our own oblivion. This then is the genius of the still image: It's ability to capture that one pure moment and to freeze it in time where we, the viewer, can forever reflect on and wonder what became of its subject. 'Photographs', as Susan Sontag contemplates, 'state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own destruction.'[20]
Memory fragments, the joyful melancholy of saudade, and the emotional response of the viewer were the three key elements I worked to evolve throughout the time I was developing 'Collecting Echoes'. As I began introducing photographic elements into my practice, I was also, as I've discussed here, beginning to identify exactly what it was in a photograph which provoked such strong feelings of nostalgia. In 'Camera Lucida', Roland Barthes discusses what he terms the theory of the 'punctum', or 'wound' which opens up in a viewer, particularly when observing the detail of an old photograph. There is an unexpected intrigue that draws the viewer in. 'Punctum' does not have to have an obvious source; small details can make all the difference in its power: The dated 'Mary Jane' shoes worn by a young girl, a child's bad teeth, the grubby fingernails of a woman's hand resting on a door frame.[21] These things mark the observer, changing something within them. Also the photo itself changes when the experiences of the observer are applied to it. There is a give and take relationship between viewer and object, making what is a dead moment alive and vivid again.
By the close of the second project I began giving some thought towards animating some of my images and with this in mind, I began investigating how the moving image differed in this respect to the still image.

6. The Still and The Moving Image

As I move forward into the final stages of this two year investigation into memory and memoir, I am attempting to bring much of what I have discovered about the myth of the self, saudade, and the precious fragments of imperfect recollection into two final pieces of work. The first is a book, a duel-narrative to be presented in a back-to-back format, and the second an investigation into the animation of the images from 'Collecting Echoes'. Vital to my practice at this point, is my understanding of how a viewer or reader of my work might interact with these pieces at a personal and emotional level.

19 Lieutenant Colonel Mervyn O'Gorman was an electrical and aircraft engineer who enjoyed taking photographs in his spare time. He used the autochrome process, an early colour process, which was invented by the Lumiere Brothers in 1907.
20 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), Page 70.
21 Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, Pages 43 - 47.

For the final part of this essay I would like to discuss my thoughts on the still image in comparison to the moving image and how I am proposing to resolve my attachment to the still image in relation to my investigation into memory fragments and the depiction of a frozen moment in time with the intention of turning these frozen moments into a moving image and how an audience response might be affected by the difference between the two.

A story doesn't have to be whole or complete for an audience to empathise. On the contrary, a still single image depicting nothing more than a slither of the whole, can offer so much more. In 'The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life', Thomas Moore likens our incomplete memories to a ruined statue of Venus, somehow more beautiful and affecting in its imperfection. 'Fragments and pieces betray the soul,'[22] he argues, while the temptation to add falsities or 'plastic parts' detracts from the truth and merely serves the ego.

In film, the audience is often manipulated by the director and carried along with the 'flow' of the moving image, with the narrative. A still image offers time for contemplation and introspection as the viewer is left imagining what the wider story might be.

Both Susan Sontag in 'On Photography' and Roland Barthes in 'Camera Lucida' discuss this comparison in their essays:

'Photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow … Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one can keep and look at again.'[23]

'… in the photograph, something has posed in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever … but in cinema, something has passed in front of this same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images.'[24]

In film, I often prefer a certain level of ambiguity, particularly in respect to an ending. This can seem frustrating and less satisfying than an ending with a neat conclusion, but it is always the open ended story which lingers longest in the mind and which offers an audience the chance to discover something about themselves as they bring their own stories to the narrative. As I have previously discussed, with a still, or a single image, we do this naturally, all the time

As human beings, we all have the creative capacity to fill the gaps, to extend beyond the boundaries of these fragments, from our own memory. We can also be receptive to the most abstract of images in the same way we relate to sound and music, with a subconscious recognition bordering on a kind of personal nostalgia or de ja vu.

Imagine the feeling which is so often prompted when standing before the ocean or inside a forest; the atmosphere, the light, the colours, the sounds, all these things prompt within us a magic which awakens our senses, emotions and memories.

However, we now know that memories are not fixed or frozen like a photograph, but are transformed, disassembled, reassembled, and re-categorized with every act of recollection. Remembering is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience. Photographs can, however, serve as a memory prompt and the more vague and abstract the image, the more an act of imagination and storytelling takes place in the viewer.

This understanding left me with something of a dilemma, as by proposing to animate my images I felt that they would perhaps lose some of these particular qualities offered by the still image which is a 'fragment' and holds the viewer in that single space open to the imagination.

At this point I was left searching for a way to bring these two things together: How to create an animation which might be a moving fragment, lending my work a more immersive, film-like experience, potentially also with sound, whilst retaining the pathos of a photograph or a still image. After all:

'Life is not about significant details, illuminated in a flash, fixed forever. Photographs are.'[25]

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22 Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, Pages 244 - 245.

23 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Page 18.

24 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Page 78.

25 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Page 81.

If a still image is too 'fixed' to truly represent the nature of memory and a film too loose to hold it, what then of a 'still moving' image? One of the key elements of memory for me within my practice is the representation of the sometimes persistent memory which replays inside our minds on an endless loop. In 'How the Mind Forgets and Remembers', Daniel L. Schater investigates this phenomena in the chapter 'The Sin of Persistence' and describes it as:

'Experiences that we remember intrusively, despite desperately wanting to banish them from our minds.'[26]

The theory of 'persistence' in memory has therefore given me a way forward as I take my practice into the final stage of this enquiry, and I am now approaching the possibility of an animation as a series of repeated images on a loop, perhaps in the format of a simple 'gif'. To explore this further, I have been researching the work of Bill Viola (Fig.11).
With his video installations, Bill Viola appears to bridge that gap between the still and the moving image which, as I consider animation as a way forward in my practice, is of particular interest to me in relation both to how I wish to interpret the 'fragments' of memory and also in my desire to engage an audience at a personal and emotional level. In the article 'Video Installation, Memory and Storytelling: the viewer as narrator', Diane Charleson gives this description:

'Many of Viola's works attempt to engage the viewer with strong emotion that can be interpreted based on personal experience and response. By slowing down time, Viola creates a different experience than our typical encounter with film and focuses our attention on the deliberate intent of the actors within the video. …The viewer is forced to focus on the action, in turn allowing the viewer to concentrate on their emotional response to the video. … The emphasis becomes about the narrative and the viewer's individual response.'[27]

Fig.11

The Veiling 1995, detail, video/sound installation, Bill Viola.

'The Veiling' consists of nine sheer scrims that are hung parallel to one another and catch the light from video projections positioned on either end. Images of a man and a woman can be seen slowly walking toward each other, passing through the scrims, merging at the centre, and then moving apart again. This ghostly action becomes hypnotic, repeating over and over on a continuous loop.

In relation to my own practice and my investigations into memory, the key elements in Viola's work are, as seen here in 'The Veiling', the slowing down of time and the continuous looping of a repeated sequence which acts as a kind of extended still image or a frozen moment in time which may appear to mimic a persistent memory, and also the use of a broken narrative which shows only parts of a larger story. In this sense, the viewer is invited to fill the gaps in these potential stories with their own imaginings. Might this non-linear way of telling a story act as a trigger for audience remembering as the viewer is enticed into making use of their own senses, memories and personal associations, thus becoming part of the narrative?

'If things are perceived as discrete parts or elements, they can be rearranged. Gaps become most interesting as places of shadow, open to projection. Memory can be regarded as a filter.' [28]

26 Daniel L. Schater, *How The Mind Forgets and Remembers*, Page 162.
27 Diane Charleson, 'Video Installation, Memory and Storytelling: The Viewer as Narrator', *Image & Narrative*, 12.2 (2011).
28 Bill Viola, *Reasons For Knocking at an Empty House*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998). Page 98.

7. Conclusion

As I ponder this question in the final weeks of this two year inquiry and reflect on my practice to date, I am now considering my practice, where it is and where I intend to take it considering everything that I have learned about memory, memoir, media and audience.
For the first part of my final project: 'Siren Vs Sailor' (Fig.12 & 13) takes the form of a duel-narrative book told from the similar but opposing viewpoints of the two protagonists who share the same memory. I have attempted to achieve a balance within the narrative which creates a certain level of ambiguity in the story whilst avoiding an excess of obscurity. In this way, my aim is to entice a reader into filling the gaps in the narrative with their own imaginings where the atmosphere and mood of the work may resonate at a more personal level.

Fig.12

Title pages for 'Siren Vs Sailor': 'Dreams of A Weary Sailor' & 'Dreams of A Tangled Mermaid'. The duel narrative of this book is an exploration of shared memory and tells the same events told from two different viewpoints. Made as a back-to-back book. Read one side. Turn it around. Then read the other side. Transparent paper and cut-outs allow the images to bleed into and through each other. Time is irrelevant. Limbo stretches on and the past, present and future flow into one, layers of memory and dream endlessly overlapping.

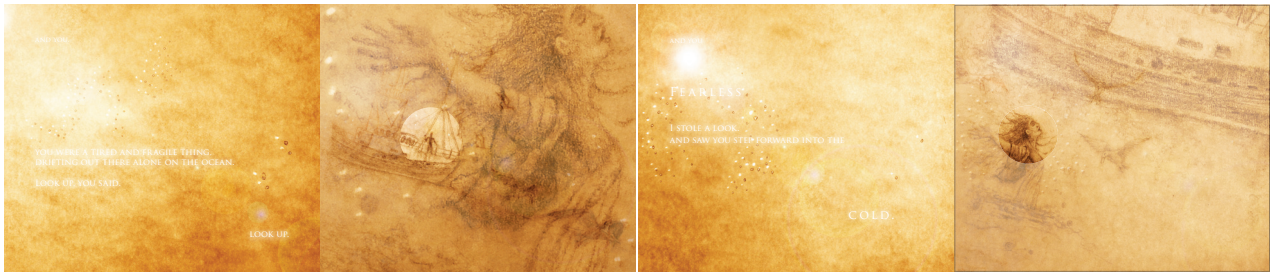

Fig.13

These two pages from the main narrative show what is happening at the same time from the viewpoints of the two protagonists. There is a repetition of images to create a looping (a 'persistent' memory) of the same moment, but they are presented in slightly different ways to place the emphasis with the speaker. My intention here is to entice the reader to look closer, to reflect on the nature of memory and how we are all biased to remember events from our own personal standpoint. The cut-outs in the images reflect the 'fragments' which are clearly remembered, whilst the rest of the image remains indistinct and vague.

Having finally established a visual language with which to express the theoretical and philosophical questions at the heart of my practice, I now feel that I have developed a strong foundation from where to broaden the boundaries of my authorial voice. By experimenting in various ways with the book format: That is with binding and the turn of the page, I am now beginning to extend beyond my previous limitations into different media. Light, projection, the moving image, even theatre are all currently informing my practice. (Fig.14).

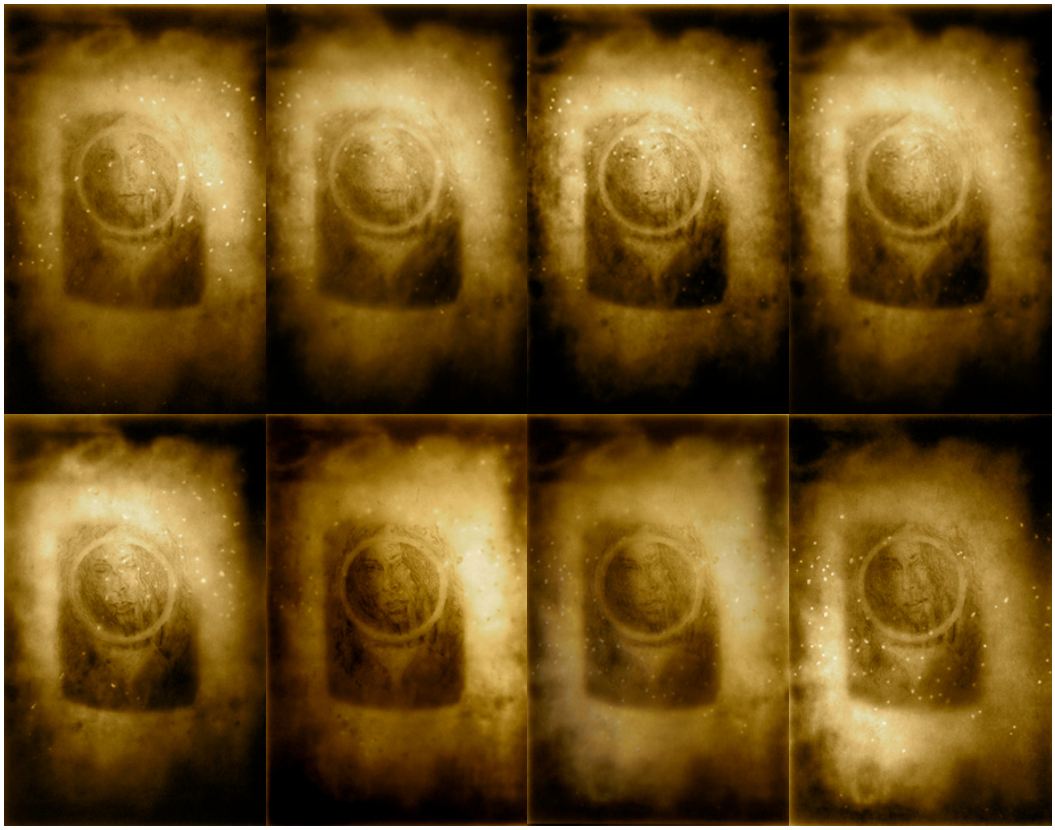

Fig.14

The Echo Collector Animation Stills

These stills from the second part of my final project show how I am beginning to bring the images from 'Collecting Echoes' to life. As inspired by the work of Bill Viola, this animation will play on a loop, flickering slightly like an old silent movie, the image shifting and changing slightly. My intention is to show this animation within an installation space which will act as a 'stage set' representing the boat, which in turn represents the character of the sailor. By having the animation playing within this space in this way, my aim is to bring into being the haunted memories of the character of the sailor and to immerse an audience within that space.

Whilst I am still working to improve the balance in my storytelling between the obvious and the obscure, I have learned to be less literal in my approach and now seek to find ways to leave gaps in my narrative for an audience to fill with their own imaginings.

This investigation has deepened my theoretical approach to storytelling and audience, and has opened up more possibilities to me as I consider my approach when using memoir as myth within my practice, and how by approaching the gaps between the fragments of memory I might engage an audience at a more personal level through the use of different media.

As I move forward as an artist and as a storyteller, it is my hope that I will not feel restricted in my approach to the use of different media within my practice, and having developed both my practical skill set and my theoretical inquiry sufficiently, I will have the confidence to continue taking my practice on to new, creative and challenging levels.

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