

Memory, Media and Everyday Life

Text by Maria Finn published in Plum Velvet # 5

In one of the most influential studies on photography, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes reflects on a photograph, which is not reproduced in the study. This image – referred to as the "Winter Garden" photograph – shows Barthes' mother as a young girl and to him this image most precisely represents his mother's personality. Barthes explains that the reason he does not include the photograph is that it exists only for him; to us it is only an indifferent image. By indifferent we can assume that he means it is an ordinary amateur photograph, similar to what we have all encountered in other family albums.

The universal quality of the snapshot offers an anonymity that in a sense turns it into a blank, a space that in its generality encourages us to use our own experiences when interpreting the content. The amateur photographer chronicles the lives of people, family and friends in the intimate space that constitutes our daily life.

When we travel, this space is replaced with unknown and foreign places, although the intimate relationship between the photographer and companions remains. This intimacy combined with the unknown produces stories that recall an anxiety, the restless gesture of wanting to be somewhere else but simultaneously remaining within a certain set of rules. The act of moving between places invites us to redefine recent experiences, no matter how close or far we transport ourselves.

Michel de Certeau writes in *The Practice of Everyday Life* about "spatial stories", the daily stories we produce while reflecting upon events in our daily life. While retelling what we experience, we use our pattern of movements as a model for the story's development. Thus the movement between places itself carries stories that reach beyond the mere experience of the transportation. de Certeau points out how spatiality is linked to how we reproduce our experiences: "Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice".

Today, this movement between places could also be a movement between different media. The transfer of an image into another medium is not merely a translation; it is also a kind of travel story. Instead of travelling physically we reproduce already existing images, or texts, in new contexts and these movements themselves create new stories. The act of reproducing the photographic image with a pencil turns it into a reflection and a tactile response to the past. By adding an abstraction in this process another kind of generality is achieved, an expression that recalls how our memory works by being both close and distanced. The movement between different media has thus become a travel story itself, challenging given narration by making our memories of different media a part of it.