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Reid, Amy C

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Long Haulers: Notes on Filming and Trucking

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Amy C. Reid

Committee in charge:

Professor Brian Cross, Chair
Professor Amy Adler
Professor Brian Goldfarb
Professor Alena Williams

2017

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The Thesis of Amy C. Reid is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University California, San Diego

2017

EPIGRAPH

Let us not say time past was long, for we shall not find it. It is no more. But let us say time present was long, because when it was present it was long.

Anne Carson

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Long Haulers: Notes on Filming and Trucking

by

Amy C. Reid

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Brian Cross, Chair

Long Haulers: Notes on Filming and Trucking is a collection of logs, speculations, and transcripts from the two and a half years I have been working on my feature length documentary *Long Haulers*. The text and film both try to capture the sentiments, knowledge, and observations I made while filming three female long-haul truck drivers across the United States.

Chapter 1: Location through identifying shared frameworks

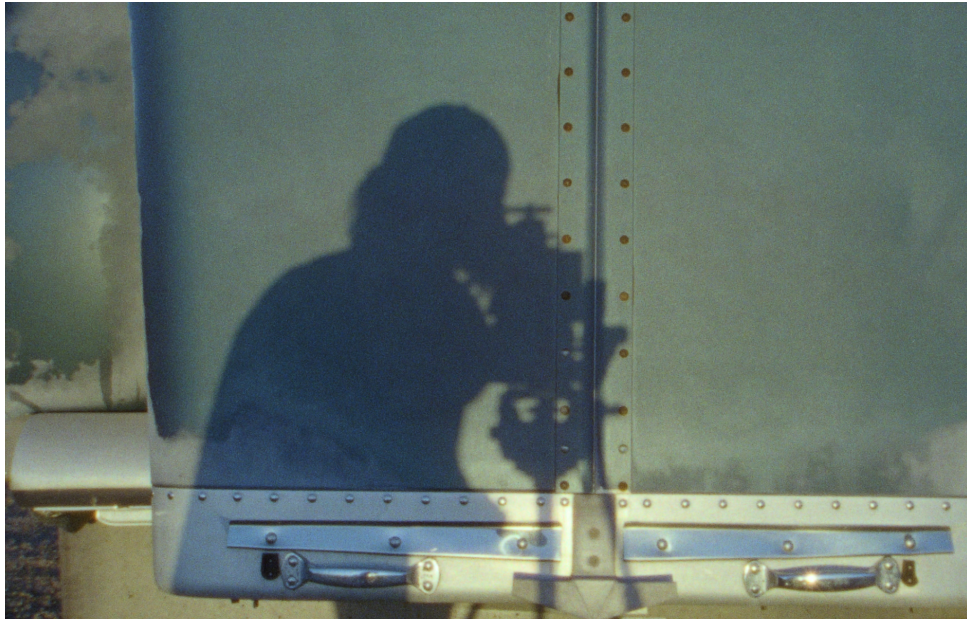


Figure 1.1: Truck and Me (Still)

Saturday April 16, 2016

I feel like I had some sort of revelation yesterday when I was walking to return the 16mm projector. I was pushing this heavy item across campus with a handcart and every time it would jostle around at the slightest pothole, I had stop and make sure the projector wasn't going to fall off. I even filmed this event on my phone in the hopes of capturing this insight, but I am not sure it's there in the video. Perhaps all of this stirred the correlation I want to make between trucking, my life, and my art. I thought about movement, the act of working, repetitions, and observing what passes by as you move through space. In that moment things clicked, but I can't exactly remember how.

What does she see? What do I see?

Sunday April 17, 2016, Day 1 of Shoot No. 1 with Tracy

Today Tracy showed me around Battle Creek. It is an industrial town, with factories making parts for cars, radiators, lights, and they even have a paper mill. Though Kellogg's has moved their processing facilities to China, Post still makes its cereals here. Tracy grew up here. I would think it would be sad to see things change so much. Walking downtown, there is not much economic or cultural vitality anymore; most things were closed or empty of people. Perhaps it doesn't seem so strange because she trucks; she can see on a larger scale than most of us how goods and production have shifted in this country.

Now that I'm finally here, it is difficult for me to assess how I want to film, or what the purpose is to what I am doing. I felt very much like an outsider last night at Pizza Hut, sandwiched in between Tracy, her mom, and her husband James. He, most of all, wasn't quite sure why I was doing this project and what I wanted from his wife. In that moment I was confronted by an immediate separation between Tracy, her family, and me. I did notice that James and I have the same neon orange hunting phone case, so at least there was that.

When I was with Tracy and her friend Tanya today they said that being a trucker makes you ask two questions:

"Where am I?"

"Where are you?"

Tracy said that truckers are more aware of exactly where they are in space rather than what time it is. They are trained to always know exactly where they are so in case the truck breaks down they can call their dispatch and get assistance. She also said she does not measure things in relation to dates on a calendar, but she measures in relation with her specific geographic coordinates.

Tuesday November 7, 2017

“Where am I?”

“Where are you?”

I am sitting in an orange chair in my kitchen. I am in San Diego, California and I am located exactly at 32°45'20.6"N 117°09'11.6"W. I am located within a frame of interstate and state routes that consist of the 8, 805, 15, 94, and the 163. I am at the end of a street called Proctor Place. My address is 4306, zip code 92116.

And where are you?

Understanding my position in relation to the three women I have gotten to know in the span of time during this project has been a question that I have repeatedly asked myself in the ways I have filmed, conducted interviews, and edited *Long Haulers*.

I have been inches away from Sandi as we shared her twin-sized bed in the grocery distribution centers outside of Ft. Worth, positioned head to toe, with her dog Shadow sleeping in between our bodies. At other moments I have been an arm's length from

Lori as we talk about the topics ranging from the qualities we want in a romantic partner, living with the traces of family addiction, and how to properly pee into a coffee can in a moving truck. Then there have been the times where Tracy and I are thousands of miles apart, as she tells me about her latest guinea pig fair and I tell her about my grant applications.

What started as an idea that was sparked by my interest in time, labor, and identity has now become something that is harder to locate the boundaries between the film, myself, and the lived experiences and relationships built among my subjects.

In order to understand the location of where this project stands, how I view and understand my process in filming, and lastly the film itself and its content, I think it's best to go back to the moments, conversations, and personal reflections that have accumulated. Returning, going back, and moving forward are some of the same actions that exist in the world of trucking. What follows are not the complete transcripts, logs, and data that I've collected but are selections from each shoot and the counterparts of transcripts from conversations I've had with Sandi, Tracy, and Lori. Through each return I make to the thoughts and ideas expressed, I can load and unload, drop off and pick up new ideas that I hope to clarify for myself and you where I am, where you are, and where the trucker is.

Monday April 18, 2016 Day 2 of Shoot No. 1

Part of me feels like the trip is already over. It is not, and today was good in figuring out new ways to shoot, like using the tripod instead of the monopod. So much of this job is all-consuming. Even on break Tracy was technically computing her log work. I do see a

correlation between her work and filmmaking. Maybe some of it has to do with the mastery of the machine.

I learned a new word today, “dead head,” it means an empty trailer.

Tuesday April 19, 2016, Day 3 of Shoot No.1 with Tracy

Tonight when I was unloading my camera and trying to be more conscious about light leaking, I thought about the sleeper acts just like a changing tent or light tight bag. This space back here can feel like a dark tomb. ¹

Thursday April 21, 2016, Day 5 of Shoot No.1 with Tracy

I had the distinct feeling how the truck in particular from other moving vehicles has a relationship to cinema, its involvement with the temporal. We are seeing what has passed. The windshield is the main screen with three mirrors on each side and two windows, making a total of nine ways of seeing all at once. ²

Saturday April 23rd, 2016, Day 7 Shoot No. 1 with Tracy

How is land measured and mapped and experienced by the mind?

How is work measured?

How is my work measured and mapped out?

¹ Rewinding film in the back as each woman is driving, I have thought a lot about the potential metaphors for the darkened sleeper including Thomas Edison’s production studio the Black Maria and Alexander Medvedkin’s film-train.

² Eames, Charles and Ray Eames. *Think*. DVD. Charles and Ray Eames (1964; Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment, 2005.) 35mm Print.

How does a trucker understand the fundamentals of orientation in space and the artist as well?

And how is a film measured? Is it by the story that it is telling?

Orientation to the self-- through work, time, and distance.

Words and expressions in trucking:

- *“Turn and burn” means to drop, reload, and then take off again.*
- *“Ridin’ braille” means riding along the rumble strip.*
- *“White smoke, green smoke, high speed chicken feed” means cocaine, marijuana, and crack.*
- *“Shiny side up, rubber side down” means safe travels.*
- *“Bob tail,” means tractor without the trailer.*

The more that I think about it, the more I see correlations between what I am doing, making a film, and that of Tracy. I don’t mean that I exactly see myself in her- or the exact work she or other drivers do. But there is a similar way, or the symbols and metaphors that can be made between Tracy and her work and making films for me. Perhaps it has to do with similar literal motions: wheels turning = film turning, the film strip and the road, the length of the road and feet of film, the axle crank and the film re-winder, the unending time- the non-definition of time to any sort of organized formation other than the formation that is constructed by the driver/ filmmaker.

The trailer is a magazine, the tractor is a motor, and the windshield is a lens. Both camera motor and truck motor make sounds from the same family.

Saturday July 9, 2016, Day 1 of Shoot No. 2 with Sandi

I thought about “Mothlight”³ while I was driving last night on my way to meet Sandi in Texas. Bugs were flinging themselves to my car and dying heroically in the process. It was as if I was in the film; the road and myself were a part of one continuous filmstrip.

Sunday, November 12, 2017

In my first initial shoots and most of all in Tracy’s first shoot, I was actively seeking ways I could make connections with the world of trucking rather than making connections with Tracy as an individual. It was the first time I had ever driven in a truck, slept in a truck, or ate in a truck. I was transplanted in a new realm where my understanding of scale, movement, sounds, and smells were much different from my personal experiences of work, travel, and living.

I started to try to find metaphors and symbols in the objects, gestures, sounds, and sights I encountered on these initial shoots, connections between my own processes as a filmmaker, theoretical frameworks, and artists whose works resonated in what I encountered. I saw Alexander Medvedkin’s film-train⁴ in the sleeper cabin as I loaded film, The Eames’ 1964 World Fair film *Think* as I sat and looked out from the passenger seat, and thought about Roland Barthes’ metaphor of the train car in his

³ *Mothlight* directed by Stan Brakhage (1963; Publisher not Identified), 8mm.

⁴ Trevor Stark, “ ‘Cinema in the Hands of the People’: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film” *October*, No.139 (2012): 117-150.

essay “The Dining Car”⁵ as I slept in my bunk.⁶ Though these examples didn’t mirror my exact circumstance and were strung together by varied commonalities internalized by myself, they were helpful in building a language of association while I was inside an unknown world.

I was, in a way, trying to see how the framework in which I was coming from (a filmmaking framework, entrenched in academia) could relate to the framework of trucking. For me, using a larger abstract set of correlations is the first step in the process of making a documentary film. In previous works these connections between my subjects and myself were carried out through tangible sculptural props and painted backdrops.⁷ These films and videos were conceived more from historical artistic traditions in painting and sculpture than from the ideas of cinematic history and theory.

Beyond finding associations for myself during the shoots, *Long Haulers* began out of my initial interest in how the medium of celluloid film could capture, represent, and document time experienced in the world of trucking. Stemming from my first-year project, *Time Working*, my concerns were based more on the abstract sense of how filming work through long durational shots could in some way bring forth a new

⁵ Roland Barthes. “The Dining Car.” *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1979. 141-44. Print.

⁶ Ibid., 142 “Thus each time man constructs his displacement, it is to give it the superstructure of the house; each time he detaches himself from the ground, he requires its guarantee: all the arts of travel have the very illusion of immobility...” In a paper I wrote entitled, “Women and the Road,” I incorporate Barthes’ notion of the duality between the immobile mobility with that of the truck driver’s perspective of the domestic space of the sleeper coexisting with the mobility of the truck.

⁷ These films, most specifically in *Looking at a Face That is Looking Back at You* (2014) and *Games* (2012), capture my relationship as a filmmaker to my subjects through the personal production of art objects that were used and activated in the film by the subjects in the film. In the film, *Looking at a Face that is Looking Back at You*, I made and filmed a series of porcelain busts of classical composers that were intercut between performances and interviews with classical performers. While the film more explicitly speaks about the relationship between performer and composer, I was also considering the formal qualities and process of portraiture as a sculptor and the relationship this has to reenacting the spirit of the composer either visually, as in my case, or aurally like the performer.

appreciation and understanding both of work time and cinematic time.⁸ Though *Long Haulers* is not a meta-critique on the durational aspect of filmmaking as portrayed through truck driving, these filmic concerns were my first step. In thinking about this, I looked to filmmakers whose self-reflexivity was addressed, such as Agnes Varda with her film *The Gleaners and I* (2000);⁹ Jean-Pierre Gorin's *Poto and Cabango* (1980);¹⁰ and William Greave's *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* (1968).¹¹ While their work addresses cinematic concerns, the filmmakers jeopardize undermining their subject's integrity and autonomy. By trying to create parallels and equivalencies between filmmaking and a subject's identity through techniques such voice-over and montage, a filmmaker runs the risk of disavowing the socio-economic barriers between himself/herself and the subjects he or she films. It's here and perhaps most specifically that Varda's film negotiates what I feel is a murky territory of ethics in documentary.¹²

A film that positions itself around the advent of digital camcorder technology of the early 2000's, *The Gleaners and I* renders itself through personal voice-overs as well as gestural actions and performances carried out by Varda through both staged

⁸ This might be best represented in my first year paper, *Time Working: A Study*, in which I use Mary Anne Doane's text, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, to speak about the correlation between the emergence of industrialization with cinema.

⁹ *The Gleaners and I*, directed by Agnes Varda (2000; New York: Zeitgeist Video, 2002), DVD.

¹⁰ *Poto and Cabango*, directed by Jean Pierre Gorin (1980; New York: Criterion Collection, 2012), 16mm.

¹¹ *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, directed by William Greaves (1968; New York: Criterion Collection, 2015), 16mm.

¹² In each of these essay-based documentaries there is a consistency of authorial representation and a self-reflexivity of making a film. Either through the physical presence of the director, as in the case with Greaves or Varda, or through voice-over and anecdotal information shared as in the case with Gorin, these films correlate negotiations between such cinema-centered subjects such as language in *Poto & Cabango*, narrative construction and interpersonal shooting dynamics in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, or the act of recording and collecting as in *The Gleaners and I*. Though I would say each of these examples are not completely author-centered and are non-biographical, they deal with their subject matter through a language that is filtered through their own personal concerns of what it means to be a filmmaker. The ethical concerns I have around works such as these during which the filmmaker tries to create equivalents between their practices with that of their subjects without ever consciously acknowledging the disparities between economic, educational, or cultural backgrounds.

camera work and POV camcorder shots. The film captures France, from the coast to inland vineyards, interviewing people who glean; crouching down to pick up discarded fruit, vegetables, and salvaged trash to recycle, transform, or consume. Varda calls attention to her own filming as gleaning, most especially in the POV shots, such as when her hand snatches trucks on a moving highway, or when she films the heart-shaped potatoes she's collected. This positioning of herself along with interviewing and filming a spectrum of people gleaning from various socio-economic backgrounds-- including homeless youth, a Michelin chef, a psychoanalyst-- begins to create equivalencies between each person's gleaning activities. While this unifying activity establishes a larger conversation between the cultural identity of gleaning in France, I believe it avoids acknowledging the disparity between Varda and her subjects, and their necessity or not to glean. In hearing Varda speak this fall,¹³ I believe she has a deep sensitivity to the disparity between herself and her subjects, and she spoke about her own privilege in comparison to some of the people in her film. Her recognition of this can also be seen in the film itself as the gleaners never gain the same dominance as Varda, typically being filmed and interviewed only once in the narrative. Instead, the dominating character is Varda herself as she comments, performs, and assembles a myriad of locations, voices, and images for the screen.

Outside of the larger theoretical frameworks and film historical associations I have considered, I have also observed and thought about the correlations between the physical work I conduct as a filmmaker and the work of my subjects, probably much as Varda did in her film. As a one-person team, I hauled two cameras, three microphones,

¹³ Varda, Agnes, "*The Gleaners and I* and *Vagabond* film Q&A" (public talk, Los Angeles, CA, October 12, 2017).

loaded and unloaded film, and logged all of my digital files at the end of each night. From the time we were up to sometimes even after the women went to sleep, I was working alongside them, filming, recording, interviewing, and writing. These observations, while acknowledged as I filmed and they worked, were again readdressed explicitly during the formal interviews that occurred during the end of each shoot. What follows below are two sections of transcripts from my first shoots with Sandi and Lori, and their perspectives on how our work might or might not overlap.

Sandi, Shoot 1:

You wrestle around with microphones, with film, with different cameras, and you've got to get your lighting correctly, so that's kind of like making sure when I leave I do a pre-trip inspection so I know that I am going to be safe and the truck is going to move the load. But yours doesn't last that long at a time; yours is minute to minute with filming. When people see a movie, they don't see any of this. All they see is the finished product. I've had the opportunity to watch you do all these hard things. So, yes, I see a connection because it's timing.

If I get in a windstorm with the truck and that wind is really pushing me around, I have the ability to pull off and stop. You have the same ability in making a film. If a sound comes in that you didn't need or if the light changes, you have to stop and readjust. There's a lot more hard work that goes into filming and recording than we realize because you're doing raw filming. You're not even going into a studio. Sometimes you'll

*take a shot, you'll run some stuff and then the situation arises where you can get a better view. And so then you've got to pull everything out and do it again. And then you get to pick between the two, which one-- which one fits what you're working to produce.*¹⁴

Lori, Shoot 1:

It's disciplined, definitely, focused; I think there are a lot of parallels between your work and mine. We deal with bodies, and definitely about bodies that are in movement. Because you are trying to think about how we are going to do this, that and the other, and I've watched your reactions to different things, and it's the very same thing I see myself.

*I see the passion, too, in what you're doing. You're thinking about "What do I need to do? And how do I need to go about doing it?" You're much more patient. (Laughs) Just because I know you are waiting for me to stop to be able to integrate, I'm trying to accommodate you, and you are trying to accommodate me, so we are trying to accommodate each other within a very tight, fixed format and we haven't had much sleep this week.*¹⁵

Both Sandi and Lori have an acute sense as to the process of my work in ways that I did not expect. In talking about the labor of my film work as an individual and

¹⁴ "Sandi, Interview 3." In person interview. July 14 2016.

¹⁵ "Lori Interview 2." In person interview. Dec. 18 2016.

their own work, I think we were both able to have a deeper sense of admiration for the physical and mental tasks each of us carried out independently. Upon reflection, this understanding acted as a bridge for a mutually respectful relationship. The film, while it does not explicitly parallel my work to theirs, represents my singular labor on the project-- from filming, sound work, and editing-- alongside theirs. While this might be evident to viewers after they see the short credit list and get a sense of the extent of my undertaking in the project, I sense that this will be a recurring concern I will have to deal with as I continue to make documentary-based projects around work.^{16 17 18}

While this thought process based on a specific framework helped me begin to understand my shoots, it only took me as far as my own thinking, without looking outward at the lives and stories of these people. As I continued to build relationships with each woman in the subsequent shoots, what started to take form was a type of filming informed more by the perspectives and personalities of Lori, Sandi, and Tracy.

¹⁶ Perhaps what is most obvious or explicit in the film are the shots of myself filming, reflected by chrome or glass, in the truck stops and trucks I filmed. These shots, while short in length arrive towards the last third of the film, hopefully pointing not only towards my own presence in the film but reaffirming the fact that I have been the one filming and recording the entirety of the time.

¹⁷ A recurring comment made by people who have viewed my film is the association between the 24/7 life of an artist and the 24/7 life of the trucker. While I agree with this statement, and am interested in people whose work encompasses, defines, and complements one's personality (as I feel in my case), to only make that relationship any more visible than it currently stands in the film would hinder the stories and images that do more to provoke a relational aesthetic between woman and truck.

¹⁸ In Jean-Luc Goddard's short film *Camera Eye* (1967), made for the compilation *Loin du Vietnam*, his focus is not so much on his own personal subjectivity, but more in thinking about the larger cultural systems that hinder his ability to not only address the people of North Vietnam but also the factory workers from the French factory Rhoiaceta. As Goddard gestures spinning knobs and checking the focus of a large-scale industry camera, he says, "We care about each other only by a sense of generosity but this is far from reflecting reality. We don't know each other because we are incarcerated in a kind of cultural prison for myself and (the) Rhoiaceta worker, in a type of prison like an economic prison."

Chapter 2: Location through sharing oneself with the other



Figure 1.2: Sandi and I (Still)

Sunday July 10, 2016, Day 2 of Shoot No. 2 with Sandi

It's 11am here and Sandi just got into the shower. This is a much slower beginning, as opposed to Tracy. Fox News is playing, talking about the sniper in Dallas and the shooting. I think this will be the most I have ever watched this news channel. It is challenging and confronting to be near someone that has different political ideas. I am not sure, but I am just trying to be open, just trying to be accepting. I am, like in my first shoot, a little tired. Having not slept well at all last night, I am not sure if I felt nauseous because of Sandi's cigarette smoke or if it's because I am just feeling a little worn out. I will adjust to this; I am already adjusting to the cigarette smoke. I had some ideas for some new things to do: have Sandi list all the parts of the truck, list what she is thinking

of...What are her dreams and her stories of the past like? Sandi is done with the shower so I will write more later tonight.

I am in Sandi's bed now. The faux leather wall covering with the rhythmic, sonar-like vibrations pulsate and make me feel like I am in a David Cronenberg¹⁹ film; an internal cave of a bodily entity. This has much more personality than in Tracy's truck. How did I arrive here in this bed on this day? And how did I get to this grocery distributor in Texas? All of these realizations of where I am hit me sometimes. As if I have just arrived out of thin air. It is exciting and almost slightly baffling to me, but maybe I am building it up to be grander than it really is. I should try to go to sleep on the earlier side tonight as I have felt a little fucked by being so out of it. What does Shadow see when he looks at me? What has this dog experienced? I think a lot, probably. I thought today about collecting dead insects from my drive to do my own moth light film.

Tuesday July 12, 2016, Day 4 of Shoot No. 2 with Sandi

I am sitting in my car with a pastry in my mouth. I went to the post office to drop off three postcards, and I stopped at the Alexia bakery to try some Mexican baked goods. It feels a little strange to be killing so much time before we drive to Jolly tonight. But I guess this is what it is really like when you are doing OTR and you're an owner operator like Sandi.

¹⁹ *Dead Ringers*, directed by David Cronenberg. (1988; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

Her friend Jimmy is here, the one they call Monkey Gouger and the one she calls "little brother." He is quite the character, a strong Southern accent and he dresses in Wranglers, a cowboy hat, and a button-down shirt. I think the hardest thing for me on this trip is just confronting the political and ideological differences between Sandi and me. She is really awesome in so many ways, but I feel uncomfortable by her racial slurs that I am not sure she even realizes are hurtful and racist. But I am also in a totally different world and how do I maneuver through these feelings while I am on this trip?

July 15, 2016, Day 6 of Shoot No. 2 with Sandi

Sandi and I went to spend the day exploring Friona and Amarillo. Tonight we went to the Big Texan restaurant and then to a western apparel store, where I bought a denim jacket and almost got a cowboy hat for some reason. There was a big storm again, and I might have seen the largest rainbow of my life. After the storm passed, and we were on our way back to Friona, there was an epic view as the sun was setting. We also passed a large barn on fire, potentially from the lightning.

Friday December 16, 2016, Day 4 of Shoot No. 3 with Lori

I have not really written my reflections in the last two days, mostly because I am just so tired at the end of each day. As always, rewinding the Bolex by hand took me way longer than I thought it would. So I ended by midnight, though it felt like eleven because of the time change. We are now driving through a desert area. We passed the Petrified Forest a while ago. Lori is catching up with people, mostly about her granddaughter who is currently in the hospital. This trip has been going well. A groove

has formed. The equipment has found its place, routines and patterns are forming, and I think things are developing well in terms of shooting. Lori and I have had some good conversations about life. Conversations about men and life shit, about Al-Anon and twelve-step programs.

There is something about being on the road with someone, driving and talking, sharing stories, that solidifies something between those people, maybe even more so than in other ways, like, say, meeting over a period of weeks for coffee. Maybe it is because together those people traverse space and time and this is a somewhat perplexing and magical action: traversing space. Traveling past climates, cities, towns, borders, and geographies. We have gone from palm trees to high desert to alpiners to mesas, from sun to clouds.

Excerpt from an Interview on Shoot No. 3 with Lori

Me: Do you ever feel like you're in a cell in here, though?

Lori: No, never. My whole mindset is different because being in this truck is my life. It is what I do. It's when I get outside of here and I go to my house. I feel comfortable in my house, but at the same token this is where I come to work and I live. Freedom I think is between your eyes, it's how you perceive what freedom is, and for me this is freedom. I'm not locked up here anymore; my mind is not locked up. I mean sometimes there's some things that I'm really tight with and I don't understand so I just shut down in that particular area of my life. But I ask and I'm steady seeking to find the truth, the truth to

whatever it might be. And, and in trucking it's what I love. I think I'm better because I'm in here. I get time to be alone, I get time to exercise, I'm focused and I don't lose sight, and sometimes I think people just need that.

I think for a lot of people you wouldn't be able to do it. But for me it was what I needed. I didn't need people crowding over me; I needed that quiet space with God to be able to assimilate or defrag whatever. I have my Bible and my study material and my color books. I write and I pray, and God and I just create a just good positive energy.²⁰

Excerpt from an Interview on Shoot No. 2 with Sandi

Sandi: No, I don't dream when I sleep. Thank goodness, I don't. No, no, no... I used to, but I don't anymore.

Me: Can you remember when you stopped dreaming?

Sandi: (Sighs) Oh my gosh, girl, it's been, over 20 years. I don't dream, I just don't. I can remember as a child and this is so ironic, as a child I remember dreaming one time in color. They say that you don't often dream in color, but one time I will never forget for as long as I live. I had never been to a thoroughbred horse race, but it was like I was at the horse race, the colors of the horses were beautiful and the jockey's silks were just outstanding. It was just like deja vu the first time I went to a real thoroughbred racetrack and saw the colors of the horses and the jockey's outfits. But, I haven't dreamt in years. I don't know if whether I'm too tired, I have no idea.

²⁰ "Lori Interview 2." In-person interview. Dec. 17 2016.

Me: Do you think it has any relationship to driving? Because you've been driving for 39 years and it's been 20?

Sandi: I know it's been 20 years or better. I've had circumstances arisen that years ago, probably in my 20's, would have haunted me in dreams. But once I had a set of dual tires come off the front drive axle, I was going down the highway with a load in my trailer and I didn't get scared. I didn't panic; I was just as cool as a cucumber, even after it was over and I got the truck stopped. I knew there was a Jersey barrier and that one wheel was riding along that barrier just as nice as you please. Had there not been that Jersey barrier there, that wheel and tire could have gone across the road and into oncoming traffic. When it came underneath the trailer, I knew it wasn't going to upset the trailer, there wasn't anything I could do. I knew I was going to run over it. It's strange how when those come off, all of a sudden they begin to catch up with you. I never had a dream about that. Never.²¹

Excerpt from an Interview on Shoot No. 1 with Tracy

Me: Do you identify with your truck at all? For me some things, like with my camera, I have an intuitive sense of it. I feel like it's almost a part of my body in some way.

Tracy: Well, the very first truck that I drove, I called her Ginger because she bucked like a little pony, but really it was me that couldn't drive it, but I accused the truck of it. And,

²¹ "Sandi Interview 3." In-person interview. July 11 2016.

yes, I refer to her as a her. This truck because it's bigger than my last truck is Big Girl. And yeah, the truck and I take care of each other; she is my lifeline, without my truck I don't have a job, a place to stay when I am at work, protection from the elements. A truck driver is nothing without their truck, and they all think of it as a lifeline.

Me: And how does it feel to wield something that's so big? Does it feel intimidating?

Tracy: It's empowering, you know, but I don't let the power go to my head. This is a very powerful piece of equipment. It shows a lot of dominance on the highways and in a lot of ways the truck dominates a large portion of my life. I mean from Monday at 6am to Friday at 5pm, it's me and the truck against the world. I spend a couple of days at home with my family, but when I think of home, I think of the truck, I don't think of the house. This is home; this is where my life is.²²

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Once I established more intimate relationships based more on the personal histories of each woman, I began to think about ways I could visually represent what I observed and experienced about the lives of Lori, Sandi, and Tracy from their position as a trucker. Fundamental to each of them was a connection with the truck, both in the physical sense and the care and attentiveness each has for it. I also observed that each equated the truck with a sense of independence and freedom from traumatic pasts, current familial situations, and previous working environments. Each personified

²² "Tracy Interview 2." In-person interview. April 19 2016.

the truck as a female, through names like, Big Girl, Big Red or Bessie,²³ and she was their friend, shelter, and source of income. As I started to recognize the symbiotic interconnectedness between truck and woman, I began to prompt each woman to explore the truck as a conduit for the fantasies and traumas they have each experienced.

These performative moments constitute one type of filmmaking I was doing in combination with my initial observational approach. Unlike the observational method, which I think speaks more to the subjectivity of the filmmaker, I was interested in how performance-driven methods created a new type of subjectivity. Performative documentary, as Bill Nichols suggests in his book *Blurred Boundaries*, allows for a social subjectivity²⁴ to emerge that is different from other forms of documentary approaches²⁵ in which the conversation between self and other expands to create a larger, community-driven subjectivity that frames a collective consciousness around a particular subject matter or historical event. In this section, I hope to expand on the individual performance strategies I developed with each trucker. From there, I want to question how these scenes encounter the social subjectivity that Nichols asserts and how this not only transformed the atmosphere of the shots but also the final completed film.

²³ "Lori Interview 3." In-person interview. Sept. 19 2017.

²⁴ Bill Nichols, "Performing Documentary," *Blurred Boundaries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. 92-107.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104 Nichols defines social subjectivity by saying, "Performative texts thus avoid both the reductionism inherent to theory and the vacuous obsession with detail inherent to formalism and contextualism. They are more properly, and fully, dialectical than a more abstract, theoretical account of dialectics could be. And as a dialectical representation, performative documentary addresses the fundamental question of social subjectivity, of those linkages between self and other that are affective as fully as they are conceptual."

As the connection between woman and truck was fundamental to how I started to view and film in my subsequent shoots, I was intrigued in creating scenarios where the inherent sentiments of the truck and trucker coupling could be studied more explicitly. With each woman I started to look for ways I could represent correlations between their personalities and experiences from their lives with the truck as an animate object.

In the case of Lori, who in 2013 completed her five-year prison sentence and who had also spent numerous times in and out of jail throughout her life, I became interested in the similar spatial aspects of both truck and prison cell. While both measure roughly to a similar confining size, each space is psychologically much different. During my last shoot with Lori, I asked her to draw out the space of her truck cabin with white chalk on the ground. She also drew out the items of her truck such as her television, arm weights, and driver's wheel. From there, she acted out the activities she does inside of the truck and walked around the perimeter of the five by eight foot space she drew. These shots, along with the other performance-driven shots were filmed on a fixed tripod, usually filmed in a wide to medium shot, encompassing the entirety of the trucker's body and the set. Prior to the majority of the chalk performances, there is a sequence of observational shots, first capturing Lori as she goes on one of her daily runs, secondly the details of Lori's sleeper cabin, and finally one continuous close up of Lori's profile as she drives and repeats along with an inspirational Joel Osteen recording. While the individually subjective viewpoints into the intimate routines represent similar themes finding personal acceptance and freedom, the performative sequences allow for both participant and viewer to reimagine how

these themes are visually represented. Reality is suspended and the meaning becomes broader, speaking to the ways we can reconceive a personal sense of freedom from confusing and confining circumstances.

Seventy-seven year old Sandi was the first truck driver I encountered in this project during the summer of 2015. It was during this time and would continue to repeat throughout my time with her, that I witnessed Sandi's deep sense of knowledge and experience in the world of trucking. Having grown up the daughter of a freight trucker, working as a dispatcher in her early thirties, and then marrying and co-driving with her third husband Puppup, Sandi has continuously observed the changes in the industry and has also been driving the longest at thirty-nine years. Furthermore, Sandi is the only owner-operator out of the three and still drives the same Peterbilt she and her deceased husband bought in 1997. From this information, I started to imagine how Sandi could speak from the voice of her truck and how her wisdom and knowledge around trucking, from the mechanics of the truck to the stereotypes associated with trucking, could create an oracle-like truck voice. It was during this point that I prompted Sandi with questions such as: If you were a truck what would you dream about?

Sandi's responses, framed through a close-up of her deadpanned face, were unlike what I could imagine scripting. These monologues, in total being six, act as chapter markers throughout the film. In one of her last addresses, the divisions between truck voice and Sandi's voice becomes blurred. Upon prompting her about her thoughts on the end of her life, Sandi talks about her own personal hopes before she passes away. Still looking at the camera in the same fixed position as the other

addresses she says, “I just wish for continued good health and to be able to take care of myself, and that someday when my time on this earth is over I can just close my eyes and slide away.”²⁶ Without fully knowing from which voice she is speaking, the truck and woman become mirrors for each other, reflecting the poetics and bittersweet realizations about the mortality of both truck and person.

Although each woman has or has had deep connections with animals in their lives, strongest perhaps is Tracy’s history with creatures big and small. From growing up with horses in southern Michigan to breeding and raising guinea pigs of all shapes and sizes. Tracy’s attachment, love, and the comfort she derives from animals was strongly felt during my time with her. From these observations, both when I was at Tracy’s house and when we talked during our drives, I started to think about her truck as one of her many animals. I asked Tracy to interact with the truck in a way she would with a horse. She decided to then take a blanket and place it over the back of her tractor and proceeded to nestle in between the tires, laying back and relaxing with her truck. As Tracy reclines and we see her smile and kick her feet around, one can see the comfort and companionship she receives from working with her “Big Red.”²⁷ Additionally, while the three examples were prompted and more tailored to specific connections I made between the women and their trucks, I also prompted each to perform dances that in some way represented movements their trucks would make. In these sequences, which are montaged together as a cathartic release after the chapter on sexual assault and abuse, we view Lori, Sandi, and Tracy dancing alongside of their

²⁶ “Sandi Interview #4.” In-person interview. March 27 2017.

²⁷ “Tracy Interview #3.” In-person interview. July 8 2017.

trucks to Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." In this montage, we can witness the resiliency of these women's spirits along with a sense of play.

In all of these performances, I believe they call forth what Nichols distinguishes about the dialectic of performative documentary. As described in his chapter, "Performing Documentary," he writes the documentary aspect "draws attention to itself" while the performance draws attention "to what it represents."²⁸ Vacillating between the specific and concrete through observational footage and tailored performances with each woman, new understandings can be unearthed for both subject and audience.²⁹

Again, when I was harnessing my inventory of filmmakers and documentaries that play with these same tensions and help inform my film, I thought about *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (1989) by Trinh T. Minh Ha. In the film, we are presented with three women who in the first half of the film perform as different cultural actors of the roles of Vietnamese women. In the second half of the film, Minh Ha presents the women as immigrants in the United States, juggling familial and work duties. The juxtaposition of these moments, interlaced with archival footage of Vietnamese women in various cultural rituals, creates layers of meaning that begin to focus less on the three women's individual subjectivities and more on a collective identity about the complicated ties between identity, translation, and representation.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., 95.

²⁹ Ibid., 104. "Through sharing the preference for the local, the concrete, and the evocative, performative documentary also generally insists on the dialectical relationship between precisely this kind of richly and fully evoked specificity and overarching conceptual categories such as exile, racism, sexism, or homophobia."

³⁰ *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha. (1989; New York: Women Make Movies, 2005), DVD.

While I see the individual voices of each Lori, Sandi, and Tracy coming through in *Long Haulers*, I believe the performance-driven scenes allow the audience to see them as larger depictions that defy and question the misrecognition and sometimes lack of recognition all together, of female truck drivers. Instead of associating women truckers merely as the wives of male drivers, or as hyper-masculine women in a man's world, these performances serve to share the playfulness and intuitive relationship they each have to their work. The gestures and performances emphasize their individual identities through light-spirited dances and empathetic monologues while simultaneously pointing towards a shared female driven perspective on trucking.

Chapter 3: Location through longevity, looking ahead



Figure 1.2: Chrome Reflection (Still)

Sunday March 26, 2017, Day 1 of Shoot No. 4 with Sandi

I am in bed right now; I think the smell of cigarette smoke is finally integrating into my system. It is strange being back, like there is a new, almost familial like relationship; not exactly between Sandi and I, but between me and this project, and the components that fall into it. Today was almost identical to my first day with Sandi in June. Driving the same route, going to the same grocery distributor, going to the same restaurant in Jolly (though we went there for breakfast one morning.) I am getting the strong sense of repetition, of sameness, the banality of the drive; familiar faces, waitresses, meals, and town water towers. There is however a deeper level of conversation Sandi and I are having. I think we are both more comfortable expressing our thoughts about things,

though we are not flat out saying our political leanings (though I think we are fairly frank without using names.)

Still, in terms of shooting, the first day is still about acclimating to the environment, observing what is happening, and figuring out the kinks. I curse myself for my lack of fluidness and astuteness, like the sample rate for the audio, the shutter speed, all the technical shit that just bogs me down completely. I need to figure out the audio issue tomorrow and I also want to film at the truck stop in Jolly and film Sandi's truck in greater detail.

I had this feeling of being free to some extent that is possible on the road, or feeling singular. But, I think that sense might be difficult as a trucker. While there is this immense freedom of working alone, traversing the country, there is also this constant awareness of the systems of commerce and capitalism in which the trucker is embedded. They are the wheels that keep the system running.

Perhaps this might be the same way that I feel about filmmaking. My relationship to others and their world is always underlined by the systems and procedures in place of making a documentary film. To some extent, being free of that knowledge and dynamic, will never escape me as I film and negotiate the relationships with the people with whom I am working with.

Truckers are given a larger panoramic view of the patterns, landscapes, and systems of this country. That is something: patterns of repetition. This is something that I want to be provoking in this project.

It would be better to say I am going to do these set of things in the film. 1) Address the personal stories of each woman 2) Define the relationship between the women and the trucks. 3) Share with the audience this crazy fucking world, and how we are implicated in it too.

April 24, 2017

It has almost been a month since when I wrote that, and now I am typing up my journals trying to again make sense of things. I had a fruitful impromptu studio visit with Matt yesterday. It felt as if I was unloading all of these suitcases of content on him. Without a carrier I feel like I am swimming in a sea of thoughts, ideas, audio, and images without knowing what path I want to take. He asked me if I had to reduce the film down into one word, what would that word be?

*A word that I am now thinking about is the word **autonomy**. There is the duality in autonomy that on the one hand comes with the infinitude of freedom, and on the other, a complete isolation from that singularity. I feel that this is somewhat relevant to them and also to myself. In being separate there is the act of being an observer, of seeing the larger picture, of being introspective personally and globally.*

There is also this line of AUTO- that feels like it has a ghostlike quality to the AUTOMATIC- AUTOMATION- AUTOMOBILE.

Tuesday March 28, 2017, Day 3 of Shoot No. 4 with Sandi

I had this feeling earlier writing while we were driving. The shakiness of the truck made me feel like the truck was producing the words based on my thoughts. That I did not need to have a lot of effort to write, almost like the truck was a Ouija board and I was just letting the truck tell me what the words were going to be. (Typing this now, it makes me think of the camera- how the act of looking through the lens produces the shot itself- it is there, and using this instrument allows me to channel and connect with what is already inside me.) Tomorrow we will wake up early at 3 am to head into Ft. Worth. I wonder if Sandi feels lonely at all like this? I don't think so entirely, but I am sure those feelings have probably passed by at some point. Ok, I am going to read Baldwin and go to bed soon.

Thursday March 30, 2017, Day 5 of Shoot No. 3 with Sandi

Today we went to the Hunan House in Friona for both lunch and dinner. We sit in different rooms so it feels like we are in different places, but the same exact staff was there. Sandi says going twice in one day to the same place is not that uncommon.

April 24, 2017

There is something that I have thought about since this shoot and continue to think about-- the visible/invisible, the interior or exterior. These truckers are the biggest vehicles on the freeways, there is no denying their presence and their existence and yet they are like giant's slowly moving that are ignored by the tiny cars around them.

Monday, July 2, 2017, Day 2 of Shoot No. 5 with Tracy

We are outside of Chicago. I am tired and exhausted and don't think I can write for long, but I want to remember how interesting it was to see Tracy help the guy tonight back his truck up. It was like she was touching an animal when she was touching his truck. Ok, going to bed. Good night.

Thursday July 6, 2017, Day 5 of Shoot No. 5 with Tracy

At a truck stop that is rather small in Hanna, IN. We had a long day today with waking up at 4am. I might be repeating myself, but so much of this project feels like repeating oneself. We are back at the same place we were at this morning but it's hard to tell of that is real as the time, locations, scenery all start to bleed into one another and there is not a clear division between days and stops on this shoot. I am still feeling uncertain if I "got it." I think I have. I've taken at least every opportunity and I am glad I shared with her what I still want to film on the shoot. I also, although I am tired might go ahead and ask if I can film inside the stop.

Thursday September 21, 2017, Day 1 of Shoot No. 6 with Lori

I am in bed, 10:30 Texas time and 8:30 my time. I am not tired at all yet although I know I will be when Lori wakes up at 4 am tomorrow, 2 am my time. I am back on the truck, in the truck, with the truck, under the truck (I peed crouching under the trailer earlier.) Lori is parked in front of her new church in Ferris, TX where her father's house that she inherited is. The lights in here are bright and not as warm as Tracy's or Lori's old truck. I didn't load my film yet, but I know that there will be time tomorrow when her trailer is being loaded.

We will go down to Houston tomorrow, I have never been and wonder if we will see any remains from the hurricane. It says it will take three hours to get there, though I assume more, with traffic. I am feeling good about what I will be able to get, and also excited to film again. I am not sure what this is a sign of, but whatever I have been on these shots I am always struck at how riveted I am by what I am filming. There are so many things worth filming in this environment. Being inside the QT, seeing the fast food section, seeing Lori's truck parked next to the church, the Mitsubishi car flag. I wonder if the next thing I film will hold as much attention and amazement for me.

Thinking about: solitary work and building relationships. We spent some part of tonight talking about sex and relationships. I told her about my summer encounter and it seems like on both of our ends the barriers are not up.

Saturday, September 24, 2017 Day 3 of Shoot No. 6 with Lori

I am now full on Chinese fast food. Lori went back to the Laundromat and I went to Panda Express. Although there is one on campus I have never been to one of these. My fortune cookie says, "You are gifted with artistic talents." I find myself a little irritated; I am not sure at exactly what. I am worried that I won't get the time to do the work on 16mm, the truck portraits, and the more scripted stuff. I am annoyed I guess by the incident at Wal-Mart. Maybe it was about asking me if I wanted to eat pork chops? Which I don't really care, but I guess I don't have control in a lot of this and I want to have control as to what I am eating. But this is also a stickier and intertwined feeling when you are pretty much living with the people you are filming, things become gray. I should get going, walk back to the truck but I feel too full and just feel gross. Hopefully I'll be able to share more thoughts tonight.

I am in bed now and comfortable in my pajamas. Lori and I are watching the original Ghostbusters, a favorite of mine. Feeling like I've gotten some good things today, I've made good progress and feel like I have finally fallen back into a rhythm. Tonight was funny in that I filmed Lori doing her exercises and then she filmed me doing the same thing. I have not looked at that footage, but I think the experience was good to attempt at a mirroring, see what that felt like, or a collaboration of some kind. It was interesting to repeat and follow her instructions.

What will it be like with the other people in the future who I will film? I was wondering if it might just be like this or will it be different? I am asking myself that because it feels

like a threshold has been crossed. There are fewer boundaries but then I can't also say that I know Lori and all of her stories. Would that ever occur? Even if it is a two-and-a-half year project, these are things to still consider. Ok, I am done.

November 17, 2017

In trying to think how I can wrap up my thoughts and sentiments around this project I am at a loss. It's happened often with this project, when I become immobile, sit, and think. Often my best thoughts have come to me while driving, or moving, be it walking, in the truck, or on a plane.^{31 32}

Last night driving back home I saw the remnants of a high-speed chase on the 8. There were about ten police cars, an abandoned car, and the sights and sounds of a helicopter overhead. Driving on freeways all the time now, I have often thought how things such as these events are rarely witnessed beyond the people in an immediate proximity to the spontaneous event. Would the people five miles away on the 8 know about the chase last night? Recognizing the micro pockets of activity while also recognizing how we understand who is around us in cars, trucks, and other automobiles is not something I was as cognizant of before this project. As all three

³¹Raymond Williams, "Career," *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Harpers Collins Publishers, 1976. 52-53. Print.

³² *Ibid.*, 53 "Career appeared in English from eC16, from fw *carrier*, F- racecourse, rw *carraria*, L-carriage road, from *carrus*, L- wagon. It was used from C16 for racecourse, gallop, and by extension any rapid or uninterrupted activity Though sometimes applied neutrally, as of the course of the sun, it had a predominant C17 and C18 sense not only of rapid but of unrestrained activity...By mC19 the word was becoming common to indicate progress in a vocation and then the vocation itself." This definition, linking career first to something that was in motion, feels highly applicable to the state in which action, identity, and purpose are linked and at its most heightened when I have been in motion on this trip, or to extend this further when I am in the act of filming.

women have described, and I have also observed, “4-wheelers”³³ are usually unaware or don’t care about the large giants that fill up the lanes. Instead, they weave in and out without regard for the break time and inability the truck has to quickly maneuver.

Now, when I look around and I spot a truck, I not only ask who the person behind the wheel might be, but where am I in relation to them? As I have gotten to know these women intimately, I have now become interested in how the longevity of a relationship to one’s subjects informs and guides the content and form of the film.

This prolonged relationship is something I think I have only begun to understand in the context of documentary film and one I want to explore in subsequent projects. How does the accumulation of time spent with someone and with the contents of material collected from those interactions affect the film? How are those durational relationships shared to the audience, and I think most importantly, how might this complicate or embed the ethical dilemmas between the filmmaker and subject even further?

³³ A four wheeler, as expressed by all truckers I’ve encountered so far, is a standard car.

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