

Some Documents. Some Archives. A List.

Lisa Radon

*O'er Mithgarth Hugin and Munin both
Each day set forth to fly;
For Hugin I fear lest he come not home,
But for Munin my care is more.¹*

Chestnuts Scrappers Club Complete Works²

The PCVA Archive³, Crumpacker Library, Portland Art Museum⁴

The Studs Terkel Program, 1952-1997⁵

patchwork quilt⁶

The Foxfire Book: Hog Dressing, Log Cabin Building, Mountain Crafts and Foods, Planting by the Signs, Snake Lore, Hunting Tales, Faith Healing, Moonshining, Eliot Wigginton, editor.⁷

Zine Library, Independent Publishing Resource Center

Archive.org

*Imago Urbis: Giuseppe Vasi's Grand Tour of Rome*⁸

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John⁹

The IWW Songbook 19th edition, 1923¹⁰

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum¹¹

Archives of American Art, Oral History Interviews¹²

Alan Lomax Collection, American Folk Life Center¹³

The Commisar Vanishes, David King¹⁴

2010 United States Census

Gigi Ibrahim Twitter feed¹⁵

The Master Cleanse YouTube video series, chachachaLeah¹⁶

StoryCorps¹⁷

The Oregonian¹⁸

Library of Congress¹⁹

the suitcase of old photos at the Nipomo swap meet, 3/\$.25²⁰

The Mine King²¹

Wikipedia²²

The Oxford English Dictionary²³

Oregon Historical Society Collection

Carmel Valley, Elizabeth Barratt²⁴

de Hooch, Pieter. *A Dutch Courtyard*, 1658/1660²⁵

*O.E. Rogue*²⁶

Originally published in *O.E. Rogue*, Portland, Oregon, May13, 2011.

- 1 Bellows, Henry Adams, trans. *The Poetic Edda*. American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1923. 92. Huginn (Old Norse for “thought”) and Muninn (“memory”) are Odin’s two raven companions who tell him everything they see and hear.
- 2 Portland's Chestnuts Scrappers Club and scrappers from across the nation gathered in Portland for a national convention organized by *Creating Keepsakes* magazine in March, 2011.
http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2011/03/national_scrapbook_convention.html
- 3 The word “archive” did not acquire its usage as a verb until 1934. "archive, v.". OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. 12 May 2011 <<http://0-www.oed.com.catalog.multcolib.org/view/Entry/10417?rskey=LpIlqU&result=2&isAdvanced=false>>.
- 4 I have spent many many hours in recent years digging through this archive of the Portland Center for the Visual Arts (1972-1987) in preparation for writing its history. I recently helped put together an exhibition of materials from an archive. It's scope was limited by the size and number of the display cases. It's scope was limited by what was in the archive from which we drew. Given that, I watched from outside myself as my chief collaborator and I talked about our choices, creating argument for inclusion. I saw us act out in dialogue the internal drama that goes on for the anyone whose job involves documentation—the writer, the photographer—over what is included (the word-count is not infinite) and what is left (or cropped) out. I watched, too, as last minute decisions were made over small parts of the puzzle that had impact on the overall story told by the included material. And all I could think, when the exhibition opened, was about the holes, about what wasn't there because it hadn't been well documented in the first place, it hadn't been saved, hadn't been cared for, hadn't been retrieved by us, hadn't been included for reasons of space, etceteras. In these most documented of times, I realized that there is no documentation that is not a failure. No documentation that can capture the full scope of the real, the actual, the now for future consideration. There is no archive that is not full of holes.

In this archive there are many letters that fragmentarily tell a story of a project, its people, its place, its time. And even as I've attempted to understand a greater picture through these preserved shards, I know that it's as if I were looking at the real through a Cardan grille or Dieter Roth's “Black page with holes (poetry machine).” And I think that a grille is perhaps the best metaphor because this is only partially a chance operation, only partly happenstance that somethings are preserved. The shaping of the archive begins before that letter, of which a copy was saved and preserved and found, was even written. Because a choice was made about what to write down. And I am terribly aware that writing the history suggested by this archive is a tricky, tricky business. There will be holes. And some of them will be there because of choices I will make or will editorially be forced to make. Call me Windmill Tilter.

- 5 The great Chicagoan, Studs Terkel, documented lives of ordinary (and extraordinary) Americans via conversation. I didn't live in Chicago and so did not hear these radio broadcasts (which in any case began before I was born), but I did read his books of interviews as great chronicles of American life told from a first person perspective including *Division Street: America* (1967), *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (1970), *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1974).
- 6 My mother made my sister and I patchwork quilts when we were young. These quilts, that are now on my son's beds, are made of scraps of fabrics leftover from things she made for us including our dresses, the cloth napkins we used at dinner, stuffed Charlies (two giant, to us, stuffed guys with yellow yarn hair who had elastic on their feet and hands so we could dance with them).
- 7 Somewhere around here I have an old stained copy of the *Foxfire* book. This title refers to a newer edition. From the publisher's description: *In the late 1960s, Eliot Wigginton and his students created the magazine Foxfire in an effort to record and preserve the traditional folk culture of the Southern Appalachians. This is the original book compilation of Foxfire material which introduces Aunt Arie and her contemporaries and includes log cabin building, bog dressing, snake lore, mountain crafts and food, and "other affairs of plain living."* Anchor, 1972.
<http://www.amazon.com/Foxfire-Book-Dressing-Building-Moonshining/dp/0385073534>
- 8 Giuseppe Vasi's Grand Tour is a project by the University of Oregon, a geographic database referencing the work of 18th century Roman topographers Giambattista Nolli (1701-1756), who published the first accurate map of

Rome (La Pianta Grande di Roma, 1748); and his contemporary Giuseppe Vasi (1710-1782), whose comprehensively documented the city and its monuments, especially in *Delle Magnificenze di Roma antica e moderna*, published from 1747-1761. <http://vasi.uoregon.edu/>

- 9 The Gospels, according to that great and comprehensive online, everchanging, crowdsourced document Wikipedia, were not written until at least five decades (in some cases eight to ten) after the events they purport to document.
- 10 Joe Wreschnig has created an online archive of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W) or Wobblies songbook. <http://www.sacredchao.net/iww/index.shtml>

Joe Hill wrote many of these songs that rally workers while documenting real events in labor's struggle. An example, *The Everett County Jail*, written by William Whalen, commemorates the Everett Massacre, documented by the Everett Public Library here http://www.epls.org/nw/dig_emassacre.asp

- 11 "I decided to devote my life to telling the story because I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead. And anyone who does not remember betrays them again." Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Elie Wiesel.
- 12 <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews>
- 13 Supplementing the material Lomax collected during the 1930s and 190s for the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folk Song, the Alan Lomax Collection includes more than 5,000 hours of sound recordings, 400,000 feet of motion picture film, 2,450 videotapes, 2,000 scholarly books and journals, hundreds of photographic prints and negatives, several databases concerning portions of the archive, and over 120 linear feet of manuscript such as correspondence, field notes, research files, program scripts, indexes, and book and article manuscripts. Lomax recorded Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, McKinley "Muddy Waters" Morganfield, and David "Honeyboy" Edwards, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, and Woody Guthrie for the Folk Song archive, and later traveled to Italy, Spain, Great Britain and Ireland, and the Caribbean for the recordings that make up the collection that bears his name. <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/lomax/>
- 14 David King's book and exhibition *The Commissar Vanishes* collects Soviet era photos that had been doctored to remove images of figures who had fallen out of favor with Stalin (and who had consequently disappeared, in more ways than one). The document is not fixed. My mother knows how to use Photoshop.

I want to say something about the word documentation. I find it fascinating that the earliest definition in the Oxford English Dictionary is "Instruction, admonition, 'lecturing'." As in, "Not another word of your documentations, dame Selby, I am not in a humour to bear them." (S. Richardson, *Hist. Sir Charles Grandison* VI. Xxv. 143) The word's previous life, its root in the medieval Latin word for admonition, is so interesting because it means the word has extensive editing built right into it. What's more, it's very individual, this documentation. Dame Selby's documentations are no doubt idiosyncratically her own. In 1888, documentation means as well, "an appeal to faithful reproduction of facts. Preparation or use of documentary evidence and authorities. In reference to realistic fiction [and art it is noted in the examples provided] applied to the faithful reproduction of historical or objective facts." "documentation, n.". OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. 10 May 2011 <<http://0-www.oed.com.catalog.multcolib.org/view/Entry/56333?redirectedFrom=documentation>>.

- 15 @Gsquare86, Ibrahim's twitter handle, was the feed to follow during the tense days of protest in Tahrir Square in Egypt. With a Blackberry and a webcam, she documented the protests in real time. <http://twitter.com/gsquare86>
- 16 This video series was uploaded to YouTube by a teenage acquaintance who goes by the YouTube handle chachachaLeah. "Good morning, everyone. So this week I am doing the Master Cleanse, and I wanna track my progress. This is Day 1." <http://youtu.be/zyazZz9vx08>
- 17 "National project to instruct and inspire people to record each others' stories in sound." <http://www.storycorps.org>

- 18 The daily paper of Portland, Oregon was founded in 1850 as the *Weekly Oregonian*.
- 19 *Established with \$5,000 appropriated by the legislation, the original library was housed in the new Capitol until August 1814, when invading British troops set fire to the Capitol Building, burning and pillaging the contents of the small library.*

Within a month, retired President Thomas Jefferson offered his personal library as a replacement. Jefferson had spent 50 years accumulating books, "putting by everything which related to America, and indeed whatever was rare and valuable in every science"; his library was considered to be one of the finest in the United States. In offering his collection to Congress, Jefferson anticipated controversy over the nature of his collection, which included books in foreign languages and volumes of philosophy, science, literature, and other topics not normally viewed as part of a legislative library. He wrote, "I do not know that it contains any branch of science which Congress would wish to exclude from their collection; there is, in fact, no subject to which a Member of Congress may not have occasion to refer."

In January 1815, Congress accepted Jefferson's offer, appropriating \$23,950 for his 6,487 books, and the foundation was laid for a great national library. The Jeffersonian concept of universality, the belief that all subjects are important to the library of the American legislature, is the philosophy and rationale behind the comprehensive collecting policies of today's Library of Congress. (<http://www.loc.gov/about/history.html>)

- 20 All archives are not created equal.
- 21 I live a good part of my life in the Archive of Ideas between the pages of books. The Mine King is a project that in a fragmented way documents my reading life while building a pile of touchstones against which to measure idea, course of action, vision. (It lives in a variety of forms, but its online home is here: <http://www.lisaradon.com/themineking>) I had considered titling this essay "Touching Stones" as a way of suggesting the value of the document, of the archive. The OED's definition of "touchstone":

Touchstone, n. A very smooth, fine-grained, black or dark-coloured variety of quartz or jasper (also called basanite n.), used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by the colour of the streak produced by rubbing them upon it; a piece of such stone used for this purpose.

b. fig. That which serves to test or try the genuineness or value of anything; a test, criterion.
"touchstone, n.". OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. 12 May 2011 <<http://0-www.oed.com.catalog.multcolib.org/view/Entry/203901?redirectedFrom=touchstone>>

- 22 As an example of the comprehensiveness of this crowdsourced "multilingual, web-based, free-content encyclopedia project based on an openly editable model," Wikipedia's article on Social Practice art can be found here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_practice
- 23 An all volunteer effort initiated by the Philological Society of London, the project of a New English Dictionary was begun in 1857; five years into a proposed ten-year project, the editors had reach *ant*.

It is generally known to literary men in the United States that the Philological Society of London has been for some time engaged in the preparation of a complete lexicon or thesaurus of the English language. The Society having determined to ask the aid of American scholars in this enterprise, the subscriber has been requested to act as secretary in America, and adopts this method of bringing the subject to the notice of persons in this country who may be disposed to contribute to the accomplishment of the object, by reading English books and noting words according to the rules hereto subjoined.
The opening of an appeal from the Philological Society of London for American readers to contribute to the New English Dictionary in 1859. <http://www.oed.com/public/appeal59/appeals-for-american-readers>

- 24 The history of my hometown told through 220 historic images with descriptive captions documenting the inhabitants of the Valley from the native Esselen and Rumsen, through the Spanish explorer period and the establishment of Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo, the early Mexican rancho and American settler period and into the 20th Century. This same history is referenced in the street names; the road I grew up on was named after the owner of the ranch at the end of the road. Barratt, Elizabeth, *Carmel Valley*, Mount Pleasant, SC:

Arcadia Publishing, 2010.

- 25 Dutch painting of the 16th and 17th centuries turns to documenting scenes of the everyday. This work is part of the Andrew W. Mellon Collection in the National Gallery of Art. http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/timage_f?object=63&image=432&c=gg51
- 26 What is *O.E. Rogue* but an attempt at on-the-fly documentation? Who will answer the call to contribute? Can the amalgamation of their contributions serve as a document? And how well will the contributions document? What choices will be made in the editing? What form will it take? Where will it...be archived?