



## Another Delicious Story

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*Another Delicious Story* consists of photography and video taken by my preschool-aged child with text and narration by myself, his mother. This video essay contemplates such questions as "How does a four-year-old frame photographs?" "What is a 'punctum' to a four-year-old?" and finally, "What stories do a mother and child tell each other?" I compose alongside the children's book *A Delicious Story* by Barney Saltzberg, which consists of an absent or eaten narrative within a narrative, within a third unfolding story. As I trace how my child appears to be trying to externalize embodied affects and feelings in the photographs he takes, I relate this, inversely, to *A Delicious Story*, which brings the outside in, in the form of an edible (consumable) story.

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**Keywords:** childhood; motherhood; storytelling; photographic punctums; Roland Barthes; Jazmina Barrera; D. W. Winnicott; Barney Saltzberg

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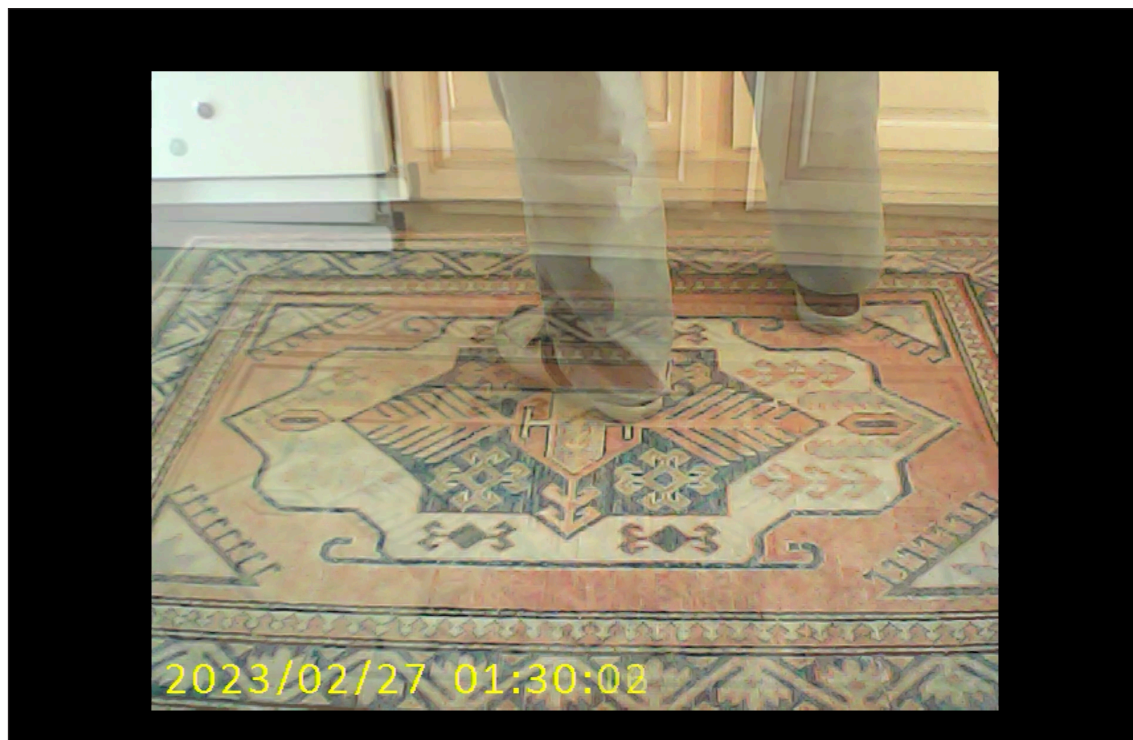


## VIDEO ESSAY

Available to view here: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.18121>.

Available for download here: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.18121.mp4>.

## STILL FROM THE VIDEO ESSAY



## VIDEO ESSAY TRANSCRIPT

[Note: This is a transcript of a video essay. Onscreen text appears left justified, while spoken words are indented. Individual elements from the transcript, such as metadata and reference lists, may appear more than once in the document, in order to be properly read and accessed by automated systems. The transcript can be used as a placeholder or reference when it is not possible to embed the actual video, which can be found by following the DOI.]

[0:21]

### Another Delicious Story

[0:25]

#### I. Not a Precision Lens

Over winter break you receive a point-and-shoot camera. It is blue and cat-shaped, and a gift from your aunt.

This is not a precision lens. And the time stamps on these images comically and inexplicably are at various points in the future and an earlier past.

The photos you take with it look like watercolor paintings—translucent, textured, blurry around the edges.

At first, you shoot accidentally.

But very quickly you transition to selecting from the whole that surrounds you, framing moments with intention.

[1:17]

Dog,  
dog again,  
teddy bear  
a chain of visual associations  
Saguaro cactus,  
yellow night lamp,  
swimming pool.  
flow and glimmer.

Later you explain, “when I feel watery, I take a picture of the swimming pool.”

You seem to be intertuning with the forces and rhythms that surround us.

[1:53]

## II. Collaborative Texts

Of all the resources on motherhood and parenting that I’ve referred to since you were born, three stand out:

Psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott’s *The Child, The Family, and The Outside World*.

Writer Jazmina Barrera’s *Linea Nigra: Essays on Pregnancy and Motherhood*.

And third, is my mother and the long line of mothers that came before her. A continuum of giving birth to and raising children, an embodied archive and intensive repertoire. Like nesting dolls but at an infinite scale.

“...each child of four is also three and also two and also one, and is also an infant being weaned, or an infant just born, or even an infant in the womb...[moving] backwards and forwards in emotional age.”

— D.W. Winnicott

*The Child, The Family, And The Outside World*

“...babies still have something of not being, of the nothingness before existence, the other world before and after life.”

— Jazmina Barrera

*Linea Nigra: Essays on Pregnancy and Motherhood*

You are four and a half years old now. But you carry this quality with you sometimes. Of other worlds in the cosmos, and of becomings.



[3:18]

### III. Becoming Four

In the corner of the frame a pigeon spreads its wings.  
 You've captured it mid-flight.  
 Streamers decorating a restaurant patio, move in the wind.  
 Succulents and an orange tree

But what are you actually looking at?

Big orange light globes  
 A heat lamp and drain covers.  
 Thigh high, you photograph your grandma's face  
 And there's your reflection on polarized sunglasses  
 blue, yellow, turquoise,  
 a single tortilla chip and,  
 my shoes.

How many ways do you teach me to become four?

[4:34]

Some ideas you have shared with me recently (about the body, about death, about love, about the everyday):

Hiccups are like an eraser for words.

Mama, I want to eat you up and poop you out.

Did I just break a rule? Mama, can I stick it back with tape?

Mama when we are stardust will you hold my hand?

Mama, when you say "I love you forever,"  
 it doesn't mean "a very long time."  
 It actually means forever.

Now back in our Brooklyn apartment again  
 I try to discern how these photographs  
 destroy the known rules of photography  
 and create something new.

I have some hypotheses about how you look at the everyday,  
 in colors and patterns,  
 and maybe with the desire to capture materials  
 for later use in your pretend play.

But I can't decipher an overarching shape to this series of images.  
 (and why does this volcano in a board game,  
 all of a sudden,  
 look just like that painting of the hat seller?)

[6:07]

Roland Barthes, in his book *Camera Lucida*, comes to a realization about the "punctum" of a photograph as something that "wounds" the spectator; it is what the spectator adds to that which is already there in the image, he writes. The materiality of passing time itself, is another kind of punctum for Barthes.

I love all of these photographs. To me they are an enchanting picture of your vision from a moment in time that is now gone.

[6:43]

#### IV. A Delicious Story

Your favorite book these days is called *A Delicious Story* by Barney Saltzberg. It is the tale of a little mouse and a big mouse. The little mouse is looking for a story and gets very alarmed when the big mouse informs him there isn't one in this book and further, that he ate the story that was there. (And, that it was delicious). To calm the little mouse down, the big mouse then tells the story that is presently unfolding — of a little mouse looking for a story and finding that the story has disappeared... and so it continues, with some surprises along the way, possibly infinitely. The end.

I like this story too for all storytelling is an embodiment of productive and reproductive labor. Especially a mother's stories to her child.

In the photos in this series, you've managed to "capture" some of yourself, "dispersed," "light," a sunsprite, to borrow from Barthes. In documenting myself, watching you, framing-unframing the world, have I captured something of motherhood?

[8:30]

### **Another Delicious Story**

**Narration and Text by Karin Shankar**

**Including Selections from:**

Barrera, Jazmina. *Linea Nigra*. [United States]: Almadía Ediciones, 2020.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Translated by Richard Howard. Vintage Classics, 1993.

Malak, Stephanie. "A Cosmos of Bodies: On Jazmina Barrera's *Línea Nigra*, An Essay on Pregnancy and Earthquakes." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 22, 2022.

Saltzberg, Barney. *A Delicious Story*. Penguin Random House, 2024.

Winnicott, D. W. *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World*. Reprint. Penguin Books, 1968.

### **Photography and Video by Samir Shankar-Hetland**

**Edited by Ruby Kline**

"Ebbs and Flows" Kevin MacLeod ([incompetech.com](https://incompetech.com))

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**Abstract:**

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**Keywords:**

Childhood, Motherhood, Storytelling, Photographic punctums, Roland Barthes, Jazmina Barrera, D. W. Winnicott, Barney Saltzberg

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## References

Barrera, Jazmina. *Linea Nigra: An Essay on Pregnancy and Earthquakes*. Translated by Christina MacSweeney. San Francisco: Two Lines Press, 2022.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Translated by Richard Howard. Vintage Classics, 1993.

Malak, Stephanie. "A Cosmos of Bodies: On Jazmina Barrera's *Línea Nigra*, An Essay on Pregnancy and Earthquakes." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 22, 2022.

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