

**NO HOME MOVIES:
FIRST-PERSON DOCUMENTARY**

Anastasia Lukovnikova

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ABSTRACT: The review of the history and practice of first-person filmmaking and autobiographical documentary, as well as common strategies of self-representation, applied by filmmakers, is accompanied by several case-studies, that give a deeper perspective on the nature of a self-portrait, diary film, a portrait of a mother, a family investigation and an essay on film. First-person documentary films by Agnès Varda, David Perlov, Chantal Akerman, Chris Marker, Catarina Mourão, Alain Berliner are discussed in the context of postmemory, representation of everyday and death, deconstruction of the archive, performative strategies, cinephilia. To conclude, the experience of creating an autobiographical documentary by the author is shared, placing some of the questions raised earlier in the practical field.

KEYWORDS: autobiography, documentary, subjectivity, self-portrait, diary

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INTRODUCTION

The title of the thesis refers to the last film of the director Chantal Akerman *No Home Movie* (2015), where she, alone with a digital camera, films her mother in her mother's home. This film deeply touched me and made me want to understand better, what is it that makes me able to connect to the intimate life of stranger in such a convincing way, but also, what lies behind the urge to film one's own life.

I started my research with a list of around twenty documentaries with an autobiographic element, but their number very quickly grew to fifty, and then to one hundred. It kept growing, until I've lost count. Along with the critically acclaimed filmmakers, a lot of lesser-known names appeared, with films that were difficult or even impossible to access. Though the list will always remain incomplete, I resolved to attach it to this work (Appendix B), in the hope that it can ensure that researchers and artists do not have to start from zero.

While subjectivity as a modality of address in documentary is well-studied and well-theorized, autobiography and self-representation has received less attention, as of today. During my research, I drew heavily on the published works of three theorists: Michael Renov, Laura Rascaroli and Alisa Lebow, who explore first-person filmmaking in its many forms.

Looking into how filmmakers approach the delicate task of self-representation, I discovered an unimaginable diversity of expressions and had to face the impossibility to categorize the films by genre or topic. Instead, I focus on the genres, stylistic and formal elements, or strategies, that appear in different combinations from film to film. The best way to speak about them is with the help of the text and body of the film, which is why I choose case study as my method.

While Chapter I provides a general overview, introducing the historic context and the existing practice of the first-person filmmaking, the following chapters are more essayistic, looking for an individual approach to the chosen subject and analysed films. Each of the chapters is built around the specific preoccupation, thematic or formal, common in personal films, and can be used separately, outside this work.

Will the help of a playful self-portrait of Agnès Varda *Les plages d'Agnès* (*The Beaches of Agnès*, 2008), I present the possible strategies of self-representation and self-

inscription in documentary (Chapter II). I study *Diary (1973-1983)* by David Perlov, reflecting on how film can portray the everyday, the mundane (Chapter III). Of course, I come back to Chantal Akerman, taking a deeper look into her relationship with the mother in *No Home Movie* (2015) with the help of the theory of postmemory and psychoanalysis, but also touching on the question of representation of death in film (Chapter IV). I compare two family investigations *A Toca do Lobo (The Wolf's Lair, 2015)* by Catarina Mourão and *Nobody's business (1996)* by Alain Berliner, describing a different way one can work with a family archive (Chapter V).

It is important to say, that the above-mentioned films are not chosen because they are exemplary. When we refuse to use categories, it is impossible to choose a “best of”. For each chapter I have looked for film that expose a certain element, stylistic or thematic, but the final choice was a subjective one, based on a personal preference and passion. As I will argue in Chapter VI, that explores the phenomenon of cinephilia through Chris Marker's essays on film, an emotional and subjective approach in film studies is not necessarily a flaw.

The theoretical research inspired a practical one, resulting in a short autobiographic film *разговорник — guia de conversação (phrasebook, 2018)* (Appendix A), an exercise in two languages aiming to share the experience of an unexpected change of countries, from Russia to Brazil. In Chapter VII, I introduce my creative process, where I use instant messages, travel diary, language exercises in search for a way to speak through distance and language barrier, and reflect on the film in the context of modern migration processes and communication practices.

CHAPTER I
LOOKING FOR IDENTITY: SELF IN FILM AND VIDEO

The film of tomorrow appears to me <...> like a confession, or a diary. The young filmmakers will express themselves in the first person and will relate what has happened to them. It may be the story of their first love or their most recent; of their political awakening; the story of a trip, a sickness, their military service, their marriage, their last vacation <...> The film of tomorrow will resemble the person who made it, and the number of spectators will be proportional to the number of friends the director has.

François Truffaut, 1957

Truffaut's dream of sixty years ago has become the reality today. I can shoot a film with a mobile phone camera and make it immediately available to all my friends via Facebook or by e-mail. It has nothing to do with the fact that I am filmmaker. On an almost daily basis I receive short videos, sometimes edited films, from my siblings who have no training in film. Most of these videos feature their children busy with daily routine: eating, sleeping, playing, running. It is hardly a coincidence that among Lumière brothers' vast heritage, several films have a similar plot and origin. In 1896, the year of the famous *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (*The Arrival of a Train*), Louis Lumière films his brother feeding his baby son. In later reels, we see the same baby boy quarrelling with a friend over a toy, taking a bath, making his first steps. These first ever home movies manifest the urge to use the technical apparatus of the camera to capture one's own life, that will come to full bloom a century later in the era of camcorder.

Lumière brothers' example was followed by many Western families that could afford a film camera. But by the time cinema market was fully formed, there was no space for the distribution of these amateur films. They remained hidden in the privacy of family homes or in safely guarded state archives until revisited by researchers or filmmakers

such as Alain Berliner and José Luis Guerín. Their respective works, *The Family Album* (1986) and *Tren de sombras (Train of Shadows)*, (1997), make public the hidden gems of home movies produced in first half of the 20th century in the USA and Europe. It is not until late 1950s and early 1960s that filmmakers returned to experiment with home video and other non-professional forms, using them to explore a new subject: the self.

The emerging interest in self-representation in film throughout the second half of the 20th century is part of a wider tendency that appeared shortly after the World War II in painting, literature, dance, theatre and photography. Contemporary art is marked by interdisciplinary contaminations, and in my analysis of first-person films I will point out the traits and influences of other artistic practices, including written diary, and performance. But it is certainly the practice and experience of photographic self-representation, that can be named a central influence when we talk about cinema. Among the artists who used photography as a media for exploration of the self, Portuguese theorist Margarida Medeiros (2000) names Gilbert and George, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman, Jo Spence, Nan Goldin and Jean le Gac (p. 13). Among them Medeiros singles out British painter and photographer Francis Bacon, whose work marks an irreversible division with the past generations: his self-representation is disfiguring, obsessive, trembling; it implies an interrogation of being (p. 103) A unique, unified and transcendent subject, the Romantic self, is no longer possible, announce De Man, Barthes and Derrida, and is replaced by the one that is fatally divided, threatened by representation, forced to summon rhetorically the ghosts of a self they can never hope to be (Anderson, 2001, p. 27). In this context, subjectivity becomes a reflection and a consequence of the increased fragmentation of human experience and of our need and desire to find ways to represent such fragmentation, and to cope with it, resumes film theorist Laura Rascaroli (2009, p. 4).

“I want to film by myself and for myself, professional cinema does no longer attract me” is how David Perlov starts his famous *Diary* (1973-1983). As many of his fellow artists, who took on a first-person perspective, Perlov had to go through the process of rupture with “cinema as a mass medium and as an industrial and collective activity” (Turim, 1992, p. 193). Autobiographical and diaristic filmmaking owes much the liberties gained earlier by the French New Wave and *cinéma-vérité* in Europe and by the New American Cinema and Underground in the USA. Those movements, formed on the

margins of the film industry, put the figure of the author up front, allowing first-person filmmaking to emerge in 1960s and 1970s. Among the first were Jonas Mekas with *Walden. Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969), Ed Pincus with *Diaries* (1971-1976), Jerome Hill with *Family Portrait* (1972), David Perlov, mentioned earlier, Johan Van der Keuken with *Vakantie van de filme (Filmmaker's Vacation)*, 1974), Chantal Akerman with *News from home* (1977), Babette Mangolte *The Camera: Je (La Camera: I)* (1977), Alain Cavalier with *Ce repondeur ne prend pas de messages (This Answering Service Takes No Messages)*, 1979) and Raul Ruiz *De grands événements et des gens ordinaires (Of Great Events and Ordinary People)*, 1979). In the 1980s they were followed by Agnes Varda with *Ulysse* (1982), Marilu Mallet with *Journal inachevé (Unfinished diary)*, 1982), Raymond Depardon with *Les années déclin (The Decline Years)*, 1983), Alain Berliner with *Intimate Stranger* (1986), Ross McElwee with *Sherman's March* (1986) and Robert Kramer with *Doc's Kingdom* (1988) and *Route One USA* (1989)¹. At the time, all these works appeared as somewhat of an exception, not part of a formed genre or a movement.

It was in the 1990s when “the arrival of the camcorder enabled an explosion of a new kind of work in which the video camera became an analogous tool to the pen or computer of the diarist or ‘life-writer’” (Dowmunt, 2005, p.171). Stripped of technical and sound crew as well as need for a film laboratory, digital camera allowed the levels of intimacy unimaginable before. “Right now, I’m sitting here with no cameraman in the room. I’m totally alone. I would never, ever talk this way if somebody were here”, Lynn Hershman describes the experience in *Binge* (1989), an intimately told struggles to control her weight.

At the same time, television joined the digital revolution and offered a distribution model for the emerging first-person works. *Binge* was broadcasted to thousands American homes as part of recently premiered PBS channel POV series, dedicated to promoting independent documentaries with “a human face”, as is stated on their official website. In 1994 BBC Two in UK went even further with *Video Nation* series where they invited common people to record their day-to-day, providing necessary equipment and training. *Video Nation* “introduced the life stories of all manner of people (the elderly upper-class gentlemen, the very pregnant Asian woman, the painfully isolated gay man) into thousands of British homes, fostering a kind of social contact unlikely to occur under

¹ See Appendix B for a more complete list of titles.

other circumstances”, resumes American film theorist Michael Renov (2004, p. XV). The curiosity towards the lives of others was not new, and PBS proved it with very successful shows *An American Family* (1971) and *An American Family Revisited* (1983), that were documenting the everyday of The Louds family during years. What was fundamentally different in *Video Nation* is the change in address: from classical “I speak about them to you”, as defined by American documentary film theorist Bill Nichols (2001, p. 133-134), to the revolutionary “I speak about myself to you”.

The “subjective turn” in documentary filmmaking in the 1980s, according to Nichols (1991), took issues of subjectivity and identification away from the exclusive domain of narrative fiction. Before, Fellini, Truffaut and Tarkovsky had to discuss intimate memories using the language of fiction. Tarkovsky, being ahead of his time, while working on the first draft of *Zerkalo* (*The Mirror*, 1974), a fictionalised version of his childhood memories, structured the film around a documentary interview with his mother. It would have been the director himself to ask the questions: “Whom do you love more - your son, your daughter? And before, when they were children? How do you feel about the discovery of nuclear energy? Do you like to hold parties at home and invite guests?” (Misharin, Tarkovsky, 1968) The director was not understood by his colleagues and by the government officials on whom the film’s fate depended, and that episode was never filmed.

Even today, a close attention to the private sphere in documentary continues to be questioned. Alan Berliner gives an ironic title *Nobody’s business* (1996) to the intimate portrait of his father, who refers to his own story as follows: “I am just an ordinary guy who’s led an ordinary life. I was in the army, I got married, I raised a family, worked hard, I had my own business. That’s all. That’s nothing to make a picture about”. Sarah Polley in *Stories We Tell* (2012), an investigation in search for her biological father, expresses a similar doubt but from the filmmaker’s point of view: “I don’t know if it’s a personal record for myself or something to be made into a piece for others to see at some point”.

It is no surprise that first person films are often referred to as “self-absorbed, myopic, ego-driven films that only a mother could love”, writes documentary filmmaker and scholar Alisa Lebow (2012, introduction). But, in fact, every “I” implies a “you”, meaning that there is always a dialogue and that viewers are addressed directly, “by looking into the camera lens, or else by speaking to them, or simply by presenting the

discourse as a confession, as a shared reflection, or as a persuasive argument” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 14). In the most intimate films, dialogue could be intended between the filmmaker and his future self, or future generations. The act of communication that is the intention and the result of first-person filmmaking may explain why “ego” films attract their audience.

Another argument in favour of filmmakers who dare to question the privacy of their lives, is our ability to “understand social by way of personal” (Renov, 2008, p.63). Private always serves as witness on a greater social and historical scale: people cannot help but keep traces of the places they came from and what they experienced on the way. While Canadian film theorist Catherin Russell (1999) speaks of “autoethnography” for when “the film or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes”, Renov (2008) proposes a term “domestic ethnography” for when “the careful description and explication of culture begins in the home, a place of great intimacy and <...> extended fieldwork” (pp. 56-57). In his documentary classification, Nichols (2001) singles out “a social subjectivity that joins the general to the particular, the individual to the collective, and the political to the personal” (p.133).

Nichols points out that the subjective mode of representation is often used by the underrepresented or misrepresented, including women and ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians (2001, p. 134). They dare themselves to answer the question “Who are we?”, the one that Foucault deems central in struggle against “economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually” and “a scientific or administrative inquisition which determines who one is” (1982, p. 781). Vanalyne Green (*Trick or Drink*, 1984) and Lynn Hirshman (*Binge*, 1989) share their struggle with overeating, something unfamiliar to the perfect women they see on commercial screens. Marlon Riggs (*Tongues Untied*, 1989) and Sadie Benning (*If Every Girl Has a Diary*, 1990) use the film to make public their socially inconvenient gay/lesbian identities. As Renov (2008) resumes, those separated from the engines of representation, including the advertising, news, and entertainment industries, find in autobiography a vital expression of agency.

The question “who are we?” is equally important to all those displaced as a result of colonial rule, the world wars and dictatorships of the 20th century. They turn to autobiographic works in an attempt to pass on the memory or in search of a lost memory

of their ethnic identity. Jonas Mekas (*Lost, Lost, Lost*, 1979) films the Lithuanian immigration community, that he is part of, in post-war New York, capturing not only their attempts to adapt but also their struggle to remember the lost land. Marilu Mallet (*Unfinished diary*, 1982), a Chilean political refugee in Canada, puts her own experience of exile in the centre of her work, filming both Chilean and Portuguese immigrants in Canada, as well as her own mother. Rea Tajiri (*History and Memory*, 1991) and Emiko Omory (*Rabbit in the Moon*, 1999), whose families were among the thousands Japanese Americans imprisoned in internment camps during World War II, collect private memories to re-write the existing historic narrative. All those works could be discussed in the context of postmemory, a complex process where, according to American theorist Marianne Hirsch (2008), the family and photographic image play key roles, serving as mechanisms for the transmission of trauma from generation to generation.

First-person film is also used increasingly to capture history as it happens, with an urge to make a difference for the present generation. Looking into the documentary practices of Middle East, Lebow (2012) notices that “those most inclined to take up first person filmmaking are precisely those who have experienced both an excess of mediation (predominately via the news media), and in direct proportion, an excess of violent conflicts”. In *Rodnye (Close relations*, 2016) Russian documentarist Vitaly Mansky films his mother and family in Ukraine during the first two years of Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, placing their everyday life against official narratives of TV. In *The War Show* (2017) a Syrian radio host Obaidah Zytoon works with the footage, that she and her friends started filming during the street protests against President Bashar al-Assad, not yet knowing that the country was to plunge into civil war. The Syrian war is often called “the first YouTube conflict” (Rosen, 2018) and, as the title chosen by Zytoon indicates, she edits the material to expose the way the mobile camera becomes a weapon, used by all sides.

An autobiographical film can become a place that contains and shares a more personal trauma, serving as a coping tool and the only possible way to communicate in the face of a tragedy and death. The tragedy could be fresh, like in *Time Indefinite* (1993), where Ross McElwee, shocked by a sudden loss of his unborn child followed by his father’s unexpected death, doesn’t stop making the home video chronicle started at a happier time. The traumatic event could be revisited years later, like in Jay Rosenblatt’s *Phantom Limb* (2005), where he deals with “a painful and haunting memory” of his

younger brother's death. The filmmaker can choose to accompany a painful process of illness and dying, of his loved one, like Johan van der Keuken in *Laatste woorden - Mijn zusje Joke* (*The Last Words*, 1998) or even his own, like Derek Jarman in *Blue* (1994). The death also could be a starting point for a greater cinematographic and philosophical journey, as in João Moreira Salles' *No intenso agora* (*In the Intense Now*, 2017). Consciously or unconsciously, these filmmakers seek to validate the death that no longer has a proper place in Western mass culture.

Autobiographic film becomes a perfect place to explore sexuality beyond the glossy images of pop culture. In *Gokushiteki erosu: Renka 1974* (*Extreme Private Eros: Love Song 1974*, 1974) Japanese filmmaker Kazuo Hara registers the love life of his ex-girlfriend with an uncomfortable directness and detail. In a road diary of a couple told in two voices, *No Sex Last Night* (1996), French artist Sophie Calle and American photographer Greg Shephard question whether to expose one's sex life is the same as to speak of one's lunch menu of the day. While Sadie Benning in *It Wasn't Love* (1992) explores her sexuality by posing in front of the camera with her girlfriend, dressing up as a boy, and retelling her experience of an intimate encounter, George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 3* (1988) features masturbation for the camera (see Russell for a thorough analyses of both artists). Using personal camera and their own bodies, the filmmakers question the notion of norm in sex and gender, each in their own way, be it obsessive, pathological, playful or intellectual.

Turning the camera on oneself opens up a unique possibility for filmmakers to reflect on the nature of their craft and the nature of the image, both still and moving. Avant-guard classic *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (*Man with the Movie Camera*, 1928) by Dziga Vertov with the title that speaks for itself, could be considered a pioneering work of this kind. But *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961) by Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch might be of a greater influence for the modern generation of documentary filmmakers. The film features a number of fascinating characters who share their life stories, and Morin and Rouch appear in front of camera as characters as well, discussing the script, showing footage to everybody involved, sharing doubts on whether the film turned out the way they wanted it to be. A few years later, American director William Greaves makes a unique film *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm. Take One* (1968), where behind-the-scene drama gradually takes over the fiction story being filmed in Central Park. In this complex documentary, one camera is filming the actors rehearsing the script, another

camera is filming the actors and the director, and one more camera is filming, as Greaves calls it, “the whole thing”. We witness how Greaves’ politics of “non-directing” create a strange situation on set that throws actors and crew members off the known grounds, forcing them to re-invent their roles. In *Ulysse* (1982), Agnes Varda turns to the photograph she made years ago, exploring the relations between the memory of the photograph, the people portrayed, and her own. In *Santiago* (2007), João Moreira Salles reflects on the footage of the film he started more than ten years ago and the reasons behind his failure to make the film. The recent *Camera Person* (2016), made by a cinematographer Kirsten Johnson, explores her role behind the camera using the footage of the films she has filmed over decades on different continents.

At the same time, Chris Marker looks for a way to share another kind of cinematographic experience, that of the film viewer. In his film essays dedicated to Akira Kurosawa (*A.K.*, 1985), Alexandr Medvedkin (*Le tombeau d’Alexandre, The Last Bolshevik*, 1992) and Andrei Tarkovsky (*Une journée d’Andrei Arsenevitch, One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich*, 2000), he invites the viewer to watch famous, as well as forgotten, works of great masters with his eyes and his passion. Jean-Luc Godard joins him with *Histoire(s) du cinema (1988-1998)*, a project in 8 parts and 266 minutes, that presents a very personal view on the subject undertaken. Both Marker and Godard belong to the first generation of cinephiles, that were “not only concerned with establishing the primacy of the filmmaker-director, but also aimed at the creation of a new “perfect” audience” (Valck and Hagener, 2005, p.11). The cinephiles celebrated subjectivity, looking for an emotional, passionate attachment to the films.

There seems to be no consensus in academic studies and film magazines about how to classify or even name this vast body of works discussed above: first-person documentary (Lebow, 2012), first-person filmmaking (Rascaroli, 2009), subjective documentary (Nicholls, 2001) or “the new autobiography” (Renov, 2004). Researchers and critics are reluctant to propose strict definitions and terms, concentrating instead on studying the existing practice, diverse and vivid. A wide variety of autobiographic genres or formats is produced, such as diary, travelogue, self-portrait, video letter, memoir, investigation of a crime, among others. First-person films are made both by professionals with a crew, such as those by Nanni Moretti, and by people with a camcorder and no training in film, such as Sadie Benning’s first works. The distribution method can vary

from a personal website or YouTube to gallery or even official theatrical release. Rascaroli suggests that the “unorthodoxy of technical formats, of subject matter, of aesthetic values, of narrative structures and of practices of production and distribution” is the only trademark common to all the films discussed (2009, p. 2).

Looking at the vast body of first person films, researchers note that “self” is not just a concern of Western civilization. It is true that we could see an “epidemic” (Lebow, 2012) of personal filmmaking in USA, dozens of works from France, a strong tradition in Italy, “an autobiographical turn” (Curtis and Fenner, 2014) in Germany and Austria, an ongoing interest in Portugal, etc. Further, works were discussed above from Brazil, Chile, Canada, Syria, Russia, all of them part of the global phenomena, that grows only in part from a western cultural tradition of individualism, and is strongly connected to the technological revolution and modern communication strategies.

As American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1993) points out, that an autobiography cannot be referred to as “life as lived”, a life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography (p. 38). It becomes quite obvious in the process of the filmmaking, where there are distinct gaps, physical and temporal, between living and filming, and between filming and editing. The process of writing autobiography is never complete: it is constantly in transit, in transformation, there is no such thing as a fixed, closed, complete identity, but rather a sort of sketch, of "work in progress" of the life experience (Labbé, 2011, p. 69). This might be the reason so filmmakers often do not stop after making their first autobiographic film and continue to explore the genre for many years.

This fragmentation is also related to the flawed work of memory that is revealed on many levels during the film’s creation. A certain discord appears between private memory and official, between one’s memory and the memory of the other, between the story told and the archive images. The film itself is always a work of remembering and forgetting at the same time, due to the fact that the filmmaker always has to revisit the footage at the editing table. In the process, his memory is confronted by that of the images, that seem never to forget but that, in truth, are unable to present a full picture.

Every director has to face one of the principal paradoxes of the first-person filmmaking: the impossibility to be at the same time behind the camera and in front of it, the effort to capture one’s own life with the camera transform oneself into his or her own spectator (Labbé, 2011, p. 68). Filmmakers are forced to develop various strategies to

inscribe his or her corporeal presence in the film. It might be using the camera in front of the mirror or using the camera as a mirror, which is very common for modern camcorder with LCD screens. Very early into the digital era, analysing some of the very first artistic experiments with the new medium, Rosalind Krauss (1976) notes the narcissistic mirror-reflection quality of video that results in the displacement of the self and transformation of the performer's subjectivity into another. The overlapping of filmmaker's and spectator's roles urges to view first-person documentaries as performative, where the self-representation, more or less self-consciously, is always *for* the camera.

Some filmmakers embrace this duality, like Boris Lehman who credits himself as a director and a character in his body of autobiographical work, or Nanni Moretti, who in *Caro diario (My Dear Diary, 1993)* plays himself in the fantasy context (Labbé, 2011). Some filmmakers choose performance as a primary method, using their own body as an experimental material and evidence, like in famous *Super Size Me (2004)* where Morgan Spurlock eats fast food for 30 days in a row, or *That Sugar Film (2014)* where Damon Gameau, just the opposite, chooses products labelled as "healthy" with an unexpected result. Michael Moore's political investigations are famous for "the intrusive presence of the director" (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 86) and have spawned numerous imitations around the World.

Long before Michael Moore, Jonas Mekas (2014), working in a very different genre of filmic diary, recognised a political potential of a personal camera as a tool for everyone to work towards consciousness of his own position:

We know that in America today there are seven million cameras in the homes, seven million 8 mm and 16 mm cameras. <...> By taking cinema away from the industry, and by exaggerating, by saying that EVERYONE can make films, we are freeing those seven million cameras. <...> Eventually, these seven million cameras can become a political force in one way: that all aspects of reality will be covered – eventually it will go into the prisons, into the banks, into the army, and help us to see where we are, so that we can go out of there and go somewhere else. (p. 164)

This utopic vision seems to be coming true in the era of YouTube, that formulates its mission in very similar words, stating that "everyone deserves to have a voice, and that the world is a better place when we listen, share and build community through our stories" (official website). The video sharing platform, that started its history in 2005, with the

first video uploaded being one of its co-founders discussing an elephant's trunk in the Zoo (Jawed, 23.04.2005), now has more than 400 hours of video uploaded to the site every minute and more than one billion users. In 2011, YouTube made a famous experiment with its *Life in a Day* project, a theatrically distributed film made of videos that has been sent by people from around the Globe showing their ordinary day. The project could have become the greatest victory of the first-person filmmaking but instead remains a perfect demonstration of the vulnerability of user-generated content that is carefully selected, managed, approved and marketed. We have to remain conscious of the fact that this technology is only in part cultural: in the first place, it is commercial.

At this point, YouTube videos tend to be relatively brief and fragmentary lacking an analysis in depth, that a documentary film develops (Peter Hughes, 2012). At the same time, YouTube and social networks present for first-person filmmakers a distribution model alternative to the more conservative movie theatres or TV. Now the director can really be sure that the number of spectators will be at least no less than the number of friends he or she has, as Truffaut hoped it would be. It is safe to say that we live in the era of acceptance of subjectivity, and that in (documentary) film and video this still relatively new terrain is yet to be fully explored.

CHAPTER II

CAMERA AS A MIRROR: STRATEGIES OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

Here I come to one of the memoir writer's difficulties - one of the reasons why, though I read so many, so many are failures. They leave out the person to whom things happened <...> So they say: "This is what happened"; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened.

Virginia Woolf, A Sketch of the Past, 1939

In this chapter, I will explore the possible strategies of self-representation that filmmakers have at their disposal when attempting an autobiographical work. In order to have a deeper look at the difficulties of self-inscription in film and video, I focus on a specific genre of self-portrait, though, as the following chapters will show, all first-person filmmakers face similar challenges in their work.

One of the classical self-portrait in the history of cinema is, in fact, a work of fiction, but we don't know it until the final credits appear. Jim McBride's mockumentary *David Holzman's Diary* (1967) tells the story of "a fictional character in a real place" (Brody, 2013): a young New York Upper West Side filmmaker loses his job and is about to be drafted for military service in the Vietnam War. This pushes him to record obsessively every little detail of his life, to preserve it, presumably, in case he ends up dead in the war. American film critic Richard Brody points out that the film "turns ordinary experience into a treasure trove of loss that empties out faster than it fills" thus enacting Jean Cocteau's statement about cinema being "death at work" (2013). The urge to fight the death head on, explicit in *David Holzman's Diary*, lies at the very heart of every self-portrait, argues film theorist Laura Rascaroli (2009), as it "freezes a moment in time, hence capturing the work of death: and each is, potentially, the last one; and therefore, a *memento mori* – the reminder of the transient nature of vanity, and the meaninglessness of earthly life" (p. 177).

But how can one define self-portrait in film? Some suggest that all first-person, autobiographical films that involve self-representation, should be considered as instances of self-portraiture. Some defend the completely opposite point of view, stating that self-portrait is the only form of autobiography truly achievable in film (see Rascaroli, 2009, chapter 8, for a thorough analyses). What everyone agrees on, however, is the narcissistic nature of a self-portrait, an obsessive fixation on oneself. But the desire that lies behind such a work often happens to be very different from the vanity of mythic Narcissus. The act of intensive and prolonged look onto oneself becomes “the ultimate means of self-analysis, presenting an opportunity for self-reflection, self-expression and self-promotion: a bid for eternity” (Rideal, 2005, p. 7).

The attempts of self-representation go back as far as cave paintings, a well-known example being the famous hand stencils in Indonesia, made at least 35 thousand years ago. But the modern filmic portraits could be seen more as heirs to the tradition of the genre in painting traced back to the 16th century, that dealt with the similar creative, as well as market, context: “the freedom they afforded the artist, on account of lack of commission and of the constant availability of the model, often originated as opportunities for technical experimentation” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 179). As opposed to painting (or a snapshot – today), filmmakers have to deal with the chronological dimension of the film, one way or another. At the same time, the influence of photography, visual and performative arts, all of which deal with self-representation, is essential in contemporary cinema. Filmmakers are pushed to experiment with the most difficult task of inscribing their own body as well as structuring their presence in the film’s time and space.

Creating a self-portrait is a conscious act, and it is not rare that the filmmakers proclaim their intention directly in the title, like Jerome Hill in *Film Portrait* (1973), Jonas Mekas in *Self-Portrait* (1980), Jean-Luc Godard in *JLG/JLG - autoportrait de décembre* (*JLG / JLG: Self-Portrait in December*, 1994), Chantal Akerman in *Chantal Akerman par Chantal Akerman* (*Chantal Akerman by Chantal Akerman*, 1997), Agnès Varda in *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (*The Gleaners and I*, 2000), or inter-textually, like Jean Cocteau in *Le testament d’Orphée, ou ne me demandez pas pourquoi!* (*The Testament of Orpheus*, 1960) and Manoel de Oliveira in *Visita ou Memórias e Confissões* (*Visit or Memories and Confessions*, 1981). All the mentioned filmed differ in length, medium, style, format, “being a decidedly experimental form, due to a high level of personal

content and the affinity for the research” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 176). The self-portrait is always a unique work, a one-of-a-kind, like the person who created it.

It is still possible to define some common problems that authors of self-portraits struggle to resolve and some common strategies, that they apply, and I will attempt to do so with *Les plages d’Agnès* (*The Beaches of Agnès*, 2008) as a model, an innovative and playful memoir of extraordinary filmmaker Agnès Varda.

In *The Gleaners and I*, Varda films one of her hands with the camera held by another, and compares this act to the self-portrait by Rembrandt. In *The Beaches of Agnès*, she explores yet another pictorial genre. “If we opened people up, we’d find landscapes”, she proclaims and starts her journey through the beaches of her life. From the North Sea beaches of her Belgian childhood, through Sète in France, where she spent her adolescence, and seaports in Corsica, where she was part of a fishing team at the age of 18, she travels to the beaches of California, where she lived and worked in 1960s. In the cinema of fiction, landscape has long stopped to be considered a mere backdrop and has been masterfully used to portray the inner characteristics or emotional states of the characters. It is enough to remember the burning volcanic sloped of Mount Etna sharing the rage and despair of the man in the final of Pasolini’s *Teorema* (*Theorem*, 1968). But in the biographical documentary tradition, Varda’s approach is more exceptional, as it is usually the house that plays the role of the gravitational centre. “The house is us”, declares Oliveira in his *Memories and Confessions* (1981), and, going through the rooms as uninvited guests, we couldn’t agree more. The ghostly presence of former habitants of the house is felt in every detail: a magnolia tree in the garden, the teapot on the stove, reproductions of Mona Lisa both in the study and the library, Camilo Castelo Branco’s portrait on the wall, the ship mast as the heart of house architecture, and numerous family photos, where every member of the family is presented together with spouses and children. It is the necessity to sell the house that triggers this act of self-portraiture, unusual for the director and surprising to himself: “It’s a film by me, about me,” Oliveira says in voiceover, “Right or wrong, it’s done.” He uses the film projector to show us three more houses, that defined him: the house he was born in, the house of his wife Maria Isabel, and finally, Tobis Portuguesa, Portugal’s great film studio, where he filmed some of his classic works. For Oliveira, the house becomes an archive, full of evidence of the past, the guardian of memories.

In her self-portrait, Varda makes an attempt to visit the house of her childhood, but it reveals little. The house is long occupied by strangers, and the filmmaker confesses that childhood is not the source of an inspiration for her. But we know for a fact that the legendary house at rue Daguerre in Paris, that has been a home and an office to her, and her late husband Jacque Demy since 1950s, has a very special role in her life and the history of the French New Wave. Strangely enough, she doesn't invite us further than the gate and the courtyard. To talk about her production company Ciné Tamaris, based in the house on rue Daguerre, she re-creates an office on an artificial beach in front of the house, bringing outside desks and chairs, telephones and computers. There, tucked in the sand, and not on the mantelpiece, are displayed all the prestigious awards that she and Demy received throughout their successful career. Closing the door of her house, she insists that certain things must remain private. It is also a signal for an attentive viewer to start observing what she does not show.



“I’m playing the role of a little old lady, pleasantly plump and talkative, telling her life story”, she says directly to the camera in the opening sequence of the film, laying her cards on the table. The only difference between the character named Agnès Varda, and the character named David Holzman is the way we, the audience, choose to think of them: we are taught to treat the first one as “real” and the latter as “fictional”. Autobiography, as documentary in general, are defined by the textual commitments of the viewer, or, in other words, by a modality of viewing, argues Rascaroli (2009, p. 12)

Fictionalization of the self in the autobiographical process is inevitable, “the image of someone behind the camera encompasses its own impossibility as a representation unable to access its origin, to invert its own process.” (Janine Marchessault, 1986, p.6). The incomplete list of the possible strategies, that try to answer the question “who is behind the camera”, includes filming oneself in front of the mirror, using archive footage and photographs, animation and computer graphics or creating a reconstruction with the help of actors. The image created tries to become the object itself, but is destined to stay a mere reflection, *doppelgänger*. The camera becomes a mirror, that multiplies the number of beings, but also, through framing, augments the fragmentation of the self. Varda, again, literally works with this when she installs mirrors on “her” beach, filming the reflections they catch, not just the landscapes, but herself and, very important, the filming crew. This is her Brechtian technique to announce: this is a representation.



The eclectic parts of the film are sewn together by a strong presence of Varda, both on the screen and in the commentary. She is our guide in her own universe, directing us by her bodily presence and her voice. Despite the intimate address of the first-person filmmaking, it is not always that the filmmakers choose to appear in front of the camera. While Jonathan Caouette’s *Tarnation* (2003) uses confessional camera, Annie Griffin in her work *Out of Reach* (1994) makes absence into the very form of the film by letting her family members talk about her, while she stays behind the camera. For filmmakers who prefer not to share their image, a voice becomes central in the process of self-inscription. The voice can be present as a simultaneous intervention during interviews or as a direct

commentary from behind the camera while filming. But in most cases, it is the voiceover commentary born in the light of revising the recorded material that gives the structural sense to the film (Labbé, 2011, p. 68) and becomes “a key site of the articulation of subjectivity” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 49). The voice is simultaneously a corporal presence, very strong in case of diaristic work of David Perlov (see Chapter III), and a text, that is always marked by a personality of the author, as proved by Chris Marker, a master of essay film, who hides behinds the different names and voices. Both Perlov and Marker could also be used as perfect examples of self-inscription through the look (camera) and the editing.

Personal or family photo or home movie archive is an essential element of self-representation and “establishing relations with one’s own past” (Labbé, 2011, p. 69). It can be combined with the interviews, like in Berliner’s *Nobody’s business* (1996), or with re-enacted scenes, like in Polley’s *Stories We Tell* (2012) or it can be used alone, like in Mekas’ *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000). Revisiting archive images, filmmakers often have to question and confront those “Kodachrome versions of family life <...> fraudulent for their substitution of form over content, generic gesture for authentic or nuanced experience” (Renov, 2008, p.61). For Jonas Mekas, just the opposite, sharing happy, full of sun and tenderness home movies is a political act, intended to bring up “positive changes in man, society, humanity” (2000).

By opening them, Varda chooses yet another way to work with her archives. Instead of a nostalgic longing for and sacralisation of faded-out images, she playfully reconstructs black-and-white photographs of her childhood, bringing in motion and colour. She populates the present with the ghost of the past, accentuating phantasmatic qualities and complex temporality of photographic image. Towards the final of the film, she gathers her children and grandchildren to take their own family photo. Varda dresses them all in white and uses double exposure to create transparency, all of them moving slowly under the evergreen tree. Reversing the process, the filmmaker pictures her living family as ghosts from a family photo album.

Varda goes further in exploring the unseen, by opening up her dreams:

I’ve always loved the circus and I thought, ‘Oh, a dream would be to see voltigeurs as flying fishes with a background of the ocean.’ It never happens, of course. So I said, ‘OK, let’s put some of the production money to that.’ This is fantasy. And it’s beautiful, no? (2009)

It is not uncommon that the fantasy, the inner and the subconscious, is given the same priority in the process of representation, as the physical, corporeal and visible. American artist Jerome Hill in the opening sequence of his *Film Portrait* (1972) goes as far as imagining and staging several possible scenarios of his own death. American photographer Cindy Sherman creates *Untitled film stills* (1977-1980), a series of self-portraits as characters of the non-existent films. A self-portrait allows an artist to act on his desire in the same way that a magic ritual allows a believer an illusion of transforming his existence (p. 117), argues Portuguese film theorist Margarida Medeiros (2000).

The nature of the photographic image is such, that it cannot help but bear indexical traces of reality. Even *David Holzman's Diary*, the personal testament of a fictional character, becomes “an extraordinary portrait of the moods and tones of his place and time <...> from the pace of the streets to the endless stream of Top Forty radio and a wondrous, hectic view of television.” (Brody, 2013). Re-creating her life journey, Varda visits places and brings in witnesses, both living and dead, opens up her archives and appeals to the photographic evidence, as well as her own artistic work. In the end, she paints a bigger “picture”, that portrays a certain cultural époque in France.

Varda adds one more ingredient to the collage of her memories, personal archives, house tours and favourite landscapes, — her art works and films. This is not uncommon. A well-known example is *Chantal Akerman by Chantal Akerman* (1996), a self-portrait “that substitutes the work for life, or rather, allows the filmic work to speak of its creator’s life more efficiently and effectively than she could manage with words” (Lebow, 2016, p. 56) The film starts with a 15-minute address to the camera by Akerman, where she established a relation between her work and her life, followed exclusively by the fragments of her films, re-edited together in a distinctive way. A young girl from *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années à Bruxelles* (*Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 1960s in Brussels*, 1993) forges a permission slips to skip school, followed by a mother in *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (*Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels*, 1975) polishing her son’s shoes before the school, followed by 18-year old Akerman herself mimicking mother’s gestures in her first film *Saute ma ville* (*Blow Up My Town*, 1968). A mash-up of scenes does not reconstruct a life journey, but through a game of rhymes and associations, it does express the salient themes developed over decades of prolific filmmaking, as well as something profound

about Akerman's own identifications and preoccupations (Lebow, 2016, p. 57).

In *The Beaches of Agnès*, the art and filmic work is tied with life in a more clear way, in part through the presence of Varda's commentary. Starting from the very first film, *La Pointe Courte* (1954), Varda little by little, as the story of her life unfolds, introduces all that followed, successes as well as flops. My house is cinema, she says in the final part of the film, and this is the house she is happy to invite us into. In that house, as in the real one, Jacques Demy takes up a very important place, with *Jacquot de Nantes* (1991), where Varda reconstructs her husband's childhood years, the two of them working together during the last months of his life.

Jacquot de Nantes presents in a full scale yet another trick that allows filmmakers to step from behind the camera into the frame – a re-enactment. Why not hire actors to perform yourself (or your loved one)? In *Jacquot de Nantes* Varda casts three actors for the “role” of young Demy. In *The Beaches of Agnès*, here and there, “a ghost” of young Varda appears: a girl with a very familiar haircut walking the streets of Paris or reading a book by the Seine. Sara Polley in *Stories We Tell* (2012) and Andrés Di Tella in *Fotografías* (2007) mix up the real archive footage with the re-enacted one, with their respective mothers being interpreted by actresses. Argentinian filmmaker Albertina Carri in *Los Rubios* (The Blonds, 2003), her quest to find the truth about the parents that disappeared during “Dirty War”, appears in front of the camera herself, but in some scenes also has an actress to portray her. But mixing the “real” images with the enacted, the filmmakers question the certainty of the photographic “truth” and by populating their films with doppelgangers, they seem to negate both the idea of the fixed, solid identity and the possibility to capture it on screen.

In *The Beaches of Agnès*, eighteen years after his death, Varda chooses to tell a secret, that she couldn't tell in 1991: her dear Jacques died of an AIDS-related illness. She re-edits the footage from the film, including the images she took of Demy not long before his death, adding the following commentary: “As a director, I had to shoot him in an extreme close-up: his skin, eyes, hair. To shoot him like a landscape: his hands, his spots. I needed to do this. His images, his own material. Jacques is dying. But Jacques is still alive.” Those images resurrect Demy every time we see them, Varda seems to believe. She had to make them, to freeze the moment in time and keep her loved one alive.



In *The Beaches of Agnès* she does the same work, this time to preserve herself and the people dear to her. “I remember as long as I live”, says Varda in the epilogue, but “the image will remain”. With this film, she leaves for the posterity not just her images, but a thorough textbook on how to read the autobiographical work in film.

CHAPTER III

THE EVERYDAY: FROM HOME MOVIE TO FILM DIARY

The banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual? <...> How are we to speak of these common things, how to track them down, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they are mired, how to give them meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what it is, who we are.

George Perec, Species of Spaces, 1974

As opposed to autobiography and self-portrait, a film or video diary is being filmed as lived. That is to say, the events depicted in a diary are being captured as they happen. But a more important difference is what kind of events are portrayed. A memoir, as Virginia Woolf describes it, “only remembers what is exceptional”, and she is right to question this memory flaw, adding that “there seems to be no reason why one thing is exceptional and another not” (1985, p. 69-70). The instantaneity of a diary doesn’t permit enough distance to attach value, and as a result “there is no subordination to suggest that one idea or event is more important than another” (Hogan, 1991, p.101). This way, a diary becomes “a practice caught in the banality of everyday existence” (Langford & West, 1999, p. 6).

The everyday, according to the artist and filmmaker Stephen Johnstone, has gained a widespread appeal for curators and artist alike since the mid-1990s. He connects “the rise of the everyday” to the desire “to bring the uneventful and overlooked aspects of lived experience into visibility” (2008, p.12). In film and video, it is the diary genre that by far has gotten closer than others to fulfilling this mission. As Jonas Mekas, whom Rascaroli calls “by far the most renowned filmmaker-diarist” (2009, p. 124), puts it:

A diarist in art is one who is totally open to all possibilities all the time. One who doesn’t throw out anything; everything eventually is used. <...> A diarist work never ends. He snaps everything all the time. He is an open eye; he is the garbage can into which everything can fall, can be thrown. (2014, p.349)

The diary, “so removed from rules, so responsive to life’s impulses and capable of all liberties”, as described by a French writer Maurice Blanchot (2003, p. 183), owes it all to its private nature. But is it true that the diary is conceived without a readership in mind? After studying various researches of the literary genre, Rascaroli comes to the conclusion that this is not the case. Among the references she brings up is Margo Culley, who argues that the “act of writing itself implies an audience and the audience will be the vehicle of preserving the life/record (through the act of reading)” (as cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p. 118) We can agree with Rascaroli (2009) who makes a parallel to the act of switching on the camera, suggesting that it immediately produces a (future) audience, even if an ‘intimate’ one (p. 130).

A diary’s intimacy, as well as its focus on the ordinary, often leads to confusion between it and a home movie. It is necessary to say that the two genres are related, but the first one is much more revelatory and complex than the latter. A documentary researcher Paola Labbé describes home movies as “family fictions” that are irremediably happy, as if a family were a social body free of any conflict, pain or tension (2011, p. 71). A diary, in turn, is able not only to include traumas as well as celebratory moments, but often is itself a response to a certain trauma or displacement, promising a refuge and healing. It is certainly the case for Jonas Mekas, Lithuanian immigrant in New York, whose diaristic works, among them *Walden* (1969) and *Lost, lost, lost* (1975), present a never-ending search for home and a longing for the lost country of his childhood.

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at a diary of another displaced person, David Perlov, a Jewish immigrant, born in Brazil, educated in Paris only to later become one of Israel’s most important documentarists. His diaries began as an act of rebellion against the industrial and political limitations, that he felt after the cold reception in Israel of his documentary *B’Yerushalaim (In Jerusalem)*, 1963) and his other films, that were not in line with the ideological propaganda of the state. “I want to film by myself and for myself, professional cinema does no longer attract me. To look for something else, I want to approach the everyday”, are the very first phrases of the *Yoman (Diary, 1973-1983)*, the work that was to become central in his long and fruitful career. Perlov’s legacy will help me speak of distinct characteristics of a film diary as a genre, such as its relation to the everyday life and its specific temporality.

A diarist, as any other first-person filmmaker, has to choose among the three possible levels to inscribe himself into the film or video, that being voice-over (speaker), being at the origin of the gaze (seer), and as body image (seen) (Russel, 1999). The constant change of these ‘voices’ as well as innumerable possibilities to combine them are what makes every diary a unique work with a distinct personal point of view. Perlov articulates his choice in a very first minutes of his diary: “The warm soup is tempting. But I know, I must choose from now on: to eat the soup or to film the soup” (*Diary, Chapter 1*). His daughter Yael laughs at the filmmaker from the inside of the frame, as his camera eye registers the soup getting cold. Throughout the years of filmed and edited material, Perlov appears in the frame very few times and very briefly, filming himself in mirrors. These moments startle, as the face we see is that of a stranger, a stranger whose life we think we know down to the smallest detail.



Even though we don’t recognize the face, we certainly recognize Perlov’s voice without a slightest hesitation. The way he works on the sound of the film can be compared to Derek Jarman’s *Blue* (1993), a masterpiece of subjective cinema, that doesn’t use a single image. Both filmmakers combine personal voice over commentary, dialogue, ambient sound and music to create a complex narrative in-between the present and the memory. While Jarman uses the voices of his friends, actors, musicians, as well as his own, in a performative play of his split alter ego, Perlov dominates the commentary with his voice. Its unique timbre, accent, rhythm, intonations all work together to create a strong corporal presence of the filmmaker, and are essential to the complex language of *Diary*. In the play of image and sound, that are often out of sync, something subterranean appears, as described by the Brazilian film theorist Feldman (2014), an anachronism that always escapes us: a kind of eternal mystery of the indomitable and inescapable flow of time (p. 23).

The diary as a written form is caught “between the spontaneity of reportage and the reflectiveness of the crafted text” (Langford and West, p. 8-9). In Perlov’s work, as in any other film diary, the camera registers life as it happens, instantaneously, but later, in the editing room, comes the moment to revisit the images taken. The commentary, as well as the editing, become powerful tools to organise the images and finalize the diary “entries”. This two-phase process creates a complex temporality: “The filmic diary is twice in the present: it offers both the ‘now’ of the recorded images (because the images are always in the present tense), and the ‘now’ of the reflection and the commentary on them” (Rascaroli, 2009, p.129). Perlov confirmed himself that he was not looking for lost time, for him the film was always a document of the present (as cited in Feldman, 2014, p. 23)

The daily, calendar time is inscribed into the form through contingency and repetition, explains Rascaroli (2009, p. 120). A diary must “respect the calendar”, that is “its demon, inspirer, composer, provocateur, and guardian” (Blanchot, 2003, p. 183) But the chronological organization doesn’t necessary suggest linear structure. For example, in his almost five-hour long *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000), Mekas gives up any attempt of imposing order:

I have never been able really to figure out where my life begins, and where it ends <...> For when I began now to put all these rolls of film together, to string them together, the first idea was to keep them chronological. But then I gave up, and I’ve just began splicing them together by chance, the way I found them on the shelf, because I really don’t know where any piece of my life really belongs.

From the start, the selection of images may seem chaotic, but soon enough we begin to recognize the familiar faces and streets, we see, how they change, and we begin to feel the passage of time, there is no escaping it.

Perlov’s diary is more pedantic than that of Mekas, and is organized by the date, every chapter covering a few years of the total ten-year project. But even though we see the dates and numbers, it is the speed of the filmmaker’s daughters growing up that becomes the main marker of the time passing. Before our eyes, they turn from the laughing teens into young adults, go through the military service, choose their careers, change hairstyles, boyfriends, cities. They are our time keepers when the camera is turned inside (the apartment, home). And when the camera looks out to the street, though the apartment window, we see the sun rise and set again and again, in an endless repetition

that is the essence of life. Perlov masterfully works with cinematic form, creating the powerful rhythmic structure by elaborate editing, invisible like time itself.

But what is it exactly that Perlov looks for in the everyday? Could he share Blanchot's view, that "the banality is also is what most important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived" (2008, p. 34)? Feldman agrees that it is the magical movement of life that Perlov seeks in the immanence of the familiar and the everyday, with their "between the acts", triviality and "dead times" (2014, p. 13) He takes a position of a watchman, observing with great attention and patience the World outside. The windows of his apartments, hotels, taxis, become his favourite look-out spots, sometimes replaced by another kind of window, "the window of the television" (Perlov, *Diary*, Chapter 1). The numerous windows offer the distance but also the frame for the images of life that Perlov wants to get hold of. "Watching has often become the essence of my being. Not in search of a plot, a story. It is an image of a man running that fascinates me. Not why he runs, or where to", he confesses in the Chapter 5 of his *Diary*.

Just as the runner he describes, Perlov starts his *Diary* without a clear aim, or a set destination. He constantly experiments, introduces new formal limitations, or stylistic elements, like an interview or a series of still photos, a video clip or a filmic portrait of a friend, a dance number or a backstage reportage from the set of his film. All in the open: he invites the audience to be the witness of the whole process of establishing and testing his method. Catherine Russell (1999) in her study on experimental ethnography points out that the identity of the avant-garde filmmaker is ever-present in an autobiographic work, among others: "by inscribing themselves on the level of 'metadiscourse', film and videomakers also identify with their technologies of representation, with a culture of independent filmmaking". When Perlov's daughter Yael, one of the key presences of the diary project, starts to work with filmmaker as an editor, he has no choice but to include the process of editing the diary in the diary. The self-reflectiveness and self-reference are essential in the creation of the diaristic text, that, as resumed by the Swiss literary critic Jean Rousset, "talks of itself, looks at itself, and interrogates itself" (as cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p. 116).



Perlov follows the way of the impressionists, who made a revolution by coming onto the city streets to look for, using the words of Pierre August Renoir, “an everyday eternity, revealed on the street corner” (as cited in Moffett, 1985, p. 157). Perlov endlessly films the street, the anonymous legs walking by, the faces, the distant, unheard conversations, the gestures, cafes and cars, street signs. “Nature moves me yet I cannot bring myself to film it at ease. I feel overpowered by it, I seem to need the artifice”, explains Perlov (*Diary*, Chapter 5). Blanchot offers a very similar conclusion in his studies of the everyday:

The everyday is human. The earth, the sea, forest, light, night, do not represent the everydayness, which belongs first of all to the dense presence of great urban centers. We need these admirable deserts that are the world’s cities for the experience of the everyday to begin to overtake us. The everyday is not at home in our dwelling places, it is not in offices or churches, any more than in libraries or museums. It is in the street – if it is anywhere. (p. 39)

Perlov’s quiet observations, with its focus on the outside, are the very opposite of the popular confessional diary mode, that commits its efforts to bringing to the surface the inner, the emotional. Among such works are Jonathan Caouette’s *Tarnation* (2003), Sophie Calle’s *No sex last night* (1996), Alain Cavalier’s *Le filmeur* (2005) or George Kuchar’s *Weather Diaries* (1986-1990), all of which expose their subjects to the extreme level. In his turn, Perlov doesn’t make “I” his primary material. Nevertheless, the look at the world that he shares accompanied by the personal narration, is more than enough to create intimacy between the author and us, the audience, in a way that his biography becomes our biography (Feldman, 2014, p. 15)

The journeys, undertaken by the diary filmmakers, are both temporal and geographic: “the diary form involves a journey between the times of shooting and editing; travelling becomes a form of temporal experience through which the film- or videomaker confronts himself or herself as tourist ethnographer, exile, or immigrant.” (Russell, 1999). Paola Labbé in her study of video diaries notes for a fact that a great part of such productions deals with journeys in search for “the lost Arcadia”, the country of childhood and adolescence that have been left behind, be it a concrete physical place or an imagined and remembered space (2012, p. 532) Among the notable examples she lists Chris Marker’s *Lettre de Sibirie* (Letter from Siberia, 1957), Jonas Mekas’ *Reminiscences of a Voyage to Lithuania* (1972), Ross McElwee’s *Sherman’s March* (1986), Atom Egoyan’s *Calendar* (1993), Manoel de Oliveira *Porto da minha infância* (*Porto of My Childhood*, 2001).

During the ten years of filming, Perlov embarks on various journeys, with his diary becoming a travelogue for a short while here and now. He briefly visits São Paulo in the beginning of the project, but it is while working on the final, sixth chapter of the *Diary*, that he explores three Brazilian cities as his Ithaca, that he had left 30 years ago. The style and the tone of this chapter is strikingly different from others, as the day-to-day is gradually forced out by the memories. Perlov isn’t there to document the journey, he constructs the universe out of his own nostalgia (Labbé, 2012, p. 538), visiting all the familiar cities and places, full of ghosts of the past.

Coming back to Woolf’s autobiographical writings, we discover that “the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important” (1985, p.69). When we deal with diaries, the seeming instantaneity, the present tense, creates the illusion that the memory couldn’t fail us. But a careful viewer will notice, that something is always “forgotten” in between the images or in the sudden silences of the narrator. For Perlov such a silenced memory is the one of his mother, Ana Perlov, who we discover little of, even when visiting her grave in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Memories of the filmmaker’s childhood continue to inhabit a painful, obscure and forever muted “off frame” (Feldman, 2014, p.17)

A key difference between a written diary and a filmed one, is that “the written form reorders, reports and comments on the author’s memory of the events; the filmic form reorders, reports and comments on indexical traces of reality” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 129) As a photographer and a painter, Perlov has almost a religious relationship with the

revelatory capacity of the image to retain moments and to produce memories (Feldman, 2014, p. 24). An image, for him, has an undeniable physical presence, to the extent that he offers some of the images taken as a present for his daughter:

Dear Yael, you do exist. I would like to give you today a birthday present, but all I can do is dedicate this images to you. You exist as this far away sun and its bright whiteness. Sometimes illusive, as a bouncing away tennis ball (Perlov, *Diary*, Chapter 4)

As much as every image guarded in it, the diary itself becomes a proof of existence in an attempt “to make a whole life a solid mass that one can hold close, firmly embraces” (Blanchot, 2003, p. 186)

While being profoundly poetic, the work of Perlov is also political on many levels. Firstly, and most obviously, is its content. During the ten-year period the filmmaker registers two wars, the Yom Kippur War and the Lebanon War, elections, manifestations. He films his TV screen, but also goes to the street with his camera, taking his place among those who protest. His *Diary* project is also political in its small-scale form, refusing to be part of the mainstream cinema that was seen at the time as an instrument of state propaganda. “I want to make films about people. I am offered films about ideas, memorials, remembrance days. Such great events around, and then cinema: sterility, shallowness. I stay at home”, Perlov laments in *Diary*, Chapter 1. His commitment to the everyday could also be seen as a desire to give voice to the personal, as opposed to historical, to show the effect of the history on private life, otherwise overlooked.

The diary is linked to a personal and private time, to time as it is humanly experienced, thus, it appears to be better suited to produce micro-history than macro-history. However, diaries grant the reader a vision of the diarist’s times as well as of their private lives. (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 120)

Perlov’s *Diary* is a priceless document of his epoch, of the countries and cities that he has filmed. And for him, we might hope, that *Diary* became a kind of home he longed for. To quote Theodor Adorno (1951), “to those who no longer have a homeland, writing becomes home.”

Even if bound by time, the diary is a journey without a destination, “the quintessential work-in-progress, it doesn’t anticipate its own ending and closure” (Rascaroli, p. 115). After closing the *Diary* in 1993, Perlov wouldn’t be able to resist the temptation and would make three more chapters, *Revised Diary, 1990-1999* (2001), this

time in digital. They were followed by *Tazlumay, 1952-2002 (My stills, 1952-2002, 2003)*, an essay on his favorite photographers, as well as his personal photographic archive, that was to become the last work he ever made. The death of the author is the one and unavoidable ending that every diary anticipates. As a French literary critic Béatrice Didier resumes, the diary is the record of death, it records the death of others, the diarist's own progress towards death, the central event that will inscribe meaning into it (as cited in Rascaroli, 2009, p. 145).

CHAPTER IV

CLOSE RELATIONS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A MOTHER

The only unbearable dimension of possible human experience is not the experience of one's own death, which no one has, but the experience of the death of another.

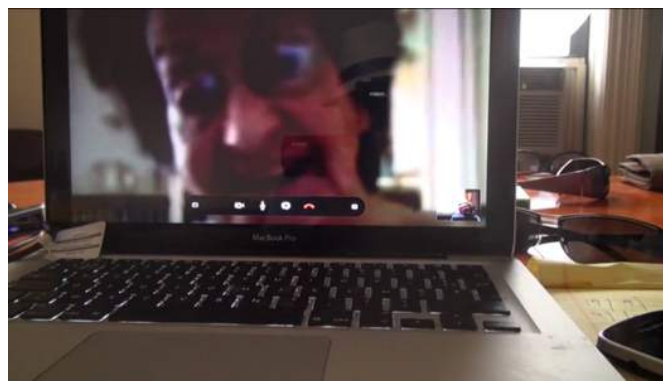
Jacques Lacan, 1977

“Mommy, tell a story!”, Chantal Akerman’s sister begs, while Akerman is filming their mother Nelly (Natalia) Akerman in *No Home Movie* (2015). Numerous filmmakers, men and woman, had dedicated films to exploring the life of their mothers. Among well-known examples are *Fleurette* (2002) by Sergio Tréfaut, in which the son insist on questioning the secret past of his mother, intimate as well as political; *Double Portrait* (2000) by Marilu Mallet, where the filmic portrait of the mother, who is a painter, is created while she paints the portrait of her daughter, the film’s director, *Tarnation* (2003) by Jonathan Caouette, who shares the experience of growing up with a schizophrenic mother using his personal as well as family archive, *No intenso agora (In the Intense Now*, 2017) by João Moreira Salles, that re-works his mother’s photographic archive, discovered after her death, *Complains of a Dutiful Daughter* (1994) by Deborah Hoffmann who chronicles the various stages of her mother’s Alzheimer’s Disease and *Stories We Tell* (2012) by Sarah Polley, a search for the filmmaker’s biological father, haunted by the figure of her deceased mother. None of these films shares a common story, and the strategies of investigation and representation differ significantly from case to case. I will avoid comparative analysis between the films in this chapters, and will focus on Akerman’s *No Home Movie* (2015) in order to discuss different approaches that are possible in the interpretation and contextualization of such a work.

Even for minimalistic Akerman, *No Home Movie* (2015) is a new terrain: it is as simple as it gets – the filmmaker, the digital camera, her mother and the mother’s house. It would be impossible to make this film with a cinematographer, as it would be impossible to catch the moment, says Akerman during the Q&A at Locarno, after the World premiere of the film (Locarno Film Festival, 2015). But then, she as well is

reluctant to stay behind the camera, often leaving it “on rec” by itself, on top of a piece of furniture. The filmmaker prefers, for the major part of the scenes, to share the space in front of the camera with her mother, be it during her stay in the mother’s house, or during the skype sessions between the mother and the daughter, when we can see both of them on the screen. The film isn’t just about the mother, is it?

“Why do you film me?” The mother asks during the Skype session. “Because I want to show that there is no distance in the World”, answers Akerman. Her mother insists, “Why do you film me?” “I film everyone... of course, you especially, more than others”, explains Akerman. This isn’t a trick. Akerman will confirm later that she was filming everything that was going in her life at that stage, for a while. But when she got to the editing, and went through a huge amount of footage, the images of the mother stayed, and the rest was forgotten.



What is so special about these images? Not too much, at first glance. A mother and a daughter share a conversation on the kitchen. The daughter cooks a meal and brags about it to her old mother. They discuss potato skins. Another meal. The mother and the daughter gossip. They share memories of the childhood. The mother and the daughter share a conversation on skype. The daughter promises to visit soon. Another Skype call. The daughter tries on a new hat for her mother. They have already said good-bye twice,

but they find themselves unable to hang up.

It is only during the skype sessions that the close up appears. As if the distance brought the mother and the daughter closer. We can hear it in the language, too. “Mamiko”, Akerman repeatedly calls her mother. “I want to squeeze you in my arms”, smiles the mother. But she never does, when they meet again in person. The spatial relationship is crucial to understanding the complexity of mother-daughter relationship: it is painful to be apart, and it is intolerable to be together.

No Home Movie, although filmed almost exclusively at home, has, as the title suggests, little to do with the aesthetics of the home movie. It doesn't offer a selection of happy special moments “to remember”. At first sight, the scenes seem to be filmed almost accidentally, and edited together simply as it goes, without a certain plan. It is, of course, as discussed before, not the case. The family members, that are being filmed, don't engage with the camera, as they would do in a proper home movie. The mother, as Akerman tells later, “totally forgets about the camera, because I was there so much, it was my job, and she didn't care...she was full of trust” (Locarno Film Festival, 2015). In this film, camera is not used as a “psychoanalytic stimulant”, as Jean Rouch called it (as cited in Renov, p. 126). Or at least, it doesn't play such a role for the mother.

We never see Natalia Akerman outside her home, but the daughter travels all the time. From her many travels, we are shown some landscapes: a desert, some mountains in a desert, a road in a desert. Are those meant to constitute some kind of an inner self-portrait for Akerman, similar to the way Agnes Varda works in her *Les plages d'Agnès* (*The Beaches of Agnes*, 2008) (see Chapter II)? Or maybe, we should read the title of the film literally: “there is no home”, and look at the taken on the road images accordingly? Homelessness could refer to Akerman herself, who left her home and her country at the age of 20, and never really settled afterwards. It could go back to the history of her parents and extended family, many of them Holocaust survivors and forced immigrants. But also, the desert road could take some viewers as far as to the Exodus, the founding myth of Israelites. Akerman works all the three levels simultaneously, but it seems that it is her mother's trauma that she wants to focus on.

In her installation *Bordering on Fiction: D'Est* (1995), based on her documentary *D'Est* (*From the East*, 1993), Akerman speaks of her primal scene, the one that recurs in

all her films without her knowing: the scene of evacuation, of people on the verge of extinction, driven by the force of history to be no longer at home anywhere, on the brink of disaster (as cited in Lebow, 2016, p. 56). This is her mother's trauma, that Akerman re-lives again as hers. Marianne Hirsch (2008) defines this process as postmemory, "a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" (p. 106), in which family plays central role:

...children of those directly affected by collective trauma inherit a horrific, unknown, and unknowable past that their parents were not meant to survive. Second generation fiction, art, memoir, and testimony are shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma. They are shaped by the child's confusion and responsibility, by the desire to repair, and by the consciousness that the child's own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss. Loss of family, of home, of a feeling of belonging and safety in the world "bleed" from one generation to the next (Hirsch, 2008, p. 112)

It is through stories that the "memory" is transmitted in a family. But quite often those stories are told in silence. As writer Eva Hoffmann describes it, "the past broke through in the sounds of nightmares, the idioms of sighs and illness, of tears and acute aches that were the legacy of the damp attic and of the conditions my parents endured during their hiding" (as cited in Hirsch, 2008, p. 112) It is certainly the case of Akerman, whose mother, the filmmaker confirmed in interviews, never mentioned Auschwitz or the Holocaust. *No Home Movie* becomes the "last chance to engage her mother in what she might consider to be a true exchange, not an evasion, no matter how ostensibly lovingly put, built on lifelong defenses" (Bergstrom, 2016). Akerman insistently pushes the most innocent conversations, like that on her grandmother's possible lover or the best diet for a child, towards that grey zone of never-been-told, with no success. It proves much easier for the filmmaker to speak about the silenced subject with the housemaid on the same kitchen. But the maid, an immigrant from Latin America, doesn't recognize the story of the family's exile, until, after a few minutes, the word Auschwitz is laid out in front of her. Only then she starts to nod, "Ah! Jews!" The contrast of the two dialogues reveals the mechanism and stresses the importance of diasporic memory.

According to Hirsch, photographic image is a primary medium in the process of transmission of trauma. As many other "children", Chantal appropriates, re-works and re-

imagines the iconic images of the Holocaust, sometimes in a very unexpected way. In *From the East* there are trains, of course, but the greatest horror comes in a form of an extremely long take of people waiting for the bus in the snowy Moscow of early 1990s. Tired, cold, lifeless, they quietly line up in the dark, as if waiting for the imminent death. Just the same, the emptiness, and motionless of the landscapes in *No Home Movie* suggest a catastrophe, that has already happened or is yet to come.

The immediate catastrophe in this film is that of the death of the mother. But somehow, we feel that the loss has already happened. It could be worked within the trope of “the lost mother and the fantasy of her recovery” (2008, p. 120), that Hirsh singles out in her theory of postmemory, analysing W. G. Sebald’s novel *Austerlitz* (2001). But many researches choose to apply psychoanalytical approach to Akerman’s relationship with the mother in her cinematic work. Among them Janet Bergstrom, who refers in her analysis to “the dead mother syndrome”, described by a psychoanalyst André Green’s as a result of having experienced the loss of mother’s love and the threat of the loss of the mother herself. “The dead mother syndrome” leads to “the decaathesis of the maternal object and the unconscious identification with the dead mother” (as cited in Bergstrom, 1999, p. 105). The possible signs of such an identification can be found in many Akerman’s films, but I will speak here of the two, discussed in earlier chapters. In *News from Home* (1976) the daughter reads, in voice over, her mother’s letters, addressed to her, “with a certain intermingling of subject positions, the “I” and the “you”, which observe no fixed address of identity” (Longfellow, 1989, p. 80). In a self-portrait *Chantal Akerman par Chantal Akerman* (*Chantal Akerman by Chantal Akerman*, 1996),

she cuts to a scene from *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (*Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels*, 1975) in which the fictional mother, Jeanne Dielman, enters the kitchen and prepares to polish her son’s shoes. The mother lives to serve her child, if only by force of habit and repetition. The child, in the very next scene, is the 18-year-old Akerman, performing in her first film *Saute ma ville* (*Blow Up My Town*, 1968), exaggeratedly mimicking the gestures of the mother. <...> The child is channelling the mother’s gestures and making them her own, externalizing with her actions the utter hysteria that is masked by the extremely controlled gestures of the mother. (Lebow, 2016, p. 57)

No Home Movie, in its turn, is often read in terms of metempsychosis, “a full-

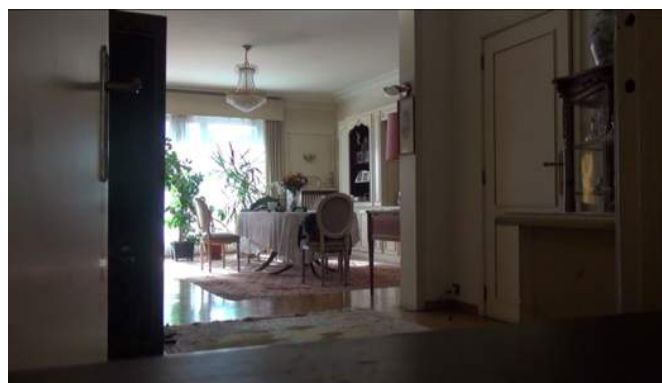
blown migration of the souls” (Lebow, 2016, p. 58). The physical resemblance between the mother and the daughter on screen is uncanny: the way they talk and move, the gestures, the certain coldness and directness. How the roles are distributed between them is also unclear: the daughter cooks for mother, the daughter gives her mother a history lesson, the daughter reproaches the mother. When the death of the mother, long anticipated, becomes real, the transformation is complete.

The film’s release was followed by the tragic death of Chantal Akerman, that took her own life a few months later. “The trauma of her death is now overlaid upon the experience of watching, and the film itself, despite its having been finished months prior to her death, can only be seen now through the scrim of her suicide, as a knowing or unknowing farewell” (Lebow, 2016, p. 54) The death of the author is the only possible conclusion to the never otherwise complete autobiographical process, as discussed in Chapter I. It is the defining event, that brings the meaning. But it also raises an uncomfortable question: should or could some distance be kept by an audience between autobiographical work and the life itself, something that is certainly the established, though debatable, norm for any other artistic work?

In case of Akerman, for those who know the legacy she left as a result of her more than four decades long career, it is virtually impossible not to see in *No Home Movie* a key to decoding her many films. The many recurring themes – exile, home, family, road – as well as formal techniques – distance, duration, the filmmaker’s own presence in front of her camera, reappear in this final work. But most important of all is the figure of the mother, central to Akerman’s work throughout the years. The mother in the kitchen, talking about potato skins, makes a bridge to *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. The presence of Akerman in the same kitchen takes us to *Saute ma ville*. The Skype conversations invite for a comparison with another form of the same long-distance communication in *News from Home*. The extremely long takes, with duration defined by intuition, recall *Hotel Monterey* (1972). The anecdotes from the life of Jewish community in immigration, that mother and daughter share, dialogue with the similar stories told in *Histoires d’Amérique: Food, Family and Philosophy* (1989). It seems that Akerman offers the conclusion to the body of her cinematic work but in a form of taking us to the origin of it all. In might be the reason why she refuses to use any kind of cinematic artifice in this film, looking for a way to expose the raw material she used, bringing an

experienced viewer closer to understanding her creative process as well as its necessity for her.

But what about an unexperienced viewer? What would this film be for an “innocent” passer-by, who doesn’t know much about Chantal Akerman? First of all, it won’t be an easy journey: the film lacks beauty, spectacle and clear narrative. The opening four-minute long shot of a lonely tree struggling in the wind in the desert could feel as a test of patience for many. But this roughness also sets up a tone for the film, allows us to tune in to the conversation that is neither easy nor encouraging: we are invited to witness, quite closely, a death. “This is the story of a loss of a mother”, Akerman presents the film before the first public screening (Locarno Film Festival, 2015). From scene to scene, we witness her mother grow older and weaker, with a frightening speed.



We watch from a distance, that is, using Akerman’s words, “not too close, and not too far” (as cited in Lebow, 2016, p. 55). But the presence of death is physical, through the constant cough of the mother, and the heightened breath of her daughter from behind the camera. The camera gets more and more uncertain, the movement comes to replace the stillness of the first long scenes, but the movement is disoriented, exposing the confusion and vulnerability of the filmmaker. We witness the house being taken over by

strangers, as the mother becomes more and more immobile. A maid takes the place of the mother in the kitchen, and a nurse takes place of the caring daughter by the mother's side. In our position of the viewer, we are just as helpless as the two daughters, that cannot stop the inevitable. Akerman refuses to manipulate the audience in any way, be it sentimental music (or any music at all), confessional address to the camera, tears or extreme exposure. But with the bare minimum that filmmaker allows herself, she "provides all of the tools required to engage with her emotional and psychic states, fairly prompting the viewer to do so" (Lebow, 2016, p. 56).

This is a painful viewing, that leaves the question open: why does Akerman chooses to do the film, and why do we watch this? As mentioned earlier in Chapter I, the death of a loved one or even one's own has a strong presence in first-person filmmaking. Among such works are *Time Indefinite* (1993) by Ross McElwee, who feels the urgent need to speak with his family after the sudden death of his father, *Phantom Limb* (2005) by Jay Rosenblatt, who reconstructs the process of mourning of his dead brother many years after the tragic event, *Laatste woorden - Mijn zusje Joke (The Last Words)*, 1998) and *De grote vakantie (The Long Holiday)*, 2000) by Johan van der Keuken, who first films the last conversation with his dying from cancer sister, only to later face a similar diagnosis, that would become his own filmic farewell, *Blue* (1994) by Derek Jarman and *E agora lembra-me (What Now? Remind Me)*, 2013) by Joaquim Pinto, both sharing a painful story of struggle with AIDS, *Heart of Dog* (2015) by Laurie Anderson, that imagines the passage of her late dog, as well as close friends, and her mother, through the bardo, as described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and *Complains of a Dutiful Daughter* and *In the Intense Now*, mentioned above.

Michael Renov uses Lacan's teachings to explain how documentary becomes an instrument of mourning: "the loss of a loved one produces a gap in the Real, that formless beyond of symbolization, a hole that <...> will be filled by a "swarm of images" having perhaps ritual or therapeutic value" (2004, p. 125) It is not just the images, he adds, but a combination of words, images, and their editing, that are in play.

There is a tremendous variability as to tactic and effect <...>: the extent to which the piece focuses on death, one's own or another's, or instead reveals loss as the veiled source of textual desire; the choice of direct, relatively unmediated representation of death or dying versus the oblique or distanced view; the tonality of the piece – elegiac or laconic. With this work, every choice is dangerous one

as regards audience response. Deep and painful identification can arise; a gamut of emotions can be elicited, including anger directed at the filmmaker for her presumed insensitivity, exploitativeness, or narcissism. One person's cathartic experience can be another's exhibitionist display (2004, p. 126)

Still, Renov notes that "the private or familial sorrows" foster identification beyond the initial audience, "creating new therapeutic communities, joined by bereavement, loss, and the need for healing" (2004, p. 129) To illustrate the process, he focuses on Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), a monumental ten-hours long documentary, that brings together the testimonies of the witnesses of Holocaust. This work also allows Renov to expose the limitations of the work of mourning in film: there will never be enough of words and images to fill the gap in the Real, left by six million people. *No Home Movie*, as discussed above, sets out to confront this same gap, among others, struggling with an impossible task.

In it revealed in the film, that Chantal Akerman has no kids of her own to pass her "memory" to the next generation directly. Her work becomes her instrument of reproduction and transmission of the family trauma: the recorded stories of her mother, but even more so, her silences, combined with Akerman's own images are there on display for everyone who is willing to "remember".

CHAPTER V

INVESTIGATIONS: FAMILY ARCHIVE

The central artefact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet.

Allan Sekula, The body and the Archive, 1986

Artist Susan Hiller (2006), rephrasing Freud, compares an artist's work with archive with that of an archaeologist, who reconstructs a past through excavating fragments. But she immediately points out that the result is always a point of view: "I know archaeology doesn't necessarily tell any truth. It's a series of fictions, like any narration. We have a choice among these histories and fictions" (p. 44).

In this chapter, I will take a look into the two histories that came as a result of such excavations, conducted by filmmakers: *A Toca do Lobo* (The Wolf's Lair, 2015) by Catarina Mourão and *Nobody's Business* (1996) by Alan Berliner. Both deal with the personal archive of their respective families in an attempt to reveal some hidden truths. Both investigations use similar techniques, though they depart from opposite starting points. While Catarina Mourão is looking into the life and death of her grandfather, the well-known writer Tomaz de Figueiredo whom she had never met, Alan Berliner confronts his living father with the camera in hand, trying to get to the truth behind the cheerful home movie tapes, that his father filmed. Both films are detective stories with unpredictable storyline and not always a happy end, and the hidden truths that are at stake in the investigations are not just about the other, but also about the self.

The essential link between the archive and identity, both on private/family and public/community levels has been repeatedly pointed out starting from the second half of the 20th century. According to an art historian John Tagg (2012), "the very existence of an archive has come to be viewed as constitutive of a community's claim to identity, and what should be in the archive, who should adjudicate it, and who should have access to it have become questions of urgent social and political significance" (p. 33). In the beginning of the new millennia, artist internationally directed their attention to the archive, seeking to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present (p. 143), a phenomenon that art historian Hal Foster (2004) called "an archival impulse".

Foster (2004) notes that, as a result of an artist's work with the archive, private archives start questioning public ones (p. 21). Divulgence of a private archive can be seen as a revolt against "the so-called public record, which in its official and media forms has become little more than a flickering shadow theatre for the entrancement of the infantilized" (Tagg, 2012, p. 32). While Berliner gives his work an ironic title *Nobody's business*, quoting his father who is certain that no one will care about "an ordinary guy who's led an ordinary life", I will argue that it is exactly that kind of stories that would function as islands of resistance to the dominating historical narratives.

Securing this relationship between private and public, a documentary theorists Michael Renov (2008) in his analyses of Berliner's *Nobody's business* proposes a term "domestic ethnography" for when the careful description and explication of culture begins in the home, a place of great intimacy and extended fieldwork. He calls domestic ethnography an autobiography of a particular sort, the one that is "always relational, a pas de deux between a self and a familial other" (pp. 56-57). The relation that Berliner chooses to explore in this film is that with his father, whom he faces in a series of interviews, determined to learn everything there is to know about the Berliners family.

The filmmaker frames this conversation with the footage of a boxing match. Indeed, his father is more than reluctant to speak as the son confronts him with archival evidence, both from family albums and public records. But even when the father speaks, his memories and that of the archive are not the same, in fact, they often tell completely different stories. While human memory is unreliable for many different reasons, archive remains a physical trace of the past event, an index, and therefore, "it contains the potential to fragment and destabilize either remembrances as recorded, or history as written, as sufficient means of providing the last word in the account of what has come to pass" (Merewether, 2006, p. 10).

The key evidence covering years of the family history, that Berliner has on his hands, are home movies, mostly filmed by his father. The filmmaker is not satisfied with "those Kodachrome versions of family life" (p. 61), as Renov (2008) calls them, he questions the images and his father in search of the real story hidden behind the facade of ever-smiling faces. *Nobody's business* can be seen as a continuation to Berliner's film *A Family Album* (1986), in which he works with home movie footage and audiotapes from 1920s to 1950s' America to create "a depiction from cradle to grave of life as lived for the

home movie camera” (Renov, 2008, p. 62). Turning to his own family, the filmmaker brings to the surface a trauma of a divorce, the unspeakable event that couldn’t enter the happy family chronicles. Looking through his father’s home movies, Berliner hopes to find the slightest sign of the future separation of his parents, or an explanation for it. He doesn’t find it, but, with his film, he inscribes it upon the images that he uses:

In returning to the images of the past, one can now rewrite their meanings through repetition or freeze frame, interrogate them via voice-over (one’s own or that of other family members), emotionalize them through the use of music or audio cues, or place them in relief to other contesting images or narratives (Renov, 2008, p. 61).



Berliner mixes freely the images from his family archive with public, both successfully representing his own story. Siegfried Kracauer described this quality of photographic image back in 1930s, after failing to recognize his own grandmother on an old photograph: “All right, so it is grandmother, but in reality, it is any young girl in 1864. The girl smiles continuously, always the same smile, the smile is arrested yet no longer refers to the life from which it has been taken” (1996, p. 423).

Just as public archive easily fills up the holes in private archive, private archive serves as a witness on a greater social and historical scale. As Berliner digs into the family past through documents and archival images, he creates a portrait of the whole American Great Generation that fought in the WWII as well as an account of a Jewish immigration wave to America in the beginning of the 20th century. The family has always been key for preserving Jewish identity, and Berliner seeks out all his distant relatives from the paternal side, struggling to find any connection. He discovers that the one thing they share is the one thing they know nothing about, as his distant cousin puts it. Just as the filmmaker himself before he started the investigation, none of the interviewed has any

certain information about where their descendants came from, as if, another cousin adds, the history of the family started in America.

Family archive can be many things: letters, wedding rings and dress, photos and videos, diaries, recipes, library, among others. In Mourão's film a very special place is secured for her grandfather's collection of tobacco pipe pouches. First time they appear presented by their owner, Tomaz de Figueiredo, in a TV-program, recorded in 1960s. He expresses hope that one day his granddaughters will find this collection in one of his drawers and go play with them on the beach, filling them with little shells. One of his granddaughters, he adds, could be called Catarina. Catarina Mourão confesses in various interviews that surreality of this direct communication to her from the past was what brought her film to life.

The filmmaker borrows the title for her film from her grandfather's most famous novel, with his public identity of a writer being the point of her departure in the investigation. If Berliner looks for traces of the family presence in history in the underground vaults of Utah and the immigration archives of Ellis Island, Mourão passes through the archives of a prison, a mental asylum and a national TV-station on her genealogical expedition. At home, she discovers the family album her mother made at the age of eighteen, and a few rolls of film.



Very different from Berliner, Mourão doesn't have a living witness to question or add to her findings: her grandfather is long dead, her mother knew little of him and

remembers even less, her mother's aunt, who hasn't been talking to the rest of the family for decades, continues silent. The filmmaker resolves to interpret the archive as she would interpret dreams, as she describes her creative process in an interview (IndieLisboa, 2015). Mourão mixes the physical archive, present in photos, films, letters, notebooks, state records, with an invisible one, formed by personal memories and dreams. In still frames of the home movies, in writings underneath the old photos, in between the lines of inedited poems, in empty houses and behind the closed doors, she looks for signs of ghostly presence of the people who no longer live.

Together with her family secrets, Mourão unravels before our eyes the story of the dictatorship, that her country suffered, and the resistance to it. Mourão discovers, as her mother puts it, a country locked in a straitjacket, with her family being one of its many victims. While her grandfather was locked into the mental asylum, her mother's uncle was imprisoned by PIDE. The events that were erased from the family history, but left traces in hard to access even today state archives. Mourão's film seems to be a response to the greater process of the end of the 20th century, that turns the archives, Derrida's "places of power", against themselves:

In the erstwhile German Democratic Republic, in post-Ceausescu Romania, in Argentina after the Dirty War, and in Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, archives have been recovered from ransacked offices, waterlogged barns, prison camps, and garbage dumps and, with patient forensic archaeology and conservation, turned around so that they have begun to speak again, this time of the guilt of the interrogators, torturers, executioners, spies, and informers for whom the pervasive archive was an infinitely elaborated map laid point by point on the world... (Tagg, 2012, p. 32)

We see how, through the montage, the deconstruction of the archive becomes, that simultaneously gives birth to a "construction site", as Foster calls it (p. 146) Editing together fragmented pieces of the archive, Mourão's film become one, as it "arranges these materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects" (Foster, 2004, p.145). Just as her mother once put together her "perfect" album for the family that has been broken apart, Mourão makes her own version of the family document. Coming back to *Nobody's business* we notice that the headshots of family

members, all signed and edited side by side, also form a kind of album, but as odd one, as those “intimate strangers” confess they wouldn’t recognise one other on the street.

Both Berliner and Mourão establish a dialogue between generations and in doing so they open up the wounds, traumas of the generations before them. They are a generation of a postmemory, as Marianne Hirsch puts it, “they are shaped by the child’s confusion and responsibility, by the desire to repair, and by the consciousness that the child’s own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss” (2008, p. 112). Hirsch states the inevitable turn of that generation to family narratives, and points out the “key role of the photographic image – and of family photograph in particular – as a medium of postmemory” (2008, p. 115).

But, as Berliner warns about the fraudulent nature of home movies, Mourão reveals the unreliability of the photograph. Looking through the family album, she finds a picture of her mother posing against what seems to be a huge pile of snow, but we are informed, it is salt, her mother never saw snow in her life. A perfect illustration for a famous statement of Godard and Gorin that states that any photograph is physically mute and talks through the mouth of the text written beneath it (as cited in Sontag, 2005, p. 64). An image is an illusion, as much as it is truth, insist Mourão, presenting yet another example. It is a photo of her mother as a little girl on a promenade with her father. To the eternal amusement of everybody, only one of the girl’s legs appear on the photo, another is hidden behind it. The photographic image is confronted by a presence of the mother, with her two legs intact.

Both Berliner and Mourão open up to us in a very intimate way, inviting to look for our own selves in the dusty archives of the past. They show a way to take the power over the archive is our own hands, it is *our* business, they seem to say. They belong to the first “digital” generation, that is fascinated and nostalgic for analogue photographs and films of the past. Today, the nature of the family archive is rapidly changing, facing the challenges of over-production, growing fragmentation, and the necessary revision of the notion of privacy driven by social networking. If we follow Foster’s (2004) assumption that archival art emerged as a response to the failure in cultural memory and a default in productive traditions, the current state of disconnection and dispersion will stimulate more and more artistic works of the sort.

CHAPTER VI

CINEPHILE LENS: A HIDDEN GENIUS OF THE EYE

You were lucky to arrive early enough to inherit a history already rich and complicated and eventful. To have taken enough time to see enough films and decide for yourself what was more or less important in this history.

Jean-Luc Godard, Histoire(s) du cinéma, 1999

“This is the first generation of directors who are aware of film history; cinema now entering era of self-consciousness”, writes Susan Sontag in her diary in 1964, while in Paris (2012, p. 46). She is referring to the directors of French New Wave, among them Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette. Most of them started as film critics for the famous magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Sontag’s diary itself is full of long lists of films that she has seen recently or was planning to see. Later on, she too would direct several films. But for now, she marks the time and the place of birth of the phenomena and practice that would be called cinephilia. The practice that would not only establish the primacy of the filmmaker-director, developing as its core *politique des auteurs*, but that would also promote a new modality of watching films, that celebrated subjectivity and personal attachment. A passionate love for cinema, cinephilia invited filmgoers “to be captured and enraptured by the magic of moving images <...>, cherish personal moments of discovery and joy, develop affectionate rituals, and celebrate their love in specialized communities” (Valck and Hagener, 2005, p.11).

Cinephilia has never been a silent adoration: it demands a shared experience. A film essay, that enables the images with the power of self-reflection while allowing a strong first-person address, became a powerful tool in hands of the film lovers. In this chapter I will discuss the three essays by one of the very first cinephiles, Chris Marker, dedicated to Akira Kurosawa (1985), Alexandr Medvedkin (1993) and Andrei Tarkovsky (2000), where he creates an intimate dialogue between the generations of filmmakers. As many of his colleagues, Marker started as a film critic, and later on started making films himself. His famous masterpiece *La Jetée* (1962), a work of fiction, can also be analysed in the context of cinephilia, as the film in its core is an imaginative but very loyal remake

of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). What is different in his essays, is that he speaks not from the position of the director, but that of a filmgoer. He lends us his cinephile lens in an attempt to share the way he sees films, reflecting on the nature of the image in a very personal way. Approaching the figure of auteur, he tries to establish a personal relationship, looking for a human face or even a friend behind the title of a genius, at the same time always leaving some space for himself as a mediator and a guide within the complex structure of his essay films.

In *A.K.* (1985), commissioned by Serge Silberman, the French producer of *Ran* (1985), Marker tries to keep out of Kurosawa's shots as he observes the master at work on the film set. It seems that he uses the same telephoto lens, as Kurosawa himself does, never daring to approach the director, always keeping respectful distance. It is an ode to a great filmmaker, but also to film itself, a film as a result of enormous effort and hard work by a large number of people. As ever, Marker is attentive to the slightest detail of this process and to every man on the set. He presents the "Kurosawa-gumi" (Kurosawa group), composer Toru Takemitsu, who visits the set, eavesdrops on the chat between a lead actress and some extras, films a sleepy soldier secretly yawning and even makes a special chapter on horses, that play a special role in this and other Kurosawa's films.

The figure of Kurosawa always remains central, his overwhelming presence cannot be overshadowed either by the army of extras nor by the Mount Fuji, that hosts the film set. He personally oversees the creative process on all the levels, "battling against the gremlins that plague every director: the actor who gets his tongue wrong, the horse which trips, the wind that raises at the wrong moment, the sun that stays hidden during rehearsal, peeping through the mist as soon as shooting begins", as Marker puts it. Very true to *politique des auteurs*, it is Kurosawa's vision, attention and intuition alone that can prevent the set from falling into chaos ("ran" means chaos in Japanese). "We, too, got into the habit of calling him Sensei: Master", Marker informs in the commentary.

Broken down into ten chapters – "Battle", "Patience", "Fidelity", "Speed", "Horses", "Rain", "Gold" and "Lacquer", "Fire", "Fog" and "Chaos" – the film primarily uses the footage from the set and a commentary, that reveals a memory of recording that footage. Yet, it cannot be called a common "making of". The film starts with Kurosawa's taped voice saying: "I always say to my crew: to create is to remember. Memory is the basis of everything". The words that we could easily attribute to Marker himself if they

weren't in Japanese. Marker is the director of memory, and here he works with the memory of Kurosawa's films. We learn that the *A.K.* crew observes the director by day, but when the night falls, they re-watch Kurosawa's earlier films using "a small imperfect miracle, called video recorder". Looking for recurring motifs in Kurosawa's vast body of work, Marker shows us several scenes on a tiny TV screen in an isolated room with red walls. VHS, that allows to pause and rewind the tape, becomes a perfect tool in the hands of a cinephile, full of a nostalgia for the fleeting experience of watching a film for the first time.



Kurosawa himself, even when directing, "remembers" his own film-going experience and makes it part of his creative process. In his written memoir *Something Like an Autobiography* (1983), the director recalls his father frequently taking him to the movies where they had watched a lot of action serials and westerns, mostly American and European. Thus, John Ford would become one of the greatest influences for Kurosawa's style. In *Ran*, for example, we will clearly see the same dedication to the landscape that John Ford had. Kurosawa would even earn the title of "the most Western of Japanese directors", as the critics both in Japan and abroad used to call him. He, whose personal and professional time and geography differ so much from the cinephile generation of Cahier de cinemá, would still be part of the "tendency of contemporary films <...> to use history as a limitless warehouse that can be plundered for tropes, objects, expressions, styles, and images from former works" (Valck and Hagener, 2005, p. 15).

There is another strong personal memory that informs Kurosawa's work. Marker inserts in *A.K.* the archive footage of the Great Tokyo Fire of 1923, which Kurosawa witnessed at the age of 13. The resemblance of the burnt bodies to the fake corpses on the director's set, that Marker accentuates, is shocking. Marker himself knows very well how trauma, and its iconic images, continue to inform the contemporary cinematic work. In *La*

jetée he goes as far as using the archive photos of the bombed Paris from 1940s to talk about the horrors and destructions of the Third World War, that is yet to come.

Marker doesn't use a single image of *Ran* in his film, refusing to appropriate the beauty that doesn't belong to him. "We will try to show what we see as we see it, from our own level", says his humble commentary. This point of view, in fact, gives Marker an advantage, as he is able to show "the clash of ordinary reality and illusory reality on a film set, since we are treated to the spectacle of men – and one or two women – decked out in full sixteenth-century warrior garb, wearing glasses, smoking cigarettes, doing facial exercises or earnestly discussing the latest computer games" (Lupton, 2005, p. 167) Celebrating the film and its creation, Marker simultaneously exposes it as a construction, manipulation, fiction.

Marker will continue "to question images" with his posthumous dedication to his friend, the Soviet director Alexandr Medvedkin. *Le tombeau d'Alexandre (The Last Bolshevik, 1993)* is somewhat of a continuation of his earlier work *Le Train en marche (The Train Rolls On, 1973)*, that introduced Medvedkin's film *Schaste (Happiness, 1934)* and the unique film-train, that he operated in 1920s. The train, built by Medvedkin's own design, was a fully equipped film studio, with a laboratory, editing and projection rooms, and a 32-person team. "294 days on wheels, 70 films, 91 reels, 24,565 metres of film projected, thousands of kilometres covered", the train was traveling the newly built factories and collective farms, filming everything and using the footage to expose the problems and look for solutions together with workers and peasants right on the spot. The film was seen by Medvedkin as evidence, the ultimate truth, that can be used as a tool to construct a better future. Fascinated by the idea, Marker even proposed the name "The Medvedkin Group" to the group of militant cinema filmmakers that he was part of in 1970s, establishing the continuity between Medvedkin's film-train and their own ambition "to remind the working class that cinema is one of its weapons".

Three decades later, in 1992, Marker's approach to his friend's legacy is strikingly different. Medvedkin dies "on the crest of perestroika", in 1989, somehow liberating Marker to re-explore the failed utopia of the Soviet Communism. "Dear Alexander Ivanovich, now I can write to you. Before, too many things had to be hushed up, now, there are too many things to say, but I will try and say them anyway, even if you are no longer there to hear." In this film, Marker radically changes the optics, compared to

observational, detached telephoto lens he uses in *A.K.* He presents a very intimate portrait of his friend, to whom he addresses six letters. But a close-up of a friend is placed against a wide shot covering a century of history of the country, whose image Medvedkin was helping to define. “It is not the literal past that rules us, it is images of the past”, this phrase of George Steiner that Marker chooses as an epigraph to this challenging task he sets for himself.



Reconstructing the course of Medvedkin’s long life, the filmmaker dives into cinema archives and old news reels, analyses Soviet films frame by frames, comparing them to the memories of the surviving witnesses as well as confused faces of citizens of the new Russia on the streets. This time Marker invites the viewer into his editing room:

The small frame-within-a-frame images interspersed throughout *The Last Bolshevik* mimic film as seen by an editor on a Steenbeck, or an Avid non-linear editing programme, and they are subject to transformations that, together with the accompanying commentary, scrutinize the evidence of the image directly (Lupton, 2005, p. 188).

Marker discovers that the Medvedkin’s utopic idea to build new life using the tool of cinema has been realized, but not in a way he imagined. “The business of stage-managing the appearance of reality would become a central preoccupation of Soviet culture under Stalin” (Lupton, 2005, p. 188), and an effective one. Among the “fictions that have assumed the place of reality” are Eisenstein’s *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925), with its Odessa staircase sequence that is made up but received a real monument, and *Oktyabr* (*October (Ten Days that Shook the World)*, 1928), that has been since used in place of non-existent footage of real events. Even the well-known image of Stalin belongs to the actor Gelovani, who played “the great leader” in films and on stage. Marker speculates, could it be that Gelovani had played the same role off screen as well?

Looking into the cinephile dream turned nightmare, Marker tries to understand how sincere and idealistic Medvedkin turned from his didactic work on the film-train and imaginative and non-conformist *Happiness* to directing *Tsvetushchaya yunost* (*Blossoming Youth*, 1939), a colorful propaganda film depicting the May Day parade. How is it that his friend chose to believe in the image of utopia over reality? Marker remembers Medvedkin confessing he had cried the first time he edited two images together and discovered they made sense. This kind of innocence towards the images would never be possible again. “Nowadays the television floods the world with senseless images and nobody cries”, resumes Marker. His final witnesses are Youri Kolyada, a disillusioned cameraman who risked his life filming the early hours of the Chernobyl catastrophe to discover later that those images were used by the government to tell a different, more convenient, story of what had happened. And Yakov Tolchan, the cameraman who had worked with Dziga Vertov, but now finds his solace in music.

The film ends with an image of a little girl holding a toy dinosaur. “Children love dinosaurs”, Marker states, and by dinosaurs he means Medvedkin, Tolchan, Vertov, and by children – all the generations of the filmmakers they inspired, himself in the first row. There is a hope in the smile of a girl. The hope is in the succession, in a possibility of dialogue. Challenging the images, Marker fights against the notion, that the society of the spectacle leaves no room for any reply, as stated by Guy Debord in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988). Marker’s work is his reply to the world of elusive images that surrounds him. Putting various pieces together, he tries to find some sense for himself and for others, as Medvedkin once did.

On the verge of the new millennia Marker comes back to the material he shot back in 1986 to make a film about another auteur and his friend, Andrei Tarkovsky. *Une journée d’Andrei Arsenevitch* (*One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich*, 2000) would become Marker’s penultimate work, and the one where he most intimately reflects on the creative process, its passions, necessities, connection to life, country, love, memory.

Again, as in *A.K.*, we see some backstage footage. The atmosphere is more friendly and informal compared to Kurosawa’s set, the “backstage” crew is welcomed to film in close range and look over-the-shoulder. Observing Tarkovsky staging the final long-take scene of *Offret* (*The Sacrifice*, 1986), “probably the most difficult scene in the history of the cinema”, Marker compares him to the bell-caster from *Andrey Rublev* (*Andrei Rublev*,

1966), whose work was based on nothing more than faith. Looking to find the source of cinematographic magic, Marker inserts fragments from the finished film right on top the footage from their rehearsal on the set. But even in Marker's skilful hands the analysis of the shot structure gets us no closer to solving the mystery of the image.



This seamless integration of art and biography becomes the motor of *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich*, just as it had been a central element in many of Tarkovsky's films. Their rich stylistic and thematic coherence is a gift to Marker, allowing him to dig at will to weave his own vision of the director's work. While placing Tarkovsky in the world of *Andrei Rublev*, he makes a similar parallel for his wife Larissa, pointing out that her hairstyle, a classic bun, recalls the famous bun of the mother in *Zerkalo (The Mirror, 1974)*. In the two scenes that Marker compares, both women, a fictionalized mother and a real wife, are anxiously waiting, the former for her husband, who would never come back from war, the latter for her son, who has finally been allowed to meet with his dying father. Only a few months had passed since the end of the shooting, and Marker joins Tarkovsky with a camera once more, to record a family reunion at the bedside of his dying friend.

Marker witnesses a unique moment when Tarkovsky sees the full edit of *The Sacrifice* for the first time. A small TV-screen, that reminds us of *A.K.*, is not quite up to the task. Just the same, Marker's digital camera fails to capture the moment in its grandeur, registering only the glow of Tarkovsky's glasses, that reflect the screen in the dark. Unsatisfied, Marker comes back to his meticulous examination of his friend's films. He is rewarded by a discovery that the whole body of Tarkovsky's work is framed by the two similar images. The opening shot of his first film *Ivanovo detstvo (Ivan's childhood, 1962)* shows a boy standing next to the tree that is green and full of life, while his last one ends with a shot of a boy lying under the tree that is dry and dead. Recalling that Tarkovsky

didn't know yet of his illness when shooting *The Sacrifice*, Marker plants a seed of doubt in us. Is the genius of the director in foreseeing or in shaping the reality? What comes first: the image or life itself? But while Marker is busy with these questions, he exposes another kind of the genius, hidden in the way he sees. No surprise that Tarkovsky himself referred to Marker in his written diary as a man who has the gift of discerning and acknowledging the talent of another (as cited in Lupton, 2005, p. 212).

In the film Marker makes what he calls a “very Russian confession”, but what could be called a very cinephile confession instead. After he saw *Boris Godunov* (1983) staged by Tarkovsky in Covent Garden, he stole the fancy opera glasses they rented there hoping that one day by magic they will give back the images they have seen. Strangely enough, he continues, there exists no trace of the London performance. And yet, it exists right here in the film, brought to us through the magic glasses of Marker's memory. After all, “writing about movies, too, was trying to seize the cinematic image, just as it escaped one's gasp”, as film critic Antoine de Baecque resumes (as cited in Elsaesser, 2005, p. 39).

Three decades after the French New Wave was over, Sontag declares the death of cinephilia in her article *The Decay of Cinema* (1996): “the balance has tipped decisively in favor of cinema as an industry” and “movies became, mainly, one of a variety of habit-forming home entertainments”, leaving little space for a true passion that makes of cinema both “the book of art and the book of life”. But some researchers, film critics and, of course, cinephiles, argue the film culture transformed itself, finding its continuity in “a new generation of equally devoted cinephiles who display and develop new modes of engagement with the over-abundance of cinematic material widely available through advanced technology” (Valck and Hagener, 2005, p.12).

As discussed above, Marker took full advantage of the new era of video, computers, and new media technologies in his work. While “the critics of video and bootleg copies <...> lament the possibilities to fast-forward, freeze-frame, and zap through the sacred cinematic texts” (Valck and Hagener, 2005, p. 13), Marker embraced those possibilities. He anticipated current cinephiles' practices, based on possession, control over the favourite films and their deconstruction for analysis. In the age of streaming, “cinephile” essays on film populate YouTube and Vimeo, giving continuity to the dialogue started three generations before. The subjective view, emotional attachment and

polyphony of those voices are crucial in the process of developing of film as language and art as well as in creating the opposition to the standardisation of the industry. But the result of these multiple conversations, is, according to the film critic Richard Brody, yet to be seen:

The ultimate test of movie culture is the future of the art—in other words, new movies—and, by that severe standard, the recent infusion of home-video culture has been doing all right. The next few years, and the rise of a new generation of filmmakers, will be the litmus test for the arrival of streaming (2016).

CHAPTER VII

SHARED DISTANCE: A PHRASEBOOK OF THE IMMIGRANT

Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words.

Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse, 1977

I will dedicate this chapter to my experience of making a short autobiographic film *разговорник — guia de conversação (phrasebook, 2018)*. Analysing the creative process, from the initial idea to the editing, I will look into the problems that I have faced and will discuss them in relation to the questions raised earlier in this work, among them: the problematics of sharing a personal experience on screen, the difficulty of self-inscription in the cinematic text, the relation between a written text and the visual and the complex temporality of the diaristic work. I will put my work in the context of the modern migration processes and communication practices, as well as present first-person films that inspired me during the process.

In short, *phrasebook* can be described as a collage of video instant messages, travel notes and re-enacted fantasies, put together in an attempt to share the experience of moving to a faraway land. I am telling my own story: at the age of 28, I moved from Russia to Brazil, as a consequence of falling in love. The move was very quick, sudden and unplanned. As a result, I found myself in another hemisphere, surrounded by people whose language, gestures, customs, climate, cuisine I don't understand. No, people wouldn't go around on their arms in Brazil, as the kids of Northern hemisphere sometimes imagine. But to me, for a long time it felt like they did. This feeling is the one I am trying to share in my bilingual film, the attempt that proved useless, as the film itself became a statement of impossibility of such a communication.

I came up with the idea for a film at the end of my first six months in Brazil, when the initial emotional storm calmed down a bit, and when I started more or less efficiently communicate in Portuguese. I wrote a non-narrative script, that would consist of staged scenes meant to symbolically represent my experience of adaptation to the language and culture. I've invited an actress to play me, to be my alter ego. We filmed several scenes,

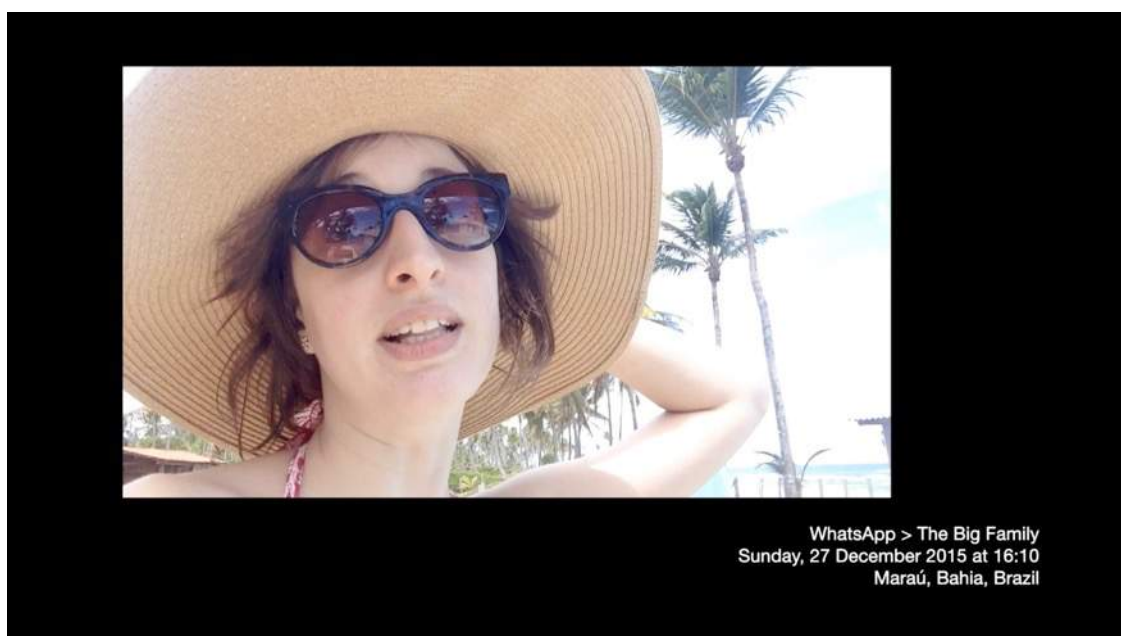
but before I could finish, I was already half way into moving to Portugal, where, I and my partner, hoped to find a middle ground between our distant countries.

Another country full of surprises took all my attention for a while, and I didn't come back to the filmed material for a year or more. When I finally returned to editing, I had to face huge gaps in the initial script, that I didn't have time to film. Looking to fill those gaps, I dived into my archive – all the photos and videos filmed in Brazil. I was very lucky, as, being a foreigner, I was filming or photographing every tiny little bit of everyday: everything would be exiting and exotic – from a fruit market to a dinner with my mother-in-law. I felt that those daily records, even being of poor quality, are richer and say much more, than my intellectual script. But the biggest surprise I was to discover were the video messages that I had sent to my family through WhatsApp: “the weather reports”, as I called them. Made in an instant, unplanned, and never meant to be kept for future, these fruits on an impossible, unnatural communication through the physical, cultural, linguistic distance, they became the heart and the spine of my film.

It is interesting to think that when I conceived the film, I was, in part, inspired by travelogues, such as *Tokyo Ga* (1985) by Wim Wenders, or *Sans Soleil* (1982) by Chris Marker. Except for a fact that I was not travelling, I was starting a life from scratch in a new country. It was not until I started an extensive research on autobiographical films, that I discovered that the migrant experience takes its place among the central themes of first-person cinema. Without knowing it, I shared what Lebow calls “immigrantitis: the mania to document one's first impressions of a new place in which one intends to live” (2012, *The Camera as Peripatetic Migration Machine*). She insists on the strong bond between the cinematic apparatus and the modern phenomenon of urban migration, the association best described by the American film theorist Anton Kaes:

As we know, the advent of cinema is roughly coincident with the first wave of mass urban migration in the West. The force of momentum, literally the engine-propelled movement of mass in time, can be said to have urged on a new sensibility, a new way of perceiving, that was equally well expressed in the scenery of a landscape as seen from a speeding train window as it was in the imagery screened through the rapid shutter of a projector (1998, as cited in Lebow, *The Camera as Peripatetic Migration Machine*)

In Brazil, for the first time in my life, I started keeping a written diary, that would become a way for me to continue daily use of my native language. But I have never thought about starting a video diary. Instead, my video messages to the family became sort of diary logs, but it was not until much later that I've come to realize that. The messages speak *I*, and *now*, as a diary must, according to Jean Rousset (as cited in Rascaroli, 2009), and have a date and place stamped on each of it. But when you put them all together, you notice that something isn't quite right. The sun is always shining and I am always smiling. A mood you rarely encounter in your regular intimate diary, that is there to listen to all your hardships and troubles, as a good friend would. My "diary" is a public one, with its addressee defining the nature of its content. My videos say: I am in paradise and no harm or trouble could possibly reach me. A typical happy mood you encounter in countless home videos, or, today, in most of your Instagram feed.



I was sending the videos, filmed on the spot whenever I've felt to, with my phone, to the family group in WhatsApp. Of course, I was sending text messages and photos as well, usually to share some news, but it is in videos that a sort of discipline, regularity, and form, appeared. This communication has a very distinct prototype, a written letter, that I would certainly use in the same situation a century earlier. A "video letter", as opposed to phone, or skype conversation, is something that can be kept, re-watched. Something that could, as I unconsciously might have hoped, fill in the gap in the life of my family, left by my absence:

Film famously provides an illusion of presence unparalleled in other media, the motion picture far surpassing that of a static image or the written word in perpetuating a potent reality effect. Sound, of course, especially that of a human voice, adds something akin to ‘dimension’ to that image, despite the fact that neither image nor sound, nor their combined effect, can ever approximate the full dimensionality of the elusive human form. But that doesn’t stop people from fantasising otherwise. (Lebow, 2012, *The Camera as Peripatetic Migration Machine*)

My video messages quickly gained a distinct theme, one of the weather report. Of course, weather is always a rich topic, when the difference in temperature between Rio de Janeiro and Moscow, our respective cities, could reach up to 60°C. But as I look at it from some distance now, I see a deeper reason. What does one talk about when one has nothing to say? Right, the weather! A joke that would mock a classic TV-genre, allowed me to create a character, in order to avoid speaking about personal. As I showed to my family paradise beaches and eternal summer, I was living through a serious cultural shock, struggling with the lack of a common language, and witnessing a rapidly deteriorating political situation in Brazil. But none of that enter in my “weather reports”, where I, with rare exceptions, focus on the outside, in terms of chosen topics and perspective. Even when it comes to presenting my new home, I choose the viewpoint from the street, and quickly switch topic, describing Brazilian winter.

The weather could also be read as metaphor for bigger external forces that we cannot control, giving one a sense of danger, needing awareness and caution. At least, this is my experience as a winter child in a country with quite a severe cold climate. I grew up learning all the possible ways of protecting my body against the cold, always checking the temperature outside before leaving the house, and the forecast for a week ahead. Something, I discovered, people in Rio de Janeiro don’t usually do. “Dear Chantal, I sent you some summer clothes, because it must be hot there. I hope I have the right address”, a worried mother writes to her daughter from Brussels to New York in *News from Home* (1977). In the film, it is Chantal Akerman herself who reads in voice over her mother’s “love letters”, as she calls them (cited in Cerne, Pollock, 2008), but before professing love, almost every letter gives out a little weather report. It’s all right, it all normal, we are safe, there is no threat, — this is what seems to be the message, the same one I’m trying to send to my family.

Akerman's case, where she is more of the passive recipient of the letter, photos, money and news from home, is not a common one. Her mother begs for a single picture, for something more than a letter, for something that could replace her missing daughter, but Akerman ignores the request (that is, until years later, when she gives an extensive reply in a form of a film). But "more often than not, it is the displaced person who attempts to make tangible what is missing and absent" (Di Stefano, 2002, p. 39). Such was my case, and such is the case explored in another film that works with video and audio-letters, *I for India* (2005) by Sandhya Suri. First thing Suri's father did, after leaving India for UK in 1965, is to buy two sets of Super 8 cameras, projectors and reel to reel recorders, keeping one set for himself, and sending one back home, to establish an ongoing connection with his family.

As many films of the genre, *I for India* looks to expose what was hidden between the lines in that communication. When Suri counterpoints the happy 8mm home movies that her father sent home, with the darker and more intimate audio letters, intended for the same addressees, the gap appears, the irreversible displacement. While film rolls put on display the growing children and the beautiful house, audio letters confess that the family wouldn't be coming back to their homeland. In *News from Home*, the "love letters" read one after another, gradually expose Akerman's reasons for leaving, "as the tone of the writing moves from inquisitive ("Please write about your work and your life there") to passive-aggressive ("I was surprised not to get a letter this week") to agitated ("You never answer my questions, and it's bothering me. Please answer this time")" (Koresky, 2010).

In my case, as a counter point to my cheerful "weather reports" I choose the footage, that I recorded from time to time for myself, as a memory or an impression. In this videos that depict the everyday, I stay in the role of the observer, struggling to decipher the culture, the city with my gaze. As a result, these videos present a much more personal look, and a broader spectre of allowed themes. Thus, the rainy days appear in film, together with political manifestations, but also parties, unknown beachgoers, and melancholic landscapes, that I filmed for no apparent reason. Edited side by side with the direct messages, those images are meant to question the nature of the family communication, i.e. what is said and what is avoided, but also the nature of our daily routine production of the images.

As much as I wanted to avoid “tourist gaze” in portraying Brazil, I was surprised to see, going through my digital archives, that I was living a tourist dream. Caipirinha, samba, feijoada, paradise beaches and carnival, all have taken an important place in my life in Rio. But handmade and homemade, without gloss and glamor of a tourist trap, it all felt unique and not in any way stereotypical. I felt an urge to share those moments with my family and friends back in Russia, believing that this is what they will be able to relate to, thanks to the existing stereotypes. At the same time, I was driven by a desire to show: this is nothing like you imagine, this is not as you saw it telenovelas.

I structured the very first cut of my film around the idea of the dictionary: the little episodes would be separated by certain words, and the visual part would explain them, or contradict them, play with the meaning. After seeing that cut, a close friend asked: but what was the main word for you? She referred to the quite forgotten today box-office hit *Eat. Love. Pray* (2010) where the characters played “the word game”, choosing the one word for each city they travelled, but also for each of their lives. That made me look into my ‘dictionary’ with more attention, only to discover that it is not the meaning of the words that was important to me, but the very fact that they are in Portuguese. The language itself was “the word” I was looking for. And I had to use more than one word to explain it. I needed what Wittgenstein refers to it as a “language-game”, “consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven” (1958, 7, p.5). I needed to put the words into phrases and sentences, I needed to create the situations for them to be used, I needed to start the process of communication. It is at this stage, that a concept of a phrasebook appears, as a structure, and as a title for the film. It is a phrasebook that one takes on a journey, not a dictionary. A set of phrases organized around the common situations, that are played out and scripted for you in dialogues.

I break up the film in little chapters, or situations, like “Copacabana”, “Beach”, “Winter”, “Samba”, etc. Each one has a title, that is a phrase, taken from a real Portuguese language textbook that I used during my studies. After the well-known coldness and formality of textbooks that I grew up with in Russia (many of them were Soviet, with dialogues of Comrades about the state of foreign affairs, the records of exemplary workers at national factories, or the bright communist future), learning phrases about girls not wearing bras or dancing their feet off at the party, was giving me new perspective on the language, but also the culture. Again, those phrases are pure stereotypes, a tourist “language-game”, and I hoped that they will dialogue and contrast with my footage.

The phrases are bi-lingual, as is the film in its entity. Some footage I had was in Russian, some – in Portuguese, some included the processes of simultaneous translation, far from exact. I found it impossible to choose one language even for the title. The constant presence of two languages, with the impossibility to ever fully translate, creates the gap, makes the distance between the cultures and the countries physically present. There is also no doubt that the way the film will be read depends on what language(s) the viewer dominates. An important reference for me here became a rarely seen film *The Camera : Je Or La Camera : I* (1977) by photographer, cinematographer and independent filmmaker Babette Mangolte. A kind of professional self-portrait, the film is shot through the viewfinder of a Mangolte's photo camera, with us witnessing everything that happens in between the moments when she presses the shutter-release button. "With numerous performers. The film is in English and French", this is the official synopsis one can find of the artist's website. Being of French origin and living and working in New York at the time when the film was made, Mangolte speaks in film in both languages, sometimes even getting confused. This is a part of her personality she shares in the portrait, and the film also speaks in many languages, starting from the title and keeping bi-lingual structure on many levels: still photo / moving image, studio / street photography, colour / black-and-white.

During the first months of my "exile", the impossibility to speak felt like a physical disability. It wasn't easy to find a way to portray this sensation of muteness. I've discovered that when one can't speak, there is still a language that one could use, the language of the body. Both in Portuguese, and in Russian, the same word is used for both "language" and "tongue" (as part of the body): "língua", "язык". So that one could say, as an anonymous graffiti on the streets of Rio de Janeiro does, "A melhor tradução entre duas línguas é o beijo" (The best translation between two tongues is a kiss). Following this notion, I introduce in my films the scenes where the body is used to explain and learn the words. My intention was to show a body as something that stays solid amidst all the confusion of languages, something that can be a substitute for, and also a reference for a language. The body is the one thing one cannot lose, even when one is threatened to lose one's language, and identity.



I also drew inspiration for “language exercises” scenes from online video language courses, that I sometimes used in my learning process. These videos are usually quite uninventive, combining the classroom experience (talking head of the teacher) and a textbook (texts or phrases appearing on the screen), without any attempt to explore a direct relationship between the image and the spoken language. Much bolder experiments to use moving image as a means to learn a language are dated as far as 1880s, when a pioneer of chronophotography Étienne-Jules Marey recorded, using 12 successive photographs per second, several faces in close-up pronouncing simple phrases. These phrases were indented as a learning aid for people with hearing and speaking disabilities, and among the recorded phrases were "Vive la France!" and "Je vous aime!" (Películas Sale, 2017). I reconstruct the experiment in my film, using the latter phrase, as an homage to Étienne-Jules Marey but also remembering my own temporary muteness. All “language exercises” scenes are scripted, rehearsed and staged, creating one more dichotomy for the film, that of fiction versus documentary cinema languages.

“You are as many people as you know languages”, the Czech proverb say. Numerous studies have been conducted to prove or disprove the connection between the language and the personality in bi- and multi-linguals. Some researchers come to the conclusion that the link is direct (language), some that it its indirect (through language to culture) (Grosjean, 2011). In any case, the fact is that many bi- and multi-linguals report “feeling different” or that their friends and relatives notice the change that they undergo when switching to another language (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012). If asked, I would report

the same feeling. I remember going through the day with a strong and never-ending sensation that I was living in someone else's house, going to someone else's work, spending time with someone else's friends. It was the language (also, someone else's) that connected me with all those elements of my daily routine. The more I mastered the language, the more the someone else's word was becoming my own, but that also meant that I was becoming someone else. I use this very directly in film, by creating my own doppelganger, a Brazilian, and speaking Portuguese. I hire an actress to play me, while I myself am present in the film, as well. I play out the famous Rimbaud's formula "Je est un autre" literally. I am multiplied in the language, but also in the process of making the film, where I am the author, the narrator, the character, the actress.

But what is it that actually happens in my film? There is no storyline, no arrival, and no departure at the end, the elements that would be necessary for a true-to-the-form travelogue. I don't speak about why I left for Brazil, how long I am going to stay, who exactly is this distant family I am addressing to. The film is fragmentary, with the intervals serving to evoke not the flawed memory, but the communication process, interrupted by physical or language distance. The film is not a nostalgic dedication to the past, it is continuously in a present, forced by the date stamps, the present tense of the inter title texts, the repetition and the absence of the voice-over commentary. I remember well that, as months passed by after my arrival, and the seasons would refuse to change, I would experience the growing anxiety and the feeling that the time has stopped. I felt stuck in the eternal summer (of course, the locals can sense the seasons change, but I couldn't). This is part of the experience I wanted to share in the film. Even now, when I revisit the images of Brazil, I have a strong sensation that when I go back, I will find nothing changed. As if somebody pressed the "pause" button while I was away, and with me back, it will all continue.

I don't explore my national roots in the film: I don't make pancakes, I don't sing songs, I show no images from my homeland but one. This only image, that I use, is sent to the same family group chat by my sister. It shows her husband giving a sledge ride to their daughter. It is a regular winter day in Moscow, the ground is covered deep in snow. With this only image, my homeland is presented as an amorphous and distant piece of ice, so distant that nothing from out there could reach the hot beaches of Brazil. From here grows the idea to include the "snow interviews", a part that interrupts the essay with

a more conventional documentary style fragment. With interruption, I hoped to give a moment of relieve from the constant repetition, as well as to bring forward, in one more way, the cultural and physical disconnection. Snow is something as mundane for me as air, while in life of “cariocas” it only exists as a Christmas decoration, plastic or cardboard, fake, eternal. The conversation about it is impossible, we don’t even mean the same thing when each of us say “snow”.

My film won’t be seen in the same way by Brazilians and Russians. For Brazilians, despite all my efforts, it will still be a “tourist gaze”, never complete. For Russians, it might present something of a travel guide or an anthropological field study. And for my friends and family, from both countries, is it a whole other story, that is enforced by what Marianna Hirsh calls, “an affiliative look”,

recognizing an image as familial elicits <...> a specific kind of readerly or spectatorial look, an affiliative look through which we are sutured into the image and through which we adopt the image into our own familial narrative <...> it is idiosyncratic, untheorizable <...> it is what moves us because of our memories and our histories, and because of the ways in which we structure our own sense of particularity (1997, p. 93)

For all who lived my immigration experience with me, on both sides of the ocean, the film is a document of physical and emotional dislocation, that we all continue to live in, and the confusing clash of two cultures and languages, for which no phrasebook could ever be of help. This is the document of how we’ve become, as Elspeth Kydd puts it,

a modern diaspora family; our journeys are contingent rather than mythic (or tragic), our wanderings are economic migrations rather than enforced exiles, our homecomings are always tinged with the knowledge that home itself is not a stable space, but a shifting signifier, an uncertain place (2012, Looking for home in Home Movies).

CONCLUSION

François Truffaut described the films where filmmakers share personal experience as “films of tomorrow”. I believe the time has come to look at autobiographic documentaries as “films of today”, acknowledging that they offer a unique and effective way to engage with reality and the pressing issues of modern life, both private and political. Using new technologies and highly imaginative forms, people around the world explore what it feels like to have body, to have sex, to be at war, to experience loss, to be a daughter or a mother, to be alive, in a way that their biography becomes our own.

I placed a distinct focus on the perspective of the filmmakers, trying to find within the body of the films the impulse that drove them to open up their private lives, while going through a similar process in my own artistic work. At the same time, I made an effort to expose how the audience is invited into the autobiographical process as an equal, a collaborator in producing the meaning. Behind every first-person film there is a desire to communicate, the point of the dialogue being that of encountering the self through the eyes of the other. While I presented the main communication strategies that the filmmakers use in autobiographic documentary films, the exploration of possible genres and thematic preoccupations can be continued.

Probably the hardest in my research was watching the films: borrowing rare DVDs from cinephile friends and film critics, searching in libraries and museums, suffering from low-quality rip-offs on the internet. I came to the realisation that first-person filmmaking still finds itself in a very marginal and fragile position. While this is exactly what allows its bold experimentation and disobedience, it is still crucial to bring visibility to the practice by studying, writing, discussing, making and, most importantly, showing personal films. I hope my work, both theoretical and practical, will add to the process, and inspire a vivid interest towards the subject both in researchers and artists. In an age when one learns everything from films, starting from driving a car to making love, we need to have more human, more diverse, more personal experience on screen.

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APPENDIX A

PHRASEBOOK (2018) INFORMATION SHEET

GUIDA DE CONVERSAÇÃO
РАЗГОВОРНИК

Фильм Анастасии Луквниковой
um filme de Anastasia Lukovnikova

с участием Каролины Бьянки
com participação de Carolina Bianchi

на двух языках
em duas línguas

lukovnikova.tv

PHRASEBOOK (2018) INFORMATION SHEET

Title (original): разговорник — guia de conversação

Title (English): phrasebook

Year: 2018

Duration: 20 minutes

Languages: Russian, Portuguese

A film by Anastasia Lukovnikova.

Cast: Carolina Bianchi, Anastasia Lukovnikova.

Sound mix: Gabriel Muzak.

Credits and inter-titles design: Marianna Morgovskaia.

Synopsis:

An exercise in two languages aiming to share the experience of an unexpected change of countries, from Russia to Brazil. A collage made out of instant video messages, travel diary, language exercises and re-enacted fantasies, the film searches for a way to speak through distance and language barrier.

Link: <https://vimeo.com/289355257>

Password: gdccdg

(version with English subtitles)

APPENDIX B – A LIST OF FIRST-PERSON DOCUMENTARIES

	English title	Original title	Director	Year	Country	Duration	Description (IMDB or MUBI)
1	<i>Baby's Meal</i>	<i>Repas de bébé</i>	Louis Lumière	1895	France	00:03	The film consists of one shot of Auguste Lumière, his wife and baby daughter having breakfast in the countryside.
2	<i>The Private Life of an Actor</i>	<i>Le Comédien</i>	Sacha Guitry	1947	France	01:35	La vie de Lucien Guitry, prestigieux acteur de théâtre et père de Sacha. Le film tout entier est un reportage. Reportage sur la vie de Lucien Guitry, joué par son fils. Reportage sur le théâtre de Guitry. Reportage sur le comédien Sacha qui joue son rôle et celui de son père, parfois dans la même scène.
3	<i>Anticipation of the Night</i>		Stan Brakhage	1958	USA	00:42	Working as a "diary" in which Brakhage recorded the events of his life and his feelings about them, Anticipation of the Night ushered in a new experimental model which synthesized a Romantic mythopoesis and the reflexive Modernism of Abstract Expressionism.
4	<i>Chronicle of a Summer</i>	<i>Chronique d'un été (Paris 1960)</i>	Edgar Morin, Jean Rouch	1961	France	01:25	Real-life individuals discuss topics on society, happiness in the working class among others and with those testimonies the filmmakers create fictional moments based on their interviews. Later on, the individuals discuss the images created with their own words and see if the movie obtained their level of reality.
5	<i>Le Joli Mai</i>	<i>Le Joli Mai</i>	Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme	1962	France		Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme's LE JOLI MAI is a portrait of Paris and Parisians during May 1962; the first springtime of peace after the ceasefire with Algeria and the first time in 23 years that France was not involved in any war.
6	<i>Fuses</i>		Carolee Schneemann	1967	USA	00:22	An experimental short in which a couple engaged in lovemaking is superimposed over ocean and beach scenes.
7	<i>Symbiopsychotaxiplasm Take One</i>		William Greaves	1968	USA	01:15	Filmmaker William Greaves auditioned acting students for a fictional drama, while simultaneously shooting the behind-the-scenes drama taking place.
8	<i>Plumb Line</i>		Carolee Schneemann	1971	USA	00:15	
9	<i>The Infatuated Camera</i>		Ed van der Elsken	1971	Netherlands	00:43	Starting point: photographic work done by Van der Elsken in 1965 as a reporter, for which he travelled worldwide. Stories & anecdotes Elsken tells in this film are illustrated with many of his pictures, slides and film fragments, progressively blurring the boundary between frozen and moving images.
10	<i>Film Portrait</i>		Jerome Hill	1972	USA	01:21	A diary film in which Jerome Hill presents his life and milieu through different scenes, many hand-colored and animated.
11	<i>Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania</i>		Jonas Mekas	1972	Lithuania	01:28	This film, and its companion piece Going Home are documentaries in the form of home movies. It records the return visit of brothers Jonas and Adolfas Mekas to their homeland of Lithuania.
12	<i>Joyce at 34</i>		Joyce Chopra	1972	USA	00:28	The film stars Chopra and examines the effect her pregnancy had on her film making career.
13	<i>Vakantie van de filmer</i>	<i>The Filmmaker's Holiday</i>	Johan van der Keuken	1974	Netherlands	00:37	
14	<i>Nana, Mom and Me</i>		Amalie Rothschild	1974		00:47	
15	<i>Extreme Private Eros: Love Song</i>	<i>Gokushiteki erosu: Renka 1974</i>	Kazuo Hara	1974	Japan	01:38	In this uncomfortably intimate film, documentary filmmaker Kazuo Hara visits his ex-girlfriend Miyuki and records her new relationships.
16	<i>Family Portrait Sitings</i>		Alfred Guzzetti	1975	USA	01:43	Using photographs, interviews, home movies, and footage shot in Philadelphia and abroad, Family Portrait Sitings tells the story of the filmmaker's family, from their origins in Italy to their life in the United States.
17	<i>Lost, Lost, Lost</i>		Jonas Mekas	1975	USA	02:58	Diary, shot between 1949 and 1963.
18	<i>Claro</i>		Glauber Rocha	1975	Italy	01:51	
19	<i>Kitch's Last Meal</i>		Carolee Schneemann	1976	USA	00:55	
20	<i>Anatomy of a Relationship</i>	<i>Anatomie d'un rapport</i>	Luc Moullet	1976	France	01:22	An embarrassingly confessional sex/relationship drama starring the writer/director Luc Moullet as himself and actress Christine Hebert as Luc's girlfriend (who is actually cowriter/codirector Antonietta Pizzorno).
21		<i>Daguerréotypes</i>	Agnès Varda	1976	France	01:20	Portraits of the people that occupy the small shops of the Rue Daguerre, Paris, where the filmmaker lived.
22	<i>News from home</i>		Chantal Akerman	1977	France / Belgium	01:25	Filmed images of the New York City are accompanied by the texts of Chantal Akerman's loving but manipulative mother back home in Brussels. The City comes more and more to the front while the words of the mother, read by Akerman herself, gradually fade away.
23	<i>The Lorry</i>	<i>Le Camion</i>	Marguerite Duras	1977	France	01:16	In this most talky and personal of films, director Marguerite Duras and actor Gerard Depardieu do an on-camera read-through of a movie script. Occasionally, the director comments about the characters or their motivations, and sometimes the actor does. That's all -- there is no action, there are no location shots, no one pretends to be anything else.
24	<i>The Camera: Je, or La Caméra: I</i>		Babette Mangolte	1977	USA	01:28	Using a technique called the 'subjective camera', Mangolte invites the viewer behind the camera to witness the artist's process and the power relations at play. The film is structured in three parts: studio photography, street photography and a final section in which the images produced are reviewed.
25	<i>The Mom Tapes - 1974-1978</i>		Ilene Segalove	1978	USA		Segalove takes her mom as subject in these short pieces, recording her stories, her advice, and her daily routine. What results is a portrait of a contemporary mother-daughter relationship, touchingly devoid of drama and full of whimsical humor.
26	<i>Daughter Rite</i>		Michele Citron	1978	USA	00:49	A documentary of a daughter's problematic relationship with her mother.
27	<i>This Answering Service Takes No Messages</i>	<i>Ce repondeur ne prend pas de messages</i>	Alain Cavalier	1979	France	01:04	Le film d'Alain Cavalier est un sinistre jeu de chambre autobiographique. Seul avec ses souvenirs, le personnage du film s'enferme dans son appartement. En off, il lit les lettres bouleversantes de sa femme, témoignages des souffrances morales qui l'ont brisé.

28	<i>Of Great Events and Ordinary People</i>	<i>De grands événements et des gens ordinaires</i>	Raul Ruiz	1979	France	01:05	A cinéma vérité documentary about the elections in Paris which reflexively inverts in on itself.
29	<i>THERE? WHERE?.</i>		Babette Mangolte	1979	USA	00:10	A naïve look at Southern California by an outsider, and/or an essay on displacement through the disjunction of Californian images and off screen voices. Where is the location of these voices, here or there? Are the images near or far in relation to the voices? Are the images commenting on the images or vice versa?
30	<i>I remember Beverly Hills</i>		Segalove	1980	USA		
31	<i>Ulysse</i>		Agnes Varda	1982	France	00:22	Agnès Varda interviews two subjects from a photograph she took 30 years earlier.
32	<i>Diaries</i>		Ed Pincus	1982	USA	03:20	A documentary on the life of Ed Pincus and his immediate family from 1971 to 1976.
33	<i>Unfinished diary</i>	<i>Journal inachevé</i>	Marilu Mallet	1982	Canada, Chile	00:50	In this moving docudrama, Chilean emigré Mallet struggles to make a film about her experience of profound isolation.
34	<i>Half a Life</i>	<i>MOURIR À 30 ANS</i>	Romain Goupil	1982	France	01:37	Romain Goupil directed this film about his friend Michel Recanati, a militant leader in the May '68 riots in Paris.
35	<i>Video-letter</i>		Shuji Terayama & Shuntaro Tanikawa	1983	Japan	01:14	This remarkable compilation follows an exchange of video letters that took place between Shuji Terayama and Shuntaro Tanikawa in the months immediately preceding Terayama's death. It can be thought of as a home video produced by two preeminent poets and inter-laid with highly abstract philosophizing, slightly aberrant behavior and occasionally flamboyant visuals.
36	<i>Diary 1973-1983</i>	<i>Yoman</i>	David Perlov	1983	Izrael	05:30	Shot over a ten-year period, Diary is not only the political, professional, and personal diary of a man, but is a testimony on the turbulent reality of a war-torn country, Israel. In six chapters, Perlov travels to Tel Aviv, Paris, London, and finally to Brazil, where he was born. The film is also a family diary in which Perlov records the coming of age of his two daughters, Yael and Naomi.
37	<i>The Declic Years</i>	<i>Les années dé clic</i>	Raymond Depardon	1984	France	01:05	This documentary is an autobiography based on director Depardon's voice, his face and pictures from his childhood which are all mixed together on screen and contrasted with selected pictures he shot between 1957 and 1977 and now comments on.
38	<i>Trick or Drink</i>		Vanalyne Green	1984	USA	20:49	This 1984 video fuses autobiographical material with information about how an alcoholic family perpetuates addictive behavior.
39	<i>Territories</i>		Sankofa Film and Video Collective	1984			
40	<i>My Puberty</i>		Ilene Segalove	1987	USA	00:10:41	Ilene Segalove reenacts the trials and travails of her desperate, hormonal, pubescent years. She plays herself, getting questionable advice from girlfriends, begging her mother for a bra, and falling in love for the first time. https://vimeo.com/172985279
41	<i>Family Gathering</i>		Lise Yasui	1988	USA	00:30	Silence is a legacy inherited by many grandchildren of Japanese Americans interned during WWII. Shortly after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Masuo Yasui, a respected figure of Hood River Valley, Oregon was arrested by the FBI as a "potentially dangerous enemy alien." Lise Yasui, a granddaughter that Masuo never knew, shows that courageous journeys into the past can bring greater understanding of family and personal history to the present.
42	<i>A song of Air</i>		Bennett	1988	Australia	00:28	An autobiographical account of a daughter's relationship with her father from the interior of a "typical" Australian family of the 1950's. Using original 16mm home movie footage filmed by her father, she speaks by means of voice-over of his severe religious and patriarchal oppression, and her resistance to his values and expectations.
43	<i>Doc's Kingdom</i>		Robert Kramer	1988	USA	01:30	Doc lives on the edge of Europe where it imperceptibly slides over into the Third World. As a doctor, he knows that the illness he has contracted ten years before in war-torn Africa is getting worse. The diagnosis is cholera, but Doc Knows the disease's real name: despair. On the other side of the world lives Jimmy, a speed-loving motorbike freak who, when his mother dies, finds a letter from Doc and discovers that his father, whom he thought was dead, is still alive. The encounter of the two men leads to a reappraisal of two worlds in opposition.
44	<i>Everything's for you</i>		Abraham Ravett	1989	USA	00:58	Filmmaker Abraham Ravett attempts to reconcile issues in his life as the child of a Holocaust survivor in this experimental non-narrative film. Ravett reflects upon his relationships with his family, from his now-deceased father (who survived both the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz) to his own young children. He utilizes family photographs and film footage, archival film footage from the Ghetto Fighters' House in Israel, cell animation by Emily Hubley, and computer graphics to create a film about memory, death, and what critic Bruce Jenkins calls "the power of the photographic image and sound to resurrect the past."
45	<i>Bye</i>		Ed van der Elsken	1989	Netherlands		Van der Elsken, suffering from prostate cancer, shares his thoughts predominantly on his illness, but also on his life and work.
46	<i>Emergency Kisses</i>	<i>Les Baisers de secours</i>	Philippe Garrel	1989	France	01:30	The familiar conflicts of a film director planning to make a movie about his life and the confrontation he has with his wife, an actress who was turned down for such project in which she wanted to play herself.
47	<i>Route One USA</i>		Robert Kramer	1989	UK / France / Italy	04:15	Doc (McIsaac), back from a decade in Africa, and filmmaker Kramer, decide to follow Route 1, from the Canadian border all the way to the tip of Florida.
48	<i>Tongues Untied</i>		Marlon Riggs	1989	USA	00:55	Marlon Riggs, with assistance from other gay Black men, especially poet Essex Hemphill, celebrates Black men loving Black men as a revolutionary act.

49	<i>I'm Britisg But ...</i>		Gurinder Chadha	1989	UK	00:30	
50	<i>If Every Girl Had a Diary</i>		Sadie Benning	1990	USA	00:06	Fragmented collage of memories, kind of a video diary.
51	<i>Jollies</i>		Sadie Benning	1990	USA		
52	<i>Sink or Swim</i>		Su Friedrich	1990	USA	00:48	A contemporary classic and a landmark in autobiographical filmmaking, SINK OR SWIM is an unflinching account of the highly charged relationship between a daughter and her father.
53	<i>Intimate Stranger</i>		Alain Berliner	1991	USA	01:00	A documentary about the director's maternal grandfather. The movie, says Berliner, "walks the fine line between sorting the dirty family laundry and polishing the precious family jewel."
54	<i>History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige</i> <i>Thank You and Good Night</i>		Rea Tajiri	1991	USA	00:32	Rea Tajiri's family was among the 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans who were imprisoned in internment camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor. And like so many who were in the camps, Tajiri's family wrapped their memories of that experience in a shroud of silence and forgetting. Ruminating on the difficult nature of representing the past that exists outside traditional historic accounts, Tajiri blends interviews, memorabilia, a pilgrimage to the camp where her mother was interned, and the story of her father, who had been drafted pre-Pearl Harbor and returned to find his family's house removed from its site.
55	<i>It Wasn't Love</i>		Jan Oxenberg	1991	UK USA	01:23	Documentary on family issues of elders, aging, and death.
56			Sadie Benning	1992	USA	00:20	
57		<i>El misterio de los ojos escarlata</i>	Alfredo J Anzola	1992	Venezuela		Encontrarme en la posesión de ese enorme montón de recuerdos, fotografías, discos, películas, cartas, recortes de prensa y quién sabe cuántas cosas más, me hacía sentir la necesidad de compartílos. Era además la historia de un grupo de hombres audaces, pero sobre todo la historia de ese calidísimo y buen hombre que fue papá. El había compartido los últimos años de su vida con los primeros de la mía, su herencia fueron sus cuentos y su amor a la verdad, el trabajo y la amistad. Por eso hoy El Misterio de los Ojos Escarlata. Alfredo J. Anzola.
58	<i>Allah Tantou, a la grace de Dieu</i>		David Achkar	1992	Guinea / France	01:02	Filmmaker David Achkar searches for his father, Marof Achkar, who was sent to the notorious Camp Boiro prison in 1969 for treason.
59		<i>Visita ou Memórias e Confissões</i>	Manoel de Oliveira	1993	Portugal	01:13	A docu-drama that follows Manoel de Oliveira's life during the times of dictatorship in Portugal.
60	<i>Delirium</i>		Mindy Faber	1993	USA	00:23	Taking her mother's mental illness as its point of departure, Mindy Faber's DELIRIUM exposes the historical relationship between women and madness wit...
61		<i>Caro Diario</i>	Nani Moretti	1993	Italy / France	01:36	"Dear Diary, there is something I like to do more than anything else..." These lines open the author's diary, the confidant of the most hidden thoughts. A diary in images, free and light as only personal thoughts can be.
62	<i>Anna ot 6 do 18</i>	<i>Анна: от 6 до 18</i>	Nikita Mikhalkov	1993	Russia	01:40	Director Nikita Mikhalkov documents the history of Russia from 1980 to 1991 by annually asking his daughter Anna such questions as "What do you love the most?", "What scares you the most?", "What do you want above anything" and "What do you hate the most?"
63	<i>Time Indefinite</i>		Ross McElwee	1993	USA	01:55	Following the announcement of his impending marriage to his film-making partner Marilyn Levine - marriage something that he and his family never thought would happen for him - McElwee turns on the camera to film life as it happens in respect to this new phase in his life. Both in real terms (as it applies to himself and those around him) and philosophical terms, McElwee discusses, through self-narration, life, death, love, family and babies.
64	<i>Tomboychik</i>		Sandi DuBowski	1993	USA	00:15	Tomboychik is a 15-minute video directed by and starring DuBowski. The story, shown through a series of vignettes, centers around his relationship with his grandmother, Malverna DuBowski, as 22-year-old Sandi DuBowski attempts to teach his 88-year-old grandmother how to film. The short video portrays struggles against gender roles and patriarchy.
65	<i>Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter</i>		Deborah Hoffmann	1994	USA	00:44	The film chronicles the various stages of a mother's Alzheimer's Disease and the evolution of a daughter's response to the illness. The desire to cure the incurable-to set right her mother's confusion and forgetfulness, to temper her mother's obsessiveness-gives way to an acceptance which is finally liberating for both daughter and mother. It is ultimately a life-affirming exploration of family relations, aging and change, the meaning of memory, and love.
66	<i>Blue</i>		Jarman	1994	UK	01:19	Against a plain, unchanging blue screen, a densely interwoven soundtrack of voices, sound effects and music attempt to convey a portrait of Derek Jarman's experiences with AIDS, both literally and allegorically, together with an exploration of the meanings associated with the colour blue.
67		<i>El diablo nunca duerme</i>	Lourdes Portillo	1994	Mexico	01:27	Oscar is found dead from a gunshot wound, his wife believes he committed suicide. But his niece, Portillo, suspects that it was murder and investigates the death with no help from the authorities.
68		<i>Katatumori</i>	Naomi Kawase	1994	Japan	00:40	Kawase Naomi films the everyday life with her grandma (adopted mother).
69		<i>Omelette</i>	Remi Lange	1994	France	01:18	Rémi, tired of writing and rewriting the same uninspired screenplay ("Nez-de-pied"), starts a diary film. At first, with his old Super-8 camera, he films ordinary daily occurrences involving his parents, his friends, his grandmother, an HIV positive friend, etc. Finding this line of filming a bit too banal, he decides rather impetuously to disclose to his family, camera rolling, that he has been living for several years with a man, Antoine. But watch out ! A skeleton taken out of the closet could hide another !

70	<i>Trying to kiss the moon</i>		Stephen Dwoskin	1994	USA	01:35	In this unique approach to the autobiographical film format, director Stephen Dwoskin pieces together home movies shot by his parents in New York City, a video letter recorded during the 1990 Gulf War by filmmaker Robert Kramer, and raw footage filmed by Dwoskin himself.
71	<i>Rambling man</i>		Dick Hebdige	1994	USA		
72	<i>Obsessive Becoming</i>		Daniel Reeves	1995	USA	00:55	Autobiographical exploration of the directors' family past.
73	<i>First Person Plural: The Electronic Diaries</i>		Lynn Hershman	1995	USA	01:15	This is a doc about a young Korean woman getting in touch with the childhood she left behind when she was adopted by an American family.
74	<i>JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December</i>	<i>J.L.G. por J.L.G.</i>	Jan Luc Godard	1995	France	01:02	Director Jean-Luc Godard reflects in this movie about his place in film history, the interaction of film industry and film as art, as well as the act of creating art.
75	<i>Nobody's Business</i>		Alain Berliner	1996	USA	01:00	A portrait of the director's father, searching for the extraordinary in the subject's seemingly normal existence.
76		<i>La Rencontre</i>	Alain Cavalier	1996		01:15	Un cinéaste rencontre une femme. Par petites touches, il filme avec sa caméra vidéo des moments de leur vie. Peu à peu, il se rend compte qu'il ne stocke pas des souvenirs mais qu'il construit un film. Il demande à la personne l'autorisation de continuer. Après un an de tournage, 75 minutes de vidéo montées sont prêtes..
77		<i>La linea paterna</i>	José Buil, Marisa Sistach	1996	Mexico	01:25	Family movies, shot with a 9.5 mm Pathé Baby camera, let us know traditions, customs, joys and sorrows of a Mexican family from the 1920s to the 1950s.
78	<i>No sex last night (Double Blind)</i>		Sophie Calle & Gregory Sheppard	1996	USA	01:16	French Artist Sophie Calle and American Photographer Greg Sheppard's autobiographical account of their road trip across America. Both hide behind their cameras as they make the mythical journey westward from New York to California in Greg's troubling convertible. The couple stop in a Las Vegas Drive-Thru wedding chapel and decide to get married, in order to save their shaky relationship, with their cameras recording everything.
79		<i>Marcello Mastroianni: mi ricordo si io mi ricordo</i>	Anna Maria Tato	1997	Italy	01:18	In 1996, Marcello Mastroianni talks about life as an actor. It's an anecdotal and philosophical memoir, moving from topic to topic, fully conscious of a man 'of a certain age'.
80		<i>Demain et encore demain, journal 1995</i>	Dominique Cabrera	1998	France	01:19	Pendant 9 mois, à partir de janvier 1995, Dominique CABRERA livre sa vie au quotidien mais par-dessus tout sa recherche du bonheur, ses angoisses et ses questionnements sur sa vie privée. En pleine dépression, elle filme au caméscope sa vie de mère célibataire, ses relations avec son fils de 10 ans, Victor, avec son ex-mari, Jean-Louis, son amant, Didier, sa psychologue, ses amis, sa famille
81	<i>Last Words – My Sister Yoka</i>	<i>Laatste Woorden – Mijn Zuske Joke</i>	Johan van der Keuken	1998	Netherlands	00:52	A personal portrait of Van der Keuken's sister Yoka who died of cancer. Eight days before her death, the filmmaker and his wife had an openhearted conversation with her and filmed it. Two days before her death, a second shorter conversation followed.
82	<i>A Letter without Words</i>		Lisa Lewenz	1998	USA	01:02	Plot Keywords: f rated holocaust independent film
83	<i>Yidl in the Middle: Growing Up Jewish in Iowa</i>		Marlene Booth	1998	USA	00:58	
84	<i>Out for Love...Be back Shortly</i>		Dan Katzir	1999	Israel	00:55	A former officer and paratrooper intimately reveals his love story with Iris, a charming girl about to begin her army service. This film is also an important historic document with rare and shocking footage from the era of assassinated prime minister Yitzchak Rabin.
85	<i>Rabbit in the Moon</i>		Emiko Omory	1999	USA	01:25	This documentary is about the internment of Japanese Americans in camps during World War II.
86	<i>My Best Fiend</i>	<i>Mein liebster Feind Klaus Kinski</i>	Werner Herzog	1999	Germany	01:35	In this personal documentary, Herzog traces the often violent ups and downs of their relationship, revisiting the various locations of their films and talking to the people they worked with.
87	<i>The Gleaners and I</i>		Agnès Varda	2000	France	01:22	An intimate, picaresque inquiry into French life as lived by the country's poor and its provident, as well as by the film's own director, Agnes Varda. The aesthetic, political and moral point of departure for Varda are gleaners, those individuals who pick at already-reaped fields for the odd potato, the leftover turnip.
88	<i>First Person Plural</i>		Deann Borshay	2000	USA		
89	<i>The Long Holiday</i>	<i>De grote vakantie</i>	Johan van der Keuken	2000	Netherlands	02:25	After Johan van der Keuken is told that he has prostate cancer and only a few years left to live he decides to take an extended vacation while filming his journeys so the afterworld can learn about his experiences.
90	<i>As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty</i>		Jonas Mekas	2000	USA	04:48	It focuses on the domestic world of the Mekas family proper, shot on jittery, mellow 16mm color-reversal stock during the last three decades of the 20th century.
91	<i>Double Portrait</i>		Marilú Mallet	2000	Canada		Marilú Mallet recounts the story of her mother, painter Maria Luisa Segnoret while her mother paints her portrait.
92		<i>Vuela angelito</i>	Christian Burkhard	2001	Mexico	short	
93	<i>Porto of My Childhood</i>	<i>Porto da minha infancia</i>	Manoel de Oliveira	2001	Portugal	01:01	The city of Porto viewed by the intimate eye of Manoel de Oliveira.
94	<i>Family</i>		Phie Ambo, Sami Saif	2001	Denmark	01:30	The directors, who are also partners, take a journey in pursuit of Sami's father, who abandoned his Danish family when Sami was very young.
95	<i>Nine Good Teeth</i>		Alex Halpern	2002	USA	01:15	The stories and recollections of his 102-year-old grandmother Mary Mirabito, an outspoken and fiercely independent woman. In a revealing and often hilarious portrait, Mary dispenses homespun wisdom while divulging family secrets and rivalries. Nine Good Teeth reveals many of the common truths hidden away in all our families, as well as the unexpected - late night visits from Jack Kerouac, illicit love affairs and the occasional murder.

		<i>Sob Céus Estranhos</i>					Nos tempos da Segunda Guerra Mundial, Lisboa foi um corredor de passagem entre a Europa e as Américas para muitos refugiados. Das 50 mil a 200 mil pessoas que passaram por Lisboa nessa época, apenas cinquenta aqui ficaram. Entre elas encontravam-se os meus avós.
96			Daniel Blaufuks	2002	Portugal	00:57	
97	<i>For my Children</i>		Michael Aviad	2002	Israel	01:00	TV movie
98		<i>Fleurette</i>	Sergio Tréfaut	2002	Portugal	01:20	Sérgio tries to understand the troubled past of his mother, Fleurette, 79 years old. Notwithstanding her resistance to his questions, little by little, throughout the film she reveals almost another life where love is closely related to politics. From occupied France and Nazi Germany to the Brazilian dictatorship and the Portuguese revolution.
99	<i>The Odds of Recovery</i>		Su Friedrich	2002	USA	01:05	After a twenty year period of multiple illnesses and injuries, the filmmaker turns the camera on herself as a way to analyze her chances for a happier, healthier life.
100		<i>Los rubios</i>	Albertina Carri	2003	Argentina	01:29	Los rubios focuses on the directors search for her disappeared parents. Is it possible to get to the truth or they are only fictions, imaginary characters from everyone who remembers them?
101	<i>I Used to Be a Filmmaker</i>		Jay Rosenblatt	2003	USA	00:10	A film about fatherhood and the bond between a father and his infant daughter. The filmmaker documents the first eighteen months of the child's life, showing the progression from newborn to infant to toddler.
102	<i>Tarnation</i>		Jonathan Caouette	2003	USA	01:28	Filmmaker Jonathan Caouette's documentary on growing up with his schizophrenic mother -- a mixture of snapshots, Super-8, answering machine messages, video diaries, early short films, and more -- culled from 19 years of his life
103	<i>Bright Leaves</i>		Ross McElwee	2003	USA	01:47	Bright Leaves describes a journey taken across the social, economic, and psychological tobacco terrain of North Carolina by a native Carolinian, Ross McElwee, whose great-grandfather created the famous brand of tobacco known as Bull Durham. It's also a film about family history, addiction, denial, and filmmaking--as McElwee grapples with the legacy of an obscure Hollywood melodrama that is purportedly based on this curious man that was his great-grandfather.
104	<i>My Stills, 1952-2002</i>	<i>Tazlumay, 1952-2002</i>	David Perlov	2003	Izrael	01:02	The first part takes the viewer on a journey to the very roots of the image, the frame, the angle, the light, and the frozen movement of people, and contemplates stills and cinema photography. The second part revolves around three photographers whom Perlov deeply admired: David Seymore, Henri Lartigue, and Henri Roth (the latter's photographs served as evidence in the Eichmann Trial) The third part of the film consists solely of stills, taken by Perlov mainly during the past two years of his life, and always from the same spot: his breakfast table at a Tel Aviv cafe.
105	<i>The Watershed</i>		Mary Trunk	2004	USA	01:18	Faced with extraordinary trauma of losing both parents to alcoholism and divorce, seven siblings form a unique family structure.
106	<i>The sky turns</i>	<i>El cielo gira</i>	Mercedes Alvarez	2004	Spain	01:50	One year in the life of a tiny village in northern Spain.
107		<i>Le Filmeur</i>	Alain Cavalier	2005	France	01:40	Construction cinématographique faite à partir de dix ans du journal vidéo d'Alain Cavalier, tourné entre 1994 et 2005.
108	<i>51 Birch Street</i>		Doug Block	2005	Germany / USA	01:30	Documentary filmmaker Doug Block had every reason to believe his parents' 54-year marriage was a good one. But when his mother dies unexpectedly and his father swiftly marries his former secretary, he discovers two parents who are far more complex and troubled than he ever imagined. It is a riveting personal documentary that explores a universal human question: how much about your parents do you really want to know?
109	<i>Grizzly Man</i>		Hertzog	2005	USA	01:43	A devastating and heartrending take on grizzly bear activists Timothy Treadwell and Amie Huguenard, who were killed by a bear in October of 2003 while living among grizzlies in Alaska.
110	<i>Phantom Limb</i>		Jay Rosenblatt	2005	USA	00:29	Divided into 12 short sections, including "Separation," "Denial," "Sorrow," "Confusion," "Longing" and "Return," filmmaker Jay Rosenblatt explores his grief and loss of his younger brother, Eliot Mitchell Rosenblatt, who died over four decades ago in 1964.
111	<i>Svyato</i>	<i>Svyato</i>	Victor Kossakovsky	2005	Russia	00:45	In Russian, "Svyato" means "happy". But it is also a nickname for Svyatoslav, the son of director Kossakovsky, who for two years covered mirrors from Svyato. For the first time in his life, Svyato is going to watch himself on a mirror.
112	<i>Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2 1/2</i>		William Greaves	2005	USA	01:39	In Central Park, 1968, a director shot scenes of a young couple whose marriage was falling apart - 35 years later they are back in Central Park as the director relentlessly pursues the ever-elusive symbiopsychotaxiplasmic moment.
113	<i>I for India</i>		Sandhya Suri	2005	UK	01:10	In 1966, Yash and Sheel Suri leave India for a temporary stay in England while he burnishes his resume as a doctor. He buys projectors, tape recorders, and movie cameras, and sends one set to India beginning a 40-year exchange of tapes and Super 8 movies between his family in India and his household near Manchester.
114	<i>Tarachime (Birth/Mother)</i>		Naomi Kawase	2006	Japan	00:43	A documentary film which observes 'life' through childbirth.
115	<i>Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman</i>		Jennifer Fox	2006	USA	05:53	In six hour long episodes, acclaimed filmmaker, Jennifer Fox, maps the world of female life and sexuality today -- from the dramatic turns in her own life to the stories of women around the globe that shed light on the universal issues all women face.
116		<i>Fotografías</i>	Andrés Di Tella	2007	Argentina	01:50	Director Andrés Di Tella travels for the first time to India in search of his Indian mother's past only to find unexpected facts.

117		<i>De son appartement</i>	Jean Claude Rousseau	2007	France	01:10	Véritable film-concept, De son appartement suit Jean-Claude Rousseau 70 minutes durant alors qu'il est seul chez lui. On le voit ainsi ponctuer ses lectures de Bérénice de tâches domestiques et d'occupations journalières. "Comme si Rousseau, tirant parti des possibilités du cadre et du montage, tâchait de mesurer l'impact sur l'espace quotidien d'un texte consacré à l'attente de l'autre, à la peur de son absence".
118	<i>Santiago</i>		João Moreira Salles	2007	Brazil	01:20	Documentary about Santiago, a peculiar man who used to work for the director and his parents as a butler. The material was filmed in 1992 but, for some strange reason, the director felt he couldn't edit it and put it aside. In 2005 he remembers the unfinished film and starts its edition.
119	<i>365 Day Project</i>		Jonas Mekas	2007	USA	38:00:00	A succession of films and videos in calendar form. Every day as of January 1st, 2007 and for an entire year, as indicated in the title, a large public (the artist's friends, as well as unknowns) were invited to view a diary of short films of various lengths (from one to twenty minutes) on the Internet. A movie was posted each day, adding to the previously posted pieces, resulting altogether approximately thirty-eight hours of moving images.
120		<i>Reinalda del Carmen, mi mama y yo</i>	Lourena Giachino	2007	Chile	01:25	An attempt to recover and reconstruct the relationship between my mother, who lost her memory about two years ago due to an accident, and her best friend, who disappeared during the Chilean military dictatorship and was pregnant at the moment of her arrest. A destiny we don't know; a failed attempt to recover of memory; a reflection upon friendship, motherhood and loss.
121		<i>J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un</i>	Joseph Morder	2007	France	01:25	A la demande du Festival Pocket Films, j'entreprends le tournage d'un journal filmé avec téléphone portable caméra. La période du tournage entre février et mai 2007 voit se dérouler plusieurs événements : des dates anniversaires importantes, le récent emménagement dans un nouvel appartement, des voyages, la vente de l'appartement familial, la campagne des élections présidentielles, la rencontre avec Sacha. Et pourtant la grande question que pose ce projet est la découverte de ce qui peut devenir un nouveau langage cinématographique." Joseph Morder
122	<i>Beginning Filmmaking</i>		Jay Rosenblatt	2008	USA	00:23	Beginning Filmmaking takes us through one year of trying to teach a preschooler how to make a film.
123		<i>Diário de Sintra</i>	Paula Gaitán	2008	Brazil	01:30	Using home movies and other media, a filmmaker returns to Sintra, Portugal to search for memories of her late husband, Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha.
124	<i>Private Hungary</i>		Peter Forgacs	2008	Hungary	02:40	Private Hungary series films based on home movies from the 1930s and 1960s, which document ordinary lives that were soon to be ruptured by an extraordinary historical trauma that occurs off screen.
125	<i>The Beaches of Agnès</i>	<i>As Praias de Agnès</i>	Agnes Varda	2009	France	01:48	Agnès Varda explores her memories, mostly chronologically, with photographs, film clips, interviews, reenactments, and droll, playful contemporary scenes of her narrating her story.
126	<i>The Kids Grow Up</i>		Doug Block	2009	USA	01:30	A look at father-daughter relationships, modern-day parenting, marriage and the looming empty nest.
127	<i>My Conversations on Film: chapters 1-3</i>		Boris Lehman	1995-2010	Belgium	06:42	These are not interviews in the strictest sense of the word, but rather, this is a film composed of small conversations that are all part of the mise en scène. It is a gallery of portraits interwoven with the watermark of the self-portrait.
128	<i>This is not a film</i>	<i>In film nist</i>	Jafar Panahi, Mojtaba Mirtahmasb	2011	Iran	01:19	It's been months since Jafar Panahi, stuck in jail, has been awaiting a verdict by the appeals court. By depicting a day in his life, Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb try to portray the deprivations looming in contemporary Iranian cinema.
129	<i>Photographic Memory</i>		Ross McElwee	2011	USA / France	01:27	Filmmaker Ross McElwee (Sherman's March, Bright Leaves) finds himself in frequent conflict with his son, a young adult who seems addicted to and distracted by the virtual worlds of the internet. To understand his fractured love for his son, McElwee travels back to St. Quay-Portrieux in Brittany for the first time in decades to retrace his own journey into adulthood. A meditation on the passing of time, the praxis of photography and film, and the digital versus analog divide.
130		<i>Papirosen</i>	Gastón Solnicki's	2011	Argentina		An inquiry into the pervasive memory of World War II and its many effects on Jewish identity, Papirosen finds the uniquely talented Gastón Solnicki avoiding the usual faults of self-portraits. The result is a graceful consideration of post-war Jewish identity and the collective memory of a family.
131	<i>First Cousin Once Removed</i>		Alain Berliner	2012	USA	01:18	Acclaimed filmmaker Alan Berliner chronicles the deeply personal story of his mother's first cousin--well-known poet/translator/professor Edwin Honig--on his journey into the depths of Alzheimer's disease. Shot over the course of five years, the film presents an unflinching portrait of Edwin's work and life while documenting his slow mental deterioration through visits and interviews with Edwin and his friends, former students, and others, along with archival footage and more.
132	<i>Out-takes from the Life of a Happy Man</i>		Jonas Mekas	2012	USA	01:08	A motion picture composed of brief diaristic scenes not used in completed films from the years 1960-2000; and self-referential video footage taped during the editing. Brief glimpses of family, friends, girl-friends, the City, seasons of the year, travels.
133		<i>A Nossa Forma de Vida</i>	Pedro Filipe Marques	2012	Portugal	01:31	A spectacular view of the world as seen from Armando and Maria's control tower, eight floors up from the river Douro. A comic and probing portrait of an old Portuguese couple whose private life has remained permeable to the modern world.
134	<i>Stories We Tell</i>		Sarah Polley	2012	Canada	01:48	A film that excavates layers of myth and memory to find the elusive truth at the core of a family of storytellers.

135	<i>What Now? Remind Me</i>	<i>E Agora? Lembra-me</i>	Joaquim Pinto	2013	Portugal	02:44	Joaquim Pinto, who has been living with HIV for more than two decades, looks back at his life in cinema, at his friendships and loves, at the mysteries of art and nature - while undergoing an experimental drug treatment.
136	<i>The Gleaners</i>		Ye Zuyi	2014	China	01:29	A coming-of-age story about a filmmaker and his family as they struggle to adapt to both a changing world and a traditional one. Can the filmmaker's family accept that he is more interested choosing to document a famine that happened 50 years ago than choosing a wife?
137	<i>Fucking in Love</i>		Justine Pluinage	2014	France	01:12	After breaking up from a long-term relationship, director Justine Pluinage's own journey of sexual emancipation triggered in her a wish to understand how different people confront their sexuality.
138	<i>The Wolf's Lair</i>	<i>A Toca do Lobo</i>	Catarina Mourão	2015	Portugal	01:45	As the granddaughter of the well-known writer Tomaz de Figueiredo, she picks apart several of them in an intimate yet universally meaningful way. As such, her film also becomes a portrait of dictatorship and resistance and of the urge to create art.
139	<i>No home movie</i>		Chantal Akerman	2015	Belgium / France	01:55	Chantal Akerman films her mother, an old woman of Polish origin who is short lifetime, in her apartment in Brussels. For two hours, we will see them eating, chatting and sharing memories, sometimes accompanied by Sylvaine, Chantal's sister. Also, and to show how small the world has become, Chantal remains in contact with her mother at other times of the year via Skype from lands as far away from Belgium as Oklahoma or New York.
140	<i>One Cut, One Life</i>		Ed Pincus, Lucia Small	2015	USA	01:47	When seminal documentarian Ed Pincus is diagnosed with a terminal illness, he and collaborator Lucia Small team up to make one last film, much to the chagrin of Jane, Ed's wife of 50 years. Told from two points of view with vulnerability, intimacy and humor, ONE CUT, ONE LIFE challenges the form of first person documentary while offering a complex story of love, loss, legacy, and the delicacy of capturing the preciousness of life while time is fleeting.
141	<i>A Strange Love Affair with Ego</i>		Ester Gould	2015	Netherlands	01:30	Admiration for her sister Rowan's self-confidence leads filmmaker Ester Gould on a personal exploration of our narcissistic culture, with disconcerting results. A remarkable journey past four life stages and the fundamental need to be seen.
142	<i>Heart of a Dog</i>		Laurie Anderson	2015	USA France	01:15	Multimedia artist Laurie Anderson reflects on her relationship with her beloved terrier Lolabelle.
143	<i>A Family Affair</i>		Tom Fassaert	2015	Netherlands	01:55	On his 30th birthday, Tom Fassaert receives a mysterious invitation from his 95-year-old grandmother Marianne to come visit her in South Africa. At that time, the only thing he knows about her are the myths and predominantly negative stories his father told him. She was a femme fatale who went through countless men, a famous model in the 1950s, and a mother that put her two sons into a children's home.
144	<i>Alisa in Warland</i>	<i>Alisa w krainie wojny</i>	Alisa Kovalenko, Liubov Durakova	2016	Poland	01:14	Follow one young filmmaker's journey deep into the heart of the conflict in Ukraine, treading the line between director and subject, filmmaker and fighter.
145	<i>One More Time with Feeling</i>		Andrew Dominik (invited by Nick Cave to film himself)	2016	UK	01:53	Explores the creative process of Nick Cave and his band as the singer struggles an unspoken personal tragedy.
146	<i>Daan's Inheritance</i>		Joris Postema	2016	Netherlands		Daan is used to stand in front of a camera. Growing up, it was his father's camera, world-renowned photographer and filmmaker Ed van der Elsken. Now it's the camera of his good friend, Joris Postema. Together with him Daan tries to get control of his life by confronting his father posthumously.
147	<i>Cameraperson</i>		Kirsten Johnson	2016	USA	01:43	Exposing her role behind the camera, Kirsten Johnson reaches into the vast trove of footage she has shot over decades around the world. What emerges is a visually bold memoir and a revelatory interrogation of the power of the camera.
148	<i>Close relations</i>	<i>Rodnye</i>	Vitaly Mansky	2016	Germany / Latvia / Estonia / Ukraine	01:52	Russian citizen and Soviet-born Ukrainian native Vitaly Mansky crisscrosses Ukraine to explore Ukrainian society after the Maidan revolution as mirrored within his own large Ukrainian family.
149	<i>The War Show</i>		Obaidah Zytoon, Andreas Dalsgaard	2016	Syria	01:34	In March 2011, radio host Obaidah Zytoon and her circle of friends join the street protests against President Bashar al-Assad, as the Arab Spring reaches Syria. Knowing their country would be changed forever, this group of artists and activists begin filming their lives and the events around them. But as the regime's violent response spirals the country into a bloody civil war, their hopes for a better future will be tested by violence, imprisonment and death.
150	<i>In the Intense Now</i>	<i>No intenso agora</i>	João Moreira Salles	2017	Brazil	02:07	A personal essay which analyses and compares images of the political upheavals of the 1960s. From the military coup in Brazil to China's Cultural Revolution, from the student uprisings in Paris to the end of the Prague Spring.